

Blessing of God's Family

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[0 : 00] Psalm 133, a song of ascents of David. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

The verse 1 begins, Behold, calling our attention to this amazing reality, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.

When it's talking about brothers, it's not a reference to one's biological siblings, but to brothers and sisters in the faith, because this is in the communal context of worship among the people of God in Israel.

And so it's referring to the chosen people of God, the family of God. And the psalmist remarks, It is good and pleasant when brothers dwell in unity.

And how good and pleasant? Verses 2 to 3 answer that question. And as you're reading verses 2 to 3, again, think about just as summer approaches and the days begin to get hot and humid here in New England.

[1 : 30] You know, think about the things that you fantasize about to refresh you. Maybe wading into the frigid waters of Boston beaches, eating cold sugary watermelon or sipping iced tea, you know, something that just refreshes you.

And I'm sure you can think of some of your favorite experiences. And so imagine something like that as you look at the two similes that are used in verses 2 to 3. It says in verse 2, It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the color of his robes.

Now, that might sound a little bit icky and uncomfortable to us because we don't do this nowadays. But in the ancient world, head lice were quite common.

And head lice are parasites, right? They live on your scalp and suck your blood. Very unpleasant. And nowadays, we can use permethrin or ointments to kind of kill lice.

But people in the ancient Near East didn't have that. Oil, however, due to its viscosity, killed lice. And it also improved your body odor and things.

[2 : 45] So it's the whole, as a whole, overall, being anointed with oil was a very refreshing experience. And same thing, similarly, verse 3. It says, It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion.

So this also is a picture of just life and rejuvenation. God told Israelites in Deuteronomy 11 that the land that he was giving them, the promised land, was not like the land of Egypt because Egypt was water from the Nile River via irrigation.

But instead, this land, God said, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, he said, is a land that the Lord your God cares for. It's a land that drinks from God's rain.

God feeds it water, basically. And so Israel received almost all of its rainfall during its rainy season for only about like half of the year.

So for the other half of the year, it was extremely dry. I mean, intolerably dry at times. And so the only moisture the land found, it would be when the moist winds kind of blowing from the Mediterranean Sea would distill as dew throughout the land.

[4 : 03] And that whenever they, you know, saw, woke up from the night and saw dew distilled on the ground, it was a refreshing experience. It brought life back to the land.

Greenery starts to show again. And so that's the kind of image that's in view here. And apparently Mount Hermon was on the, which was on the northern border of Israel, was famous for heavy dew. So he's envisioning this kind of heavy dew falling on God's people in Zion. And so we could, you know, maybe relate to this a little better now than usual because we've been social distancing, you know, with the pandemic and whatnot.

And we long to be together and we can talk about how it is good and pleasant for us to dwell in unity. But this is speaking of more than just the joys of, you know, horizontal human connection. You know, the second half of verse three gives us the exact reason why it's good and pleasant for brothers to dwell in unity. And it says, The reason why brothers dwelling in unity is so good and pleasant is that the Lord dwells among them and brothers and sisters in Christ, all of us.

[5 : 20] And in blessing us and imparting eternal life to us, it's the Lord's presence that makes the difference. They're not just dwelling with one another, they're dwelling with one another in the presence of God.

As Psalm 27 verse four says, One thing have I asked of the Lord that will I seek after that I may dwell. Say more, dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

And there's a, so there's a vertical connection to God that makes the horizontal connection good and pleasant. And in verse two, the phrase running down is repeated twice, running down, the oil running down, and then in verse three, it speaks also the dew falling down.

The phrase falling down is actually, falling on is actually the exact same phrase as the running down in verse two. So there's actually a threefold repetition of the same phrase, all conveying the idea of something coming down from above, all to communicate the fact that blessings come from God downward to us.

is like the anointing oil that sets aside Aaron as God's priest, the one who intercedes on behalf of God's people in the presence of God. No other nation had that.

[6 : 36] No other nation had a priest anointed by God to intercede on their behalf in the presence of God. It marked Israel as God's special possession.

It is also like the dew that falls on mountains of Zion coming down from heaven. It's watered by God himself. It is there that the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

But the Zion, this blessed Zion, where God's people dwelt together in unity in the presence of God, it was not ultimately the physical place in the Middle East.

Rather, the land of Canaan pointed to our eternal dwelling place with God. And that's how the author of Hebrews interprets it. Hebrews chapter 12, verses 22 to 24.

He says, but you have come, he's talking to believers in Christ, but you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

[7 : 57] It's because Jesus came as the greater brother, the brother that Cain never was to Abel.

The blood of Abel could not save Cain from his iniquity, from his sin.

However, the blood of Christ speaks not only judgment as blood of Abel did, but forgiveness for us because Jesus died on the cross for us. He speaks forgiveness for us. He speaks God's grace over us.

And when we believe in Jesus, as we become citizens of Zion, Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and it is as such people, when we are aligned with the purposes of Jesus Christ, when we are aligned with the agenda of his kingdom, that's when it is good and pleasant for us to dwell in unity. when we are aligned with God, when we are reconciled with God, that's when it is pleasant for us to dwell together in unity. Thank you. Thank you.