

United we stand, divided we fall (Psalm 133 & 1 Corinthians 1:1-17)

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We'll be looking at **Psalm 133** and **1 Corinthians 1:1-17**.

So, it would be **great to have your Bibles in front of you** - and you can use the **outline** if you want to take **notes**.

Let me pray first...

Intro/Unity (Psalm 133)

[PowerPoint 1-Peanuts]

*In a **Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist - if he didn't.***

*"What **makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?**" asks **Linus**.*

*"These **five fingers,**" says **Lucy**. "**Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold.**"*

*"**Ok which channel do you want?**" replies **Linus**.*

*Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "**Why can't you guys get organized like that?**"*

[Charles Schultz - American Cartoonist]

What Lucy is describing is the **power of Unity**

So, we'd better **define Unity**

[PowerPoint 2-Definition]

Unity is: the state of being united or joined as a whole.

It's **great** to be **joined together** and united? Isn't it?

(pause)

It's **great** to live in **unity!** (Psalm 133)

Well - that's what **King David** says in our **OT reading** from **Psalm 133**

[If you'd like to turn there now]

Look at verse 1

[PowerPoint 3-Ps 133:1]

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity

What a **great truth** that is!

In this Psalm - David gives **2 pictures** of what it's like when **God's people** live together in **unity**

[PowerPoint 4-Anointed Picture]

1st Picture - v2 - unity is like when the **High Priest** - is **anointed for his job** as High Priest of the people - where he is set apart by God to do this special job - and **oil is poured on his head** and it **runs** over his **whole body**. David's saying - when we live together in harmony and unity as God's people - it's like the very happy and special occasion of the High Priest being anointed.

It's like we're all priests joined together doing a special job for God -

[remember how back in Exodus 19:6 - God promised Israel would be a **kingdom of priests** and a **holy nation**]. So, the **picture of the priest** is saying - if **we're altogether** in unity - all on the **same page** - **Jesus' page** - **God's page** - **we're like a whole nation of priests blessed by God** and **anointed** to do the **same**

special job - the job of sharing the Good News of Jesus. What a lovely picture that is?

(pause)

[PowerPoint 5-Mount Hermon/Zion]

2nd Picture David gives - in v3 - is a picture of the **morning dew from the highest mountain in ancient Israel - Mount Hermon** - that morning dew **watering the very dry Mount Zion in Jerusalem.** Now - Mount Hermon is in northern Israel and Mount Zion is in the south, in Jerusalem. That's a **distance of 405km.** So what David's saying is **living together in unity - removes any distance or division** between us - so it would be like **bringing the moisture of Mount Hermon and to the dryness of Mount Zion together** - even though they're so far apart.

Also, because **Mount Hermon is the highest mountain** - it's as if the **dew of Heaven we're falling on Mount Zion** in the **Holy City of Jerusalem.** A picture of **God giving a blessing for unity.**

And that's why David finishes his psalm - saying - when **God's people are in unity** - the result is the end of verse 3 - **God giving his blessing on them** - and those **blessing go on in to eternity** - with **eternal life.**

It's like - David's saying - when there's **unity with God's people** - it's like a **glimpse of what Heaven is like!**

Unity is a beautiful thing - I see it all around me in our church...

[PowerPoint 6-Unity]

Here's what it looks like to me...

- Seeing everyone **worshipping** together - **singing hymns** at full **gusto** - being really **attentive** to the sermon - **responding with love** and **enthusiasm** to the **young people** - it **warms my heart**
- Or turning up on a **Thursday** - listening to the **choir practicing** - and the **happy banter** that goes on
- Or turning up on **Wednesday** and seeing the **ladies** in **Bible Study** - really getting into **God's Word** - and getting **excited** about it
- Or seeing the **generosity of our people** - with our exceptional **morning teas** and the **teamwork** in the **kitchen**
- Or turning up on **Saturday** - and seeing people **engrossed** in the **movie**
- Or turning up on **Wednesday** - seeing the **craft ladies** - **having fun** designing cards - and then **sharing** their **prayer concerns** and **having a devotion**
- Then **Friday** - watching the **Jaffa kids** **respond** to the **stories** from the **Bible** - and the **mind-blowing prayers** they come out with for their age - and the **heaps of fun they have**
- And seeing **videos and photos** of the **friendship group outings**
- All that brings tears to my eyes...

As we pick up **Paul's** letter to the **Corinthians**, he's **talking about** this idea of **unity**

[Please turn to 1 Corinthians 1:1-17]

He begins with a greeting in vv1-3

[PowerPoint 7-Greeting]

Greeting (1 Cor 1:1-3)

- He begins his letter saying he's **not a self-appointed writer** - but a **called Apostle - called by Jesus** to be an apostle - as Paul walked on the **road to Damascus** (Acts 9)
- The **letter is written according to God's will and authority** - and with the **help of Sosthenes** - possibly the **synagogue ruler** mentioned in Acts 18 - who's now a Christian
- The letter's **written to**:
- **The Church of GOD** - in **Corinth** - let's not forget church is **God's church** - it's **not Paul's church** or the **Corinthian's church**
- We can be **proud of our church** - but **remember** it's **God's church** - and it's **not the building** - but the **body of believers**
- **Let's not forget too** - that **Jesus died for His church** - the body of believers
- The letter is written to the **holy people (= saints)** - made holy - **sanctified by believing in Jesus**
- And **notice** (a **light globe moment** for me this week) - the letter **written to us too** - v2 - **all those everywhere** who call on the name of our **Lord Jesus Christ** as their Lord
- The **greeting v3** - **Grace and peace** to you - from **God our Father** and the **Lord Jesus**
- **Grace first** - God in his grace - gave a **free gift** - He **sent Jesus, His Son** to **save us**
- **Because** of this **Grace** - **peace** between God and humans follows
- Paul uses this greeting in a lot of his letters

Thanks (1 Cor 1:4-9)

After his greeting - **Paul thanks God** for a number of **things about the Corinthians**

[PowerPoint 8-Thanks]

- He thanks God that **they have received God's grace** - thanking God that He has been kind enough to send the free gift of Jesus - v4
- He thanks God that **their lives have been enriched in so many ways** because of the grace of Jesus - v5 - God has **blessed them with eloquence** (not necessary to be a Christian - but Greeks loved eloquence and rhetoric) and God has blessed them with **knowledge** (certainly necessary to share and explain the Good News of Jesus)
- And v6 - He thanks God that they are **now certain** that everything Paul and his mates told them about **Jesus - is true**
- V7 - He thanks God that they're **not missing out on any blessings** as they **wait for Jesus to return**
- And Paul is certain - v8 - that until Jesus returns - **Jesus will keep them blameless** - that is not guilty of their sins - because **God will see Jesus' righteousness in them - instead of their sin**
- And Paul is **confident** - v9 - that **God is a faithful God** - who has called the people of Corinth (and us as believers) - to **fellowship with Jesus**
- This means as **God's children** we **never** have to **feel paralyzed** in our Christian service - or **feel inferior** or **inadequate** - because we should look to Christ **Jesus** who is **all-sufficient** for our needs
- I **wonder** though - **if we take** all these things Paul is thankful for - **for granted?**

- **Do we thank God** every day for **His grace** in sending Jesus?
- **Do we thank God** every day for the **way He enriches our lives** - health, food, finances, family, children, grandchildren, church family, work - do we count all our blessings and forget not our benefits (Psalm 103:2)
- **Do we thank God** for the **Good News** of Jesus - which means **we're blameless** in God's eyes - as we wait for Jesus to return
- **Have we forgotten** that part of our fellowship with Jesus - is to share the Good News about Him

(pause)

Paul's **greeted** the Corinthians and he's **thanked God** for them

But this **first** little **section** of Paul's **letter** - is a bit **like** going for your **annual performance review** at work

When I worked in **IT** - I'd have an **annual review**

The boss would go through all the **pleasantries** - **greeting** me - asking **how the family is** -

Then he'd tell me how much he **appreciated all my work** - and it's been a great year

And then we'd **get down to the nitty gritty** - down from the **helicopter level** - down to the **grass level** -

And there may be some **detail things** that need to be **discussed** and **ironed out**

There may be some **problems** - that need to be **addressed**

That's what Paul does in verses 11 to 17

There is a **problem in the Church of God** - in Corinth

Problem (1 Cor1:11-17)

[PowerPoint 9-Problem]

- See v11 - there's a **problem**- a report has come in from **Chloe's household** (v11) - there are **quarrels among them**
- **Specifically** (v12) - People are **splitting into groups or cliques or factions** - some following Paul - some following **Apollos** - some following **Cephas** - and some following **Jesus**
- This is part of **Greek culture** to be loyal to a teacher or mentor - and to argue that their teacher or mentor was better than the others
- This is not necessary in a church setting though
- It would be like people here at church - following me - or one of the **elders** - or following one of the leaders of a ministry or **COM**
- Paul's argument is v13
- Is Christ divided?
- **Christ can never be the exclusive property of one group in the church** -
- **The Church is Christ's body** - so it cannot be divided
- **Christ does not bring about division** - He brings people together - because we all need to be forgiven of the same thing - our sin - and we all need to have death wiped out - with the promise of **eternal life** - and **Jesus is the only one** who can achieve **forgiveness** and **eternal life** - He is the **only way** to the **Father** (John 14:6)
- **Paul's argument** continues in v13
- Was it Paul crucified on the cross? Of course **not** - it was **Jesus** - so why are people following Paul or **Apollos** or **Peter** - instead of the one who died on the cross - it doesn't make sense?
- Still in v13 - how were people baptized? In the name of Paul? **No** - in the name of the **Father, Son and HS**

- Then **Paul puts Baptism** in its **proper place** - he explains he's baptized a few people -
- And that it **doesn't matter who baptized you** - it **matters who you follow** - and that's **Jesus**
- You can imagine **people in Corinth being ever so proud** - well **I** was **baptized by Paul** - and others saying - well **I** was **baptized by Apollos** - or **I** was **baptized by Peter** - and he was **with Jesus** - so **my baptism** is much **more special**
- And **Paul's saying** - v17 - his **job wasn't** to come and **baptize** people - **Jesus** sent **Paul** to **preach** the **Gospel**
- The **Good News** - that **Jesus' death on a cross** - **takes** the **punishment** of our **sin away** - and **gives** us **forgiveness** - and the **Good News** that **Jesus** is **resurrected** and **alive** - and **offers** those who **believe** in Him - **eternal life**
- **Paul's saying** that the **Gospel** is **way more important** than **baptism**
- **Baptism** is a **symbol** of being a **believer** - but the **key thing** is **believing** in the **power of Jesus' death and resurrection**
- **We don't need to be baptized to get to Heaven** - remember the **thief** on the **cross** next to **Jesus** - **believed** at the **11th hour** - and was **promised paradise** - he didn't have to be baptized
- **We just need to repent of our sins and believe in Jesus to get to Heaven**
- **Jesus does the rest**
- The **bottom line** - and problem that **Paul** is **tackling** is
- The **people of Corinth** were **proudly following human beings** - like **Paul**, **Apollos** and **Peter (Cephas)** - **instead of following Jesus** - and that is **actually idolatry** - **worshipping someone ahead of God/Jesus**

- I wonder if we're guilty of pride in others or pride in ourselves - rather than being proud of Jesus
- Examples of these
 - Are we quarrelling amongst ourselves because it's more important that we have an opinion and be right - and have missed what's the most important thing - that's following Jesus?
 - Are we agreeing with someone to gain their approval and friendship - even if what they're saying is contrary to God's Word or plain unkind or simply untrue?
 - Are we caring more about what people will think of us than what God thinks - because we want to be popular or accepted?
 - Do we get upset if we're not recognised by everyone for our work at church? But why are we doing this work? The people to praise us - or to glorify to God?
- By being proud and following human beings - The Corinthians have been quarrelling amongst themselves and there have been divisions (schisms) amongst them
- United we stand - divided we fall

Solution (1 Cor 1:10 & 17)

Paul gives the solution to the problem in verse 10 and verse 17

[PowerPoint 10a-V10]

Verse 10 first

In the name of Jesus Christ - because we share the name Christian - we should agree with one another in what we say -there should be no divisions amongst us - we should be perfectly united in mind and thought.

- In other words - **put aside any differences** and **don't have divisions**
- But instead **be united** in how we think
- **United** here - is a **medical term** like broken bones **being knitted together** - this gives the idea that **divisions** in the church are like **broken bones** and has to be **healed** -
- So, it **has to mean to put aside what we think** - and **agree with what God says** - and so our **minds and our thoughts** - are **based on God's way** - and **not our own**. If we have the **same mindset** as **Jesus** (Phil 2:5)- **WWJD** - then we will be **united**
- A practical example of this in our church: is our **Vision** - to **show the love of Jesus** - **why** is that our vision? Because **Jesus' summarized the commandments** down to **loving God** and **loving our neighbours** - in fact He **summarized everything** down to **one word** - **Love**
- So, if we are **like-minded** - and have **same mindset** as **Jesus** - we'll **show Jesus' love all the time**
- So, if **everything** we do here **at church** - is **done through the lens** of showing **Jesus' love** - we start to **forget about ourselves and our egos** - and think about **showing love to one another** and to our **community**

E.G.- say the **children's talk** or sermon on Sunday - it's **not a matter** of who does the best talk or the **most entertaining** - but it's a **matter of sharing Jesus** and **showing the love of Jesus**

Once we've mastered that unity in Christ

[PowerPoint 10b-Gospel]

Then **verse 17** - we can do **what it's important** - the **job** Paul was given and **preach the Gospel of Jesus** - and this Gospel has **the power of the cross** of Jesus - Paul's argument is the **effectiveness** of the cross of Jesus is **lessened** - **when** we're investing half our time in **quarrelling** over stuff and **following** key personalities in the church - **instead** of **focusing** our efforts on sharing the **message and love of Jesus**

And Paul says at the end of V17 - the **way** the **Gospel** is **preached** - **doesn't** rely on being a **fancy orator** like Apollos or someone else - it **relies** on the **power** of **God** and **His Word** and the **Power** of the **Cross** - and the **Holy Spirit** working in people's heart. Gospel **preaching** **does not** rely on **fancy speaking** - it just **relies** on **God's Word** achieving its purposes and not returning to Him empty (Isaiah 55:11) - the **action** of **Jesus** on the **cross** - **speaks louder than any words** can do!

Conclusion

Just one final thought to finish up then...

[PowerPoint 11-Fishers]

We're supposed to be fishers of men (Matt 4:19) **catching people for Jesus** - but if **we don't have unity** and we're **quarrelling** and having **cliques** and **power groups** - we **more like** fish in an **aquarium** **fighting** with other - than being than fisher of men!

United we stand, divided we fall!

Let's pray...