

**Brethren
Dwelling
Together
In
Unity**

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Christian unity is a confusing subject for many Christians. Some Christians think that there can be unity as long as one professes to be a Christian. But some Christians will only fellowship with those who are in their camps or denominations as far as their practice of Christian unity is concerned. Christians have many different ideas concerning Christian unity. The practice of Christian unity is often dependent on how a Christian has been taught by his church as to how much and how far to accommodate other Christians in the way they interpret the Holy Bible before they are accepted into their fellowship. Bible believing Christians practise separation especially from the world and from those Christians they deem to be worldly according to their own measurement of standards. The Holy Bible does teach separation. Notwithstanding, the Scriptures also reveal the desire of God's people for brethren to dwell together in unity.

This book is a study on brethren dwelling together in unity. This is not a book about Christian standards going into legalistic details like the Pharisees of old to require compliance for Christians on extra Biblical observances. This book is a brief exposition of Psalm 133. It is the hope of this author that all true Bible believing Christians will learn from the Holy Bible to appreciate the desire of the psalmist for brethren to dwell together in unity and to treasure true Christian unity in the Christian faith.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. (Psalm 133:1-3)

Ever since by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, brethren could no longer dwell together in unity. Unity, especially unity in obeying and serving the thrice Holy God of Creation has become something to long for by Christians but is seldom realized. Brethren dwelling together in unity is the expressed hope of the psalmist so that all brethren may with one voice, one heart and one mind worship the Great King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Brethren dwelling together in unity has to do with the priesthood because it is connected with worship. Christians having been washed by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ are members of this universal priesthood of believers. Brethren are supposed to dwell together in unity praising this great and benevolent God of salvation and all brethren redeemed of the Lord are expected to be united in serving Almighty God. Unfortunately, though saints redeemed from sin by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, brethren dwelling together in unity does not come naturally.

Christian unity is the hope of many sincere and God-fearing Bible believing Christians. Those who truly love the Lord Jesus Christ hate to see the Body of Christ divided and Christians quarrel and fight one another. For they know the true and living God is also a God of love and this Almighty God who loves the world so much that He sent His only Begotten Son to die for sinners. True Christians expect this love of God to permeate the Body of Christ and desire Christians to be united in Christ. Any schism and strife hurt Christians and the weaker Christians are stumbled when they see disunity and quarrel among Christians. Brethren dwelling together in unity is very important if there be edification in the church for Christians to grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are many exhortations written to Christians to drive home this point of Christian unity. The Church is torn by schisms and is seldom united in one spirit and in one mind to serve the risen Saviour and magnify His Holy name. Christian unity is often superficial and artificial. Christian unity is also camouflaged by forms and not true worship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There may appear to be unity in church activities with Christians revolving their lives around the church calendar but the underlying tensions of self-will and self-centredness of the brethren can suddenly erupt like a volcano and tear the church apart. Brethren dwelling together in unity is the desire of the psalmist as well as those who truly love the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the hope of all God fearing Christians that there will be no disunity among the brethren but that they all dwell together in unity worshipping and serving this God of Creation and Redemption.

Fallen men have this natural propensity to be disunited. It is rather uncommon for brethren to dwell together in unity. The first pair of brethren, Cain and Abel, ended up with one murdering the other because of envy. Cain could not stand the fact that his approach and worship of the Creator God was rejected while his brother Abel's sacrifice was accepted by the Lord God. Sin entered the world through Adam and sin separated the brethren. Brethren could no longer be of one mind in obeying God. The brethren have different ideas in their approach to worshipping and fellowshiping with God. Abel obeyed God while Cain tried to be creative in his approach towards gaining acceptance from the Lord God but was rejected. As history would have it, more sibling rivalries turn up and brethren could not dwell together in unity. This is an observable fact and hatred and envy plague the fallen human race. As such, oftentimes bloodshed is the end result because of such animosity between the brethren.

Abraham and Lot could not dwell together in unity and to prevent the constant bickering between the brethren, Abraham told Lot to choose the land he would go and he would separate himself from Lot. **And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. (Genesis 13:8&9)** Abraham was a man of a large heart. He regarded Lot and all the herdmen as brethren. Their quarrels over earthly possession were hurting their testimony before the Canaanites. Abraham being a man called of God to inherit the blessing refused to ruin his testimony before the Canaanites. This led to his parting with Lot. Being the elder and an uncle to Lot, he even allowed Lot to choose the land before him first. Separation is the next best option to prevent disunity from getting out of hand and relations turn ugly.

Ishmael could not stand the coming of the son promised to Abraham and when he mocked Isaac, he was cast out with his mother. **And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. (Genesis 21:9&10)** Envy was the culprit and Ishmael was cast out for mocking Isaac the son promised to Abraham. Dwelling together in unity under one roof with the whole family became impossible. It would be intolerable to bear with all the constant bickering between the two

sons and their mothers and parting of way was the only option. In fact this option had the approval from Almighty God to teach an objective lesson between the fruit of the flesh and the Spirit.

Esau could not stand Jacob and they ended up in parting ways. Their quarrels started when Jacob took advantage of Esau when he was hungry and Jacob demanded that Esau sold him his birthright before he would feed him with pottage (Genesis 25:29-34). So it was recorded that Esau despised his birthright. Moreover, Jacob also stole the blessing Isaac intended for Esau. Esau was raging mad with his brother Jacob and he planned to kill him: **And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. (Genesis 27:41)** They not only could not dwell together in unity, Esau was close to killing his own brother like what happened between Cain and Abel. Again separation is the way to go when brethren could not dwell together in unity. How sad! Isaac and Rebecca must be brokenhearted because the brethren had to go separate ways and the family became divided.

The children of Jacob likewise engaged in quarrels and they nearly murdered Joseph but in the end they sold him into Egypt as a slave. Joseph was gifted in interpreting dreams and so his brethren were envious of him. It was not just his capability on interpreting dreams that caused him the trouble. It was the dreams themselves indicating that his brethren, including his own parents would bow down to him someday. So when an opportune moment arrived, the children of Jacob were in murderous mood. **And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. (Genesis 37:18-20)** Eventually, this dreamer, Joseph, was sold as a slave into Egypt because the brethren just could not dwell together in unity. Jacob was brokenhearted thinking that Joseph was dead and he mourned for him for many years. Brethren could not dwell together in unity often brings tragic consequences and trouble to the family.

The children of Israel could not stand Moses for interfering in their affairs when Moses tried to stop them from quarreling and they ran him off into the desert. Concerning this incident, the Scriptures reveal: **And when he**

went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. (Exodus 2:13&14) Moses was trying to do right but he was not accepted by his brethren. So while the children of Israel were living under Egyptian bondage, they were also not dwelling together in unity as brethren. Even when Moses tried to make peace between them, he was driven away. Brethren dwelling together in unity was simply impossible even during very trying times of bondage. How sad and what reproach to be disunited even before the enemies! No wonder the Egyptians continued to lord over them.

Miriam and Aaron could not stand the authority of Moses and they murmured against him for marrying an Ethiopian woman and Miriam was punished with leprosy for a week. This incident is recorded in Numbers 12:1&2: **And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.** Their disunity angered the Lord. They were supposed to be marching into the Promised Land after being delivered from Egypt and so quickly, they allowed such petty quarrels to ruin their joy and their victory march into Canaan land. As for Miriam, she was punished with leprosy. **And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. (Numbers 12:9&10)** It was tragic that such evil disease should strike the children of Israel. Hence Miriam had to be quarantined. **And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again. And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran. (Numbers 12:15&16)** Because they were disunited and could not dwell together in unity, this incident hindered their trip and held back a few million people for one week. Such disunity caused much trouble not only to Miriam and Aaron, all the children of Israel were affected as well. Brethren dwelling together in unity even after a great and wondrous deliverance also could not be maintained for very long. It is very sad indeed!

Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal, could not stand his brethren, the sons of Gideon, so he killed all of them but one escaped. After the death of Gideon, Abimelech rebelled and killed his brethren to reign in the stead of Gideon.

And Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem unto his mother's brethren, and communed with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, Speak, I pray you, in the ears of all the men of Shechem, Whether is better for you, either that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are threescore and ten persons, reign over you, or that one reign over you? remember also that I am your bone and your flesh. And his mother's brethren spake of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, He is our brother. And they gave him threescore and ten pieces of silver out of the house of Baal-berith, wherewith Abimelech hired vain and light persons, which followed him. And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone: notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself. (Judges 9:1-5)

So these brethren here not only could not dwell together in unity, one of them was wicked to the core and killed almost all his brethren that were better than him. These men had forgotten that they had been delivered from oppression by the Midianites in the past. It was Gideon who stood up for them and now they returned evil for good. They had peace for forty years after their deliverance from the Midianites (Judges 8:28). What happened during to their years living in peace? Why was there a simmering tension between the brethren living in times of peace? So even during good times brethren still find it difficult to dwell together in unity.

David's brethren could not stand him for coming to the battle with Goliath and they rebuked him without a cause. **And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause? (1 Samuel 17:28&29)** They had to find an alibi to cover up their lack of courage in the face of this great foe, Goliath. It was David

who was sent by their father to enquire of the welfare of his brethren. Here even in the face of an enemy, brethren still could not dwell in unity.

The brother of the prodigal son could not stand it when his brother repented and returned to the father's house. He would rather his prodigal brother did not come back and remained dead. The Scriptures revealed the anger of this brother for refusing to enter the house upon his prodigal brother's return. **And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. (Luke 15:28)** His inability to dwell together in unity under one roof with his prodigal brother upon his repentance and return to the father is very telling concerning the condition of his own selfish heart. Blood is thicker than water but blood is no match for self-interest. Brethren dwelling together in unity seldom materializes whether in wealth or in poverty. Sin does separate and utterly separates. It separates not only man with God but man with man as well. Even the closest brethren are no exception.

Eventually, the children of Israel could not stand their brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ, and they sent him to the cross. Christ came unto his own brethren and his own brethren received him not (John 1:11). Centuries ago they rejected Moses who came to stop them from their quarrels trying to admonish them to dwell together in unity as brethren. This time, a greater Prophet, their Brethren in the flesh, the Son of David came to them, they likewise rejected Him. So down through history, it is a fact that it is very difficult for brethren to dwell together in unity. Disunity reins supreme while the brotherhood lies defeated in this fallen world.

How many of us parents would not want to see our children dwelling together in unity. It is a wonderful feeling to see all our children dwelling together in unity. It is good to see them play together and enjoy one another's presence. It is good to see them help one another in times of need. It is good to see them encourage one another instead of envying one another. But we know such times of their dwelling together in unity are not always the case. Their constant bickering, comparing, complaining and murmuring are just as natural as the sun rises from the east. It is God's amazing grace for any family whose children can truly dwell together in unity. This is an exception rather than the rule when brethren dwell together in unity.

Why is it so difficult for brethren to dwell together in unity? It is because of sin. It is due to the out-breaking of iniquity. Fallen men tainted by sin are self-centred and are not selfless. They put themselves first and others second. They are out to preserve their own turf, their status, their esteem among others and their pride. Envy is the chief culprit in most cases that cause brethren to part company. Some think too highly of themselves and they cannot stand others having been placed ahead of them. Some envy others for their success, their wealth, their standing, their capabilities and their popularity. Because some love the preeminence, they become troublemakers like what the apostle John revealed. **I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. (3 John 1:9)** Some went as far as to sue one another in the court of the unsaved like the carnal Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 6).

God must be brokenhearted to see His children constantly putting themselves and their welfare ahead of others. They do not practise the admonition it is more blessed to give than to receive. To such Christians, giving is a loss and getting is a gain. They have been brainwashed by the world to grab is to gain. They do not understand that the Christian faith is founded on giving; chiefly God gave us His only Begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. If only Christians have this spirit and attitude of giving, then brethren would be able to dwell together in unity.

When some Christians become selfish, then the spirit of unity would become strained. Giving to a common cause drives us in the same direction and moulds us into one united people. Even fallen men understand the need to be united. That is why our children have to pledge their unity every morning in school, "We the citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves as one

united people, regardless of race, language....” Such pledge drives everyone in the same direction to achieve a common objective. Through such a pledge, it is hoped that division is minimized as well as unity is achieved. But Christians need not make such a pledge everyday. They are commanded to live in peace with one another and to love one another as brethren.

Grabbing and getting cause us to get as much as possible and get out of the way. Where is the togetherness and unity? Have you seen how some shoppers behave during a mega sale? They grab as much as they can carry and they run off. Such behaviour is obnoxious to say the least. If Christians behave that way, no wonder they cannot dwell together in unity. It is not all for one and one for all like the world says. It is all for himself and the sooner you perish the better and I have one less competitor. Unfortunately, this is the unspoken motto for carnal Christians whose only hope in this life is to acquire riches and fame in this world.

The psalmist knew very well the value and the importance of brethren dwelling together in unity. David had seen the petty quarrels among his people. His captain Joab murdered two other captains that were better than him. Joab was thinking for himself. He wanted to consolidate his position and uphold prestige and power. The more competitors he eliminated the better for him. He never thought about the loss to the country as a whole. He was a very small man and a selfish man. He was not a giant of the faith and an example for others to follow. If the brethren dwell together in unity, David’s army would have more capable men to run and serve the country. If the brethren dwell together in unity, the enemies would think twice before they even consider starting a war with them. No country would likely start a war with another country if that country were united as one people.

It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; (Psalm 133:2)

Brethren dwelling together in unity is like Aaron's precious ointment. This ointment is specially produced or concocted under strict guidelines from Jehovah God to be used in anointing and in worship. Anointing with ointment signifies God's stamp of approval on the person who is anointed. David was so clear and careful on this matter that he did not raise his hands against King Saul, the anointed of God. He was given two opportunities to kill King Saul which was perfectly justifiable under the circumstances of self-defence as rationalized by the wisdom of fallen men in this world. But David was a man of faith and he would not touch King Saul who was anointed by God. He committed the matter of persecution by King Saul to God to deal with him rather than raising his hands against King Saul. He tried his best to dwell together with the king in unity but it was impossible. So he had to flee for his life living in exile.

Brethren dwelling together in unity has God's stamp of approval upon such close fellowship. God does not always allow fallen men to dwell together in unity. In fact, God caused a worldwide scattering of the brethren when they were dwelling together in unity trying to build a tower to reach heaven (Genesis 11). They did not dwell together in unity to worship God but to rebel against God's directive will for them and so they were scattered with the confusion of their tongues.

Only brethren dwelling together for the purpose of worshipping God and magnifying His holy name is like the precious ointment that flows from the head of Aaron and down to his beard and all the way to his skirts. God is putting His stamp of approval for such gathering anointing the high priest from head to toe with precious ointment. The fragrance of sweet fellowship between God and men is made manifest in such anointing. The presence of God during such anointing is to be expected. In fact, Christians are told: **For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20)** Hence, when brethren meet to worship God, they are expected to be united in one spirit, in one mind and in one mouth to glorify God.

The exhortation given by the apostle Paul to the church in Rome is one such desire expressed like the psalmist: **That ye may with one mind**

and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:6) Because it is not in the nature of men to dwell together in unity, albeit, Christians are all saved by the precious blood of Christ, a commandment is still necessary to drive home the point of Christian unity. The church in Corinth likewise received one such admonition: **Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. (2 Corinthians 13:11)** In fact, the church in Corinth had a greater need for such a commandment because the Christians in that church were generally carnal and schism was present during their meetings.

Even the church in Philippi was no exception and they were likewise exhorted to dwell together in unity. **Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. (Philippians 1:27; 2:2)** When brethren seemingly are dwelling together in unity, such appearance of unity cannot be taken for granted. Brethren have to be constantly reminded on the need to dwell together in unity. The necessity for such reminders cannot be underestimated. It is the desire of all God-fearing pastors to see Christian unity in the church. No godly Elders in the church hope the church to be divided by schisms and torn by strives. Sincere Christians likewise wish to see brethren dwelling together in unity. Weak Christians are easily hurt when disunity surface in the church and strives tear the church apart. As such, the need for brethren dwelling together in unity is a primary concern for church leaders.

The apostle Peter also has something to say on this matter of unity: **Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 2:17; 3:8&9)** Such words of exhortation must be received with thanksgiving. The consequence of disunity is very serious. Not much is heard about loving the brotherhood. This word "brotherhood" has been hijacked by the liberals and the ecumenists to pursue a perverse form of unity without regards to true doctrines from the Holy Scriptures. As such, loving the brotherhood is shunned by many Bible believers as though "brotherhood" has become a

dirty word. Notwithstanding, it is the God's directive will for Christians to love the brotherhood. This is fundamental as far as brethren dwelling together in unity is concerned. The act of loving the brotherhood governs the behaviour brethren should exercise with one another.

Dwelling together in unity for Christians also do not come naturally. Christians have to be taught, instructed and admonished to obey such a commandment. The Lord Jesus Christ was even more direct when He gave instruction on this matter for brethren who were supposed to be dwelling together in unity. **Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. (Matthew 5:23&24)** This is the instruction coming from the Lord that is seldom obeyed by Christians. If Christians can dwell together in unity naturally, then there would be no need for such a command from the Lord to order believers to do the right thing. God does not want believers to come before Him when they are not right with their brethren. God makes it very clear that He does not accept such worship when their fellowship with the brethren is not right. King Solomon also has very strong words for those whose sacrifice is not accepted by God. **The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight. The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind? (Proverbs 15:8; 21:27)** Hence, sacrifices from believers when their relations are not right with the brethren are an affront to God. Christians have to be careful on this matter lest they associate themselves with the wicked.

As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. (Psalm 133:3)

Brethren dwelling together in unity is also like the dew that descended upon the mountains. How refreshing to have dew coming down from above when brethren truly dwell together in unity. When brethren cannot dwell together in unity, the dew from above is withdrawn and the dryness of famine takes over and all nourishment of sweet fellowship is all gone. There is no more refreshing fellowship and enjoyment of one another's presence. There is no more constant and conscious care for one another's welfare. The dew of God's grace and blessing from above that stamps the approval of brethren dwelling in unity will be gone when brethren quarrel and fight over childish and unimportant things. Christians must constantly guard against such folly that will affect the whole body as a congregation of believers worshipping God in Spirit and in truth.

If the brother of the prodigal son loved his father, he would not begrudge the return of his prodigal brother. He would consider the father's position and appreciate his view. He would see things through the eyes of his father instead of his own eyes tainted with envy clouded by self-righteousness. He would look at the entire family as a whole and not through his own selfish myopic view of grabbing and gain with the brother dead and gone. The apostle John wrote about those who do not love their brethren. **We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. (1 John 3:14)** Without loving the brethren, it is impossible to dwell together in unity. If we love the brethren, we will see things through the eyes of the Lord and understand where we stand. Our will, feelings and opinions are simply not important. God's will is paramount and we will seek to follow the Lord according to biblical admonition. Our desire is for the backsliding brethren to repent and return and we will embrace him with open arms of warm fellowship again in the Lord.

Those who hate their brethren abide in death. They do not possess eternal life. Brethren dwelling together in unity receive blessings from above like the dew descending from Mount Hermon. Brethren dwelling together in unity is indeed life for evermore. Brethren dwelling together in unity is a perfect picture of life for evermore like we have been told: **We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.**

Those who love the brethren know that they have eternal life and they desire to dwell together with the brethren in unity. It is understandable that those who do not have eternal life hate the brethren for how can darkness have fellowship with light! That is why such people do not desire to dwell together with the brethren in unity. If they are constantly found among the brethren, they are up to no good. They are sent by the devil with a mission from hell. They are there to cause strifes and create trouble. They are there to cause division and not unity. Their chief aim is to harm the body of Christ. No wonder the Scriptures tell us that such people who do not love the brethren abide in death.

Brethren quarreling is the beginning of the death of fellowship in the Lord. Brethren could no longer stand one another's presence. Brethren could not come before God and worship God with a pure conscience. Brethren could not fellowship with God because they could not even fellowship with one another. When they cannot dwell together in unity, they are faking true worship of Almighty God. The apostle John again tells us: **If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (1 John 4:20)** How can a Christian claim he loves God whom he cannot see when he hates his brother whom he can see! Brethren dwelling together in unity is a mark of those truly washed by the precious blood of Christ.

Brethren normally would not dwell together in unity until they feel the threat from a common enemy. The report from Iron Mountain put out by humanists suggest that to unite a people of any given country, you have to put before them a common enemy. The threat from this common enemy must be real and an attack from this enemy must be ever imminent. One reason why brethren cannot dwell together in unity is because they have forgotten they all have a common enemy. This common enemy manifests itself in three areas. They are the flesh, the world and the devil.

If a Christian is aware of the flesh, knowing the propensity of his own flesh, he would know how to be judgmental against the fleshly inclination of other brethren yet without being self-righteous. If he is aware of the nature, the glitters and the seduction of the world, a Christian would know how to help another Christian to overcome the world. If he is aware of the influence and the power of the forces of darkness, he would know how to protect his brethren. The apostle Paul reminds Christians about the wiles of the devil:

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. (2 Corinthians 2:11) Knowing the wiles of the devil, he would not fall into the trap of leaving his brethren to fight the forces of darkness alone.

Mount Hermon is a snowcapped mountain in Israel. Its highest peak is about 9230 feet above sea level. Anyone ever traveled would tell you that snowcapped mountains are a refreshing sight. Who would really enjoyed traveling through a parched dry land devoid of life form? We had driven in some places and had seen some snowcapped mountains. God in His creation has given fallen men some refreshing moments in spite of sin entering into the world. This mountain is just south of Lebanon. Mount Hermon is a picture of redemption and mercy.

Jeremiah asked: **Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken? (Jeremiah 18:14)** How refreshing to drink of this cold flowing water from this mountain covered with snow! Who in his right mind would want to forsake this cold water of refreshment and sustenance? It is like a picture of the river of life. From there, the dew from the mountain descends to provide refreshment and nourishment and when brethren dwelling together in unity, it is indeed a refreshing sight.

Job also mentioned about the cleansing effect of snow water: **If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; (Job 9:30)** The psalmist likewise associated purity with snow: **Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. (Psalm 51:7)** This dew from the snowcapped mountain is a picture of purity. Brethren are supposed to be dwelling together not only in unity but in purity. It is impossible for brethren to dwell together in unity when there are impure motives. There may be a semblance of dwelling together in unity when the impurities of fleshly and worldly lust are disguised and propagated by the wisdom of this world. The end of such unity is still depravity and to every work reprobate. Such impure fellowship must be avoided at all cost. May Christians have spiritual eyes to discern the difference between unity in purity and unity in perversity!

Impurity is such an impediment to Christian unity that the apostle Paul wrote to the young preacher Timothy to warn him against such fleshly trouble: **Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy**

2:22) Fleshly lust and a pure heart can never be partners in fellowship. The Apostle Paul also wrote to the other preacher Titus to counsel him on purity: **Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. (Titus 1:15)** The apostle Peter also had something to admonish Christians concerning purity. **Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: (1 Peter 1:22)** He told Christians that they were already pure. He told them to remain pure by loving the brethren. He told Christians not only to love one another but to love one another with a pure heart fervently. This fervent love of the brethren with a pure heart is a prerequisite for brethren to dwell together in unity. The apostle John also confirms this truth that Christians who have this hope as sons of God will keep themselves pure: **And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (1 John 3:3)** Keeping oneself pure is a constant theme for a Christian to obey. Purity is the very essence of brethren dwelling together in unity. Otherwise, it would be like the days of old when fallen men gathered together in unity for the purpose of perversity to rebel against God and were scattered all over the earth.

Job also tells us: Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned. (Job 24:19) The refreshing snow waters of fellowship when brethren are dwelling together in unity will be gone when there is constant bickering among the brethren. How quickly the cold refreshing snow of blessed fellowship vaporizes when the drought of envy and the heat of selfishness enter that destroy the unity of the saints! The disciples of Christ were not exempted from such folly. Even during the earthly ministries of the Lord, they quarreled and compared to see who was greatest among them. **But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. (Mark 9:34)** They had to hold their peace because of this petty quarrel. Self-interest comes first. It is really embarrassing to see such ugly manifestation of the flesh even in believers of Christ. So drought and heat of fleshly inclinations consume the snow waters of sweet fellowship among the brethren. Beware of self-centredness for this will cause the close and warm fellowship among the brethren to be destroyed.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psalm 133:1)

Such a picture of perfect fellowship in the Lord is something all Christians should long for and put in effort to work towards this end. Having a depraved form of liberty will not get us there. Promoting and tolerating drunkenness, fornication and all forms of worldliness and frivolities are not the way to unity. It is only unity in disguised and such unity is only form over substance. There cannot be unity in diversity in Christian morals and truths. Dwelling together in unity must be marked with purity and sincerity seeking after the welfare of others and not our own. This includes helping others quit their sinful ways and not to pad him on the shoulders telling him it is the normal Christian life to indulge in the flesh. Pretending there is unity in sinful misconduct among the brethren is the subject of much discussion in the book of 1 Corinthians. Christians would do well to study the rebuke and admonition given to the church in Corinth by the apostle Paul.

The apostle Paul told the Christians in Philippi: **Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (Philippians 2:4)** If Christians are only interested in caring for themselves without regards to the welfare of others, it will be impossible to achieve Christian unity in the Lord. Christian unity is achievable when Christians are not selfish but love one another as brethren with a pure heart. The anointing of God's grace and blessing from the top of the head to the skirt of the man will be stamped with the approval from above for such unity. The blessing from above will be continuous like the dew of Mount Hermon descending upon this fellowship of the saints. The refreshing and nourishing supplement of God's grace, goodness and mercy will bind the brethren together in unity. When this is the case, the brethren will look forward to more blessing for the next gathering together of the saints. Such goodness is addictive as well as refreshing. Which sincere Christian would not hunger for more of such blessed feast of enjoying the fellowship of the saints! When Christian charity is present and spiritual growth of believers in Christ the aim, such Christian unity is worth the effort to secure and pursue.

So when the brethren long for such unity in the spirit, they will put in effort to keep the unity in the right spirit. In fact, the apostle Paul also had given such instruction to Christians in Ephesus: **Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:3)** Christians no doubt must endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Since time immemorial, brethren dwelling in unity does not come easily and naturally. However, blood-wash saints are exempted from such a curse. Christian unity is possible according to Scriptural prescription. As such, much effort must be constantly applied to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace if brethren are to dwell together in unity. Because of the common enemy of the flesh, the world and the devil, Christian must really put in effort endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Christian unity cannot take place naturally without effort.

True Christian unity will lead Christians to grow unto a perfect man and attain unto the full stature of Christ. **Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (Ephesians 4:13)** This is the very purpose of Christian unity. It is to build up one another in Christ and for the spiritual growth of the brethren. No doubt, like the psalmist said of such dwelling together in unity, it is indeed life for evermore. May we want this true life from above having been recipients of eternal life. May we all strive to dwell together in unity and enjoy one another's presence, and treasure this life from Christ given to us all.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! (Psalm 133:1)

Do you feel what the psalmist felt this day? How can we contribute to the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace? Here is a good exhortation from the apostle Paul: **Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. (Romans 12:9)** Love must be without dissimulation. Abhorrence of that which is evil must be practised. Cleaving to that which is good is a constant requirement for true Christian love to flourish. This simple three-prong approach is necessary for Christian unity to take root. It addresses the motives for the love of the brethren and sets the course to pursue the mark of true Christian charity as well as to mark out warning signs of evil to be avoided at all cost. It requires much work to promote true Christian unity for brethren to dwell together in unity.

Let us truly love one another fervently and with a pure heart so that we may truly dwell together in unity. The desire of the psalmist to see brethren dwelling together in unity is the desire God would want to see happen among His people. Let us do our part and contribute to the true spirit of liberty and endeavour to keep the Spirit of unity in the bond of peace. Let

us beseech God to bless us in true unity that all brethren may enjoy sweet and warm fellowship of the saints.

May there be unity in the church and the brethren grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ till we all attain unto the full stature of Christ and enjoy the fullness of Christ. Yes, it will be indeed very good and very pleasant when brethren dwell together in unity. Let us enjoy true worship of the Lord and fellowship of the saints this side of heaven and in the world to come, this fellowship of the saints will be perfected in glorious bliss in the presence of the blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you have been blessed with the reading of this book and you wish to contact the author, you may write to him at charles@kjp-asia.com.