

*Let Us Exalt His name together. Psalms 34:3*

Up until 450 years ago, everybody believed that the universe, and the sun, and the planets revolved around the earth.

THEN, in 1543, Copernicus told them that the earth wasn't the center of the universe. 50 years later, Galileo said that the planets revolved around the sun. They were so opposed to this idea, that they threw him in prison, and kicked him out of the church.

The very IDEA that WE weren't the center of the universe was unthinkable!

God has a very important LESSON in all of this ... the world doesn't revolve around YOU ... or ME.

God's priority isn't your comfort ... happiness ... or pleasure.

If God existed to please you and me, then why aren't we pleased all the time?

The TRUTH is it's not all about you or me ... it's all about GOD.

If God's priority isn't to make us happy then WHAT IS GOD'S PRIORITY?

God's priority is that He receive all the honor and glory.

God exists to showcase GOD.

- Why did God create the universe? Psalm 19:1 - "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork."

- Why did God choose the Jews? Isaiah 43:7 - "Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him."

- Why does God allow trouble in our life? Psalm 50:15 - "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

- Why did God send Jesus to earth? John 17:4 - "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

God wants the spotlight on HIM! Everything that God does, He does to give Him glory!

NOW ... this doesn't mean that God has an ego problem.

If you or I did everything we do for the purpose of receiving honor and glory, we would be considered arrogant.

BUT ... God doesn't do everything so His glory will be revealed for HIS OWN good.

God wants His glory revealed in everything that happens ... FOR OUR GOOD ... so we can not only witness His glory for ourselves but also bear witness OF His glory to others.

God wants us to SEE His glory so we can REFLECT it to the rest of the world.

We are to be like the MOON. The moon doesn't have any light of its own ... it REFLECTS the light of the sun. We are to be "Son-Reflectors" ... and reflect the glory of God that He displays for us in everything He does.

2 Cor. 3:18 - "that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him, and reflect His glory even more."

- God tells His people - 1 Chron. 16:24 - "Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvelous works among all nations."

- Paul told the Roman Christians - Romans 11:36 - "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

- Why do the planets exist? For God's glory  
Rev. 4:11 - "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

- Why did God give you talents and abilities? NOT for YOU to receive honor and glory BUT for His glory.

- Why do you have money ... or live in poverty? For God's glory

- Why do you have victory, or struggle in life? For God's glory

Everything happens ... everybody exists ... everything was created ... to give glory to God!

We think that the world ought to revolve around us.

Do you really want that? Remember, IF it's all ABOUT you, then it's all UP TO you.

God knows better than to revolve the world around you and me. WHY?

BECAUSE ... He knows that we are weak and powerless ...  
He knows our limitations.

BUT ... GOD is GOD! THAT'S WHY God wants all the  
glory ...

God doesn't share His glory.

LISTEN to what God says - Isaiah 42:8 - "I am the  
Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give  
to another ..."

LISTEN to what John the Baptist said about Jesus -  
John 3:30 - "He must increase, but I must  
decrease."

WHY?

BECAUSE ... it's all about HIM ... NOT about you and  
me.

### **A. Exalting God through our UNITY**

Psalms 133:1-3

We can all agree that unity is GOOD and PLEASANT.  
We can also agree that it is RARE!

1. Unity is Good, Pleasant, --- and Rare

Illustration:

Once a person visited a hospital for the criminally  
insane.

The visitor was shocked to see that only 3 guards  
were supervising more than 100 dangerous inmates.  
He asked the guide, "Don't you fear these people  
will plot an escape and overpower the guards?"

"Don't worry about that," The guard assured him.  
"Lunatics never unite."

If you know much about Church History, you might conclude that the Church is full of Lunatics.

In fact, you don't really need to be a Historian to see that the church has a hard time with UNITY. Add to that the fact that even within their own little sub-groups, many Christians can't get along.

In Congregations all across the World, people are bickering and backbiting --- and quarrelling and quibbling. It seems impossible for Church folk to learn how to live together in unity.

But scripture makes it clear that the church is called to UNITY.

Acts 4:32 says about the early church: All the believers were one in heart and mind. What a powerful description of the Church as a UNITED people.

So why do we have such a hard time getting it together?

Perhaps one answer is found in our TEXT: How good and pleasant it is ... when brothers live together in unity! Psalm 133:1

The first account of two brothers living together. It's a story of murder.

It is important to note that Cain killed Able for "religious" reasons. It was a religious fight over which of them God loved best.

Much of world history shows that "living together

like brothers" is made up of power-struggles and wars.

So if we ever hope to sing, How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity --- we obviously need Supernatural help!

Psalm 133 gives us two word-pictures to show what true Unity is like.

Verse 2 says It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes.

## 2. Unity is Like Oil

### o Unity Blends All

This verse gives a snapshot of the day when Aaron was first anointed as High Priest over the new nation of Israel.

The Oil that was poured over his head probably contained several strong spices: myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. These spices were blended together in a base of Olive Oil.

In Scripture, Olive Oil is used as a symbol of God's Holy Spirit.

Just as the Olive Oil blends these spices together, God can blend us together.

Humans tend to be what you could call ... spicy. Our various strong flavors can clash with each other.

Only the Oil of God's Spirit can blend us together.

And notice that when Aaron was anointed with Oil,

it was no little droplet of oil. He was drenched with it. It was running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. The Oil covered everything!

#### o Unity Covers All

If we are going to maintain UNITY in the Church, we don't need just a little droplet of the Spirit. We need a good drenching. We need God's Spirit to pour down over us and cover us completely.

I Peter 4:8 says "Above all love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins."

In the same way, God's Spirit can pour over us and cover those rough edges of sin that make us rub each other wrong.

Only God's Spirit can give us the Grace to overlook each other's faults so that we can live together in good and pleasant Unity. And when that happens, the whole world will take notice.

#### o Unity Fills All

When Aaron stood there with the Anointing Oil running off his head and flowing down his garments, the whole temple was filled with the scent of sacred perfume. The aroma was inescapable. Everyone noticed it.

When we come together as a church, the sweet smell of unity should fill the building.

If it does, that aroma will not be contained here.

It will flow out and fill the Community around us. And people will be drawn to Christ by sweet aroma of Unity.

The second word picture in Psalm 133 is that Unity is like DEW.

It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. Psalm 133:3

### 3. Unity is Like Dew

The Dew of Mount Hermon comes only after a still, quiet night.

Tranquility is needed for this Dew to form.

o Unity Falls while we Rest

This gives us another picture of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Unity descends like Dew as a gift from God.

Our part is to ask and receive this gift. But too often we think we can somehow MAKE it happen by our own human efforts.

Most people try to get organized for one reason - they want Power.

Sadly, sometimes the Church can act the same way. Too often you hear about power-struggles between Christians. But POWER is not our goal.

Our goal and our calling from God is UNITY.

It is UNITY that pleases God - not power, not success, not size, not clever programs -but UNITY.

That's why the early church rejected all the normal ways of "getting organized" so that their unity would bring glory to God.

- o They rejected Totalitarianism: absolute authority in the hands of a Dictator.
- o They rejected Anarchy: complete individualism where it's "every man for himself."
- o And they even rejected Democracy - majority rule (which we are familiar with in IPC)

Instead of these models, the early church practiced what could be best called "Spirit-directed Unity."

Richard Foster describes "Spirit-directed Unity" in the book, *Celebration of Discipline*.

He writes, "Unity --- rather than majority --- is the principle of corporate guidance. More than mere agreement, it is the perception that we have heard the voice of God. ... We do not seek compromise, but God-given consensus."

Then we can enjoy the promise given at the end of Psalm 133 - *For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.*

- o Unity Results in Life

Unity is the soul of fellowship.

Destroy it, and you rip the heart out of Christ's Body.

It is the essence, the core, of how God intends for us to experience life together in his Church.

Nothing on earth is more valuable to God than His Church. He paid the highest price for it, and he wants it protected, especially from the devastating damage that is caused by division, conflict, and disharmony.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Eph 4:3, NIV)

You are commissioned by Jesus Christ to do everything possible to preserve the unity, protect the fellowship, and promote harmony in your church family and among all believers.

Just hours before he would be arrested, Jesus made this request for all those who would believe in Him.

He prayed, May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17:23

IPC can be part of the answer to that prayer. We can be a United community.

But let's remember that we can't do it on our own. You can't force unity. You can't create unity. So what CAN you do? You can PRAY for unity!

Pray first that God will work in your heart.

Then pray that he will work in the hearts of others to bring about the kind of supernatural Unity that will show the world the LOVE of God.

## **B. Exalting God through our COMMUNITY**

We are CREATED FOR COMMUNITY Acts 2:42-47

That is why God has given us His Church which is the body of Christ on earth.

When one is baptized into Christ, one is baptized into the body of Christ.

Through Christ we are bound together in a community of faith. Belonging to Christ we belong to each

other. Fellowship with Christ means fellowship with each other.

This is our God-given support system. As such, it is intended to meet some crucial needs in our lives.

In his book *The Connecting Church*, Author Randy Frazee writes, "The experience of authentic community is one of the purposes God intends to be fulfilled by the church. The writings of Scripture lead one to conclude that God intends the church, not to be one more bolt on the wheel of activity in our lives, but the very hub at the center of one's life...." (36/995)

The church or a local community of believers is essential to our spiritual well-being.

In the New Testament there are no "Lone Ranger" Christians. The early believers needed each other and God expected them to be there for each other.

Likewise, we need each other and God expects us to be there for each other.

God has ordained that we play a vital part in each other's faith. For that reason we are commanded in Hebrews 10:25 not to, "...give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another..."

God has a purpose for putting us together.

And as Henri Nouwen points out, "We are unified by our common weaknesses, our common failures, our common disappointments and our common inconsistencies."

Luke wrote in Acts "ALL THE BELIEVERS WERE ONE IN

HEART AND MIND.”

They were united in Christ into a community of faith. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit they possessed the “MIND OF CHRIST.”

They made every effort to be led by God’s Spirit and to think and act like Christ.

Consequently, God used this community of faith to do some powerful things in the lives of countless believers living in a pagan, godless world.

God’s plan hasn’t changed. He still desires to use His Church to do some powerful things in our lives.

The community of faith is absolutely crucial to our spiritual well-being. Through it God desires that we find strength for the journey, places to minister and a never ending source of guidance.

During the times when we are overwhelmed by trials, heartaches and the burdens of life, we too need to be strengthened and encouraged by fellow believers.

When we wonder if God really does love us and care for us, we need God’s people. God, in His providence, has chosen to come to us through His people. When we are loved and cared for by another believer, especially during painful times, we gain a new sense of God’s love at work through them for us.

Author Gary Burge says “When God’s love feels distant or non-existent, the body of Christ’s love is real and tangible...”

That is why we cannot afford to stand alone; to go it on our own. We need each other; we need the community of faith.

The closer we stand in community, the more we will be able to hold up.

In Christ we are a community of faith, a special place where we can minister and be ministered to. We need each other. Therefore, the community of faith needs to be a priority in our lives.

Acts 2:42 says that the early believers "DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO FELLOWSHIP"...to the community of faith.

### **C. Exalting God through our PERSONAL LIFE**

#### 1.- Your SUCCESS Is For God's Glory

Sometimes, great men and women start thinking that they are very important - that they are 'somebody'. Even preachers fall into this trap.

Paul had something to say about this in 1 Cor. 3:7 - "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

1 Cor. 1:31 - "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Any success you have, has been given to you by God, to bring GLORY to Him.

Any success you have, is given to you by God, to advertise GOD.

God lets you excel, so you can make HIM known ... to declare His glory.

#### 2.- Your BODY Is To Be Used For God's Glory. 1 Cor. 6:19-20

- Sexual impurity doesn't glorify God.
- Living to satisfy the flesh ... doesn't glorify God.
- Your body is God's TOOL ... maintain it ... for His glory.
- Your body is God's TEMPLE ... respect it ... for His glory.

That's why God gave you a body ... so He would get all the glory.

### 3.- Your STRUGGLES Are To Be Used For God's Glory

Everybody can relate to problems, trials, struggles, heartaches, tragedies ... They are there for one purpose ... to bring glory to God.

Psalm 50:15 - "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

John 9:1-3 . WHY was this man born blind? So that God might be glorified! See 9:35-38

- To MARY, God said - "You will be the mother of My Son ... for My glory."
- To PETER, God said - "You will be the first preacher of the gospel ... for My Glory."
- To MATTHEW, God said - "You will write the first Gospel... for My glory."
- To THIS BLIND MAN, God said - "You will be born blind ... for My glory."

I can just hear the blind man reply to God ... "Have

you got a Plan B?"

REMEMBER Lazarus? Turn to John 11:1-3.

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, He didn't rush to their house. As a matter of fact, He waited a couple of more days - 11:5-7

Mary and Martha couldn't understand why Jesus waited - 11:21, 32. They were broken hearted ... weeping and crying.

But their happiness wasn't God's priority.

Some even doubted Jesus - 11:37

- WHY did Jesus allow such trial, trouble and heartache?
- WHY does Jesus allow such struggles, tragedies and trial in YOUR life?

MAYBE ... It's to bring you to salvation in Jesus.

MAYBE ... It's to strengthen your faith.

MAYBE ... It's to get you to depend on Him ... not on yourself.

LISTEN to what Jesus says - 11:4 ... 11:40. Death ... and blindness ... and (whatever you are going through) ... is for the glory of God.

LISTEN to what Jesus told the Apostle John - John 21:19 - "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God."

- What do you think happened when Lazarus walked out of that tomb? They witnessed the glory of God.
- What do you think happened when the blind man

came walking down the street without his white cane ... greeting everybody? They witnessed the glory of God.

What do you think will happen ...

- When people see you put your trust in God, in your struggles? God will be glorified.
- When people see how God brings you through your trials and testings ... meeting your needs? God will be glorified.
- When people see your faith, in spite of your circumstances? God will be glorified.

MAYBE ... YOU have been selected by God (like Lazarus and the blind man) to display the glory of God!

Are people strengthened because of your struggles? Do they see the glory of God in your trials?

REMEMBER ... It's not about YOU.

Your struggles and trials might be for God to display His glory through you.

God might be using you to reflect His glory ... as a "Son-reflector".

MAYBE ... You have been selected to suffer for God's glory.

God will use whatever He chooses to reflect His glory ... the universe ... a beautiful sunset ... YOU and your struggles.

2 Cor. 4:17 - "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;"

Compared to the glory that you will give to God ... compared to the glory that you will receive in Heaven ... our trials are but a "light affliction".

#### **D. Exalting God through our WORSHIP**

a) Genuine worship must be based on the reality of WHO GOD IS. (John4.24)

Worship must arise out of the spirit.

Worship must be practiced in truth.

Worship must be built upon the knowledge of who God is.

How can you learn about God and about His nature, His love, mercy, grace, character, and judgment?

Only through His Word and through our walk with Him - hence, a systematic exposition of the Word of God is necessary in a worship service.

Worship is an expression of praise from the heart, toward a God who is understood and truly revealed.

Worship is receiving a revelation about God and then rendering back homage for His greatness and His glory.

b) Genuine worship must be concerned with the glory of God.

Worship for any other purpose other than God's glory is not true worship.

c) Genuine worship must be God-centered.

We are not to just get emotional or sing loudly for our own sake.

Our focus should NOT be on how worship makes us feel.

Our focus must be centered on God alone.

In the first two verses of the psalm, we are to “sing for joy to the Lord”, we are to “shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation”, we are to “come before Him with thanksgiving”, and we are to “extol Him with music and song.”

David danced and shouted but he did it “*before the Lord*”.

We need to make sure our music is ‘Christocentric’, not man-centered.

Instead of singing about how happy we are to be together worshipping God, the Psalms call us to sing directly to God.

In other words, we are to not just talk about how we feel when we worship, but rather engage our body, soul and spirit, complete with our emotions, in a total preoccupation with the Rock of our salvation.