

**Psalm 131: 1-3; “To Be Humble, Calm, and Hopeful”, A Communion Sermon
delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on November 4th, 2018,
In the Afternoon Worship Service.**

We have here in this passage a prayer of David, in which he declares his sincere intentions in regard to following the Lord; that even when there were some people around him who were thinking that he was selfishly ambitious, and perhaps they were also thinking that he desired to become somebody great, that he was not thinking that way. He confesses in the presence of God, that he had examined himself, and that he knew that he was not proud. Sometimes this is something that we need to do as well; to examine ourselves, to see if we have right motives for the things that we think and say and do. And isn't it good to know that, here at the Lord's table, we find that this is just the place to do that. There are, here in these three verses, three declarations which David makes. Two of them concern humility and how it is learned, and the third is an exhortation to all Israel that they should hope in the Lord. Let's take them in that order.

1st of all – Humility is to be learned, by your not concerning yourself in great matters, or in things which are too profound for you. (verse 1)

“Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty.” “Neither do I concern myself with great matters, nor with things too profound for me.” Now David, was saying these things in prayer to God, and he was asking God to verify that these things were true in his life. He was saying these things in the context of what other people were saying about him personally, in relation to the way that he was living his life. There were some who thought that he was a proud; that he was a selfishly ambitious man, in relation to his own advancement in the political kingdom. I believe that David wrote this Psalm at the time when he first came into the public view in Israel. He had been tending his father's sheep, but the Lord providentially called him up to Jerusalem, to take provisions to his brothers who were in the military and on the front line of battle, and so David went, not knowing what would happen that day.

Turn with me over to 1st Samuel 17, verses 17 to 20. It says here, “Then Jesse said to his son David, “Take now for your brothers an ephah of this dried grain and these ten loaves, and run to your brothers at the camp.” (Can you see here, that for David, humility was being willing to be a servant. It was his being willing to remain under his father's authority while living in his household? The same will be true for you.) Verse 18 – “And carry these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand, and see how your brothers fare, and bring back news of them.” “Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.” “So David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, and took the things and went as Jesse had commanded him.” Let me pause here and make an application. This day was going to be a turning point in David's life, and yet it began interestingly enough with what his father asked him to do. He had been taking care of sheep out in the pastures, and He had learned much about guarding the sheep; protecting them and watching over them.

Let me say to every young person here today; if you would serve the Lord, and learn humility in relation to serving the Lord, be content to fill a little place like this, until God calls you to something greater. It is by learning to do the humble tasks that are assigned to you, by your parents, that you will gain experience and be in a position to be useful to God and to people around you, in a way that God will be pleased with. Verse 20b – “And he came to the camp as the army was going out to the fight and shouting for the battle.” “For Israel and the Philistines had drawn up in battle array, army against army.” “And David left his supplies in the hand of the supply keeper, ran to the army, and came and greeted his brothers.” “Then as he talked with them, there was the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, coming up from the armies of the Philistines; and he spoke according to the same words.” “So David heard them.”

(The words were – “I defy the armies of Israel; give me a man that we may fight together.” Everyone else in Israel’s army was afraid of the Philistine.) “And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were dreadfully afraid.” “So the men of Israel said, “Have you seen this man who has come up?” “Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and it shall be that the man who kills him the king will enrich with great riches, will give him his daughter, and give his father’s house exemption from taxes in Israel.” (Wow, those were pretty great motivations to undertake the killing of this Philistine). And so David says in verse 26, “What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and take away the reproach of Israel?” “For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

Now I want you to notice David’s humble, yet bold and holy reasoning here. It was the reasoning which the Holy Spirit had prompted in his heart. This was God’s army, and who was it who thought that he could defy God and His army? It was a reproach against all of them in Israel that his boasts were allowed to stand. Humility, by the way, can be very bold and assert the claims of God and His honor, against all those who come against Him and against His people. But look at the reaction of David’s oldest brother Eliab to what David said. In verse 28 it says, “Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab’s anger was aroused against David, and he said, ‘Why did you come down here?’” “And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?” “I know the pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle.” “And David said, ‘What have I done now?’” “Is there not a cause?”

Well, there was indeed a cause. Eliab thought David’s cause was himself and his pride, but in this he was wrong. The cause was the honor and glory of God. It was not that David was proud in his heart. David was sure of what God had taught him, and he was sure of what he could do with what God had taught him. And He knew that he could not stand still and do nothing for God’s honor and glory, if he had the chance to do it. You can see how easy it is for people around you to misconstrue your zeal and your desire to honor God, as being pride. This is why David needed to make his appeal to God in our text, “My heart is not haughty.” Remember now, that God has already sent Samuel, before this, over to Jesse and made him show him all of his sons, but finally David had come forward and Samuel had anointed him as king in Saul’s place.

But now we shall see why some thought that David was proud. Look at verse 32. “Then David said to Saul, ‘Let no man’s heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.’” True bravery is not based upon fleshly pride; of you believing that you can do these great things based upon your own natural strength and wisdom which you have learned from worldly men. It is based upon a love for God’s honor and the desire to do what you know would please Him, and what would deliver other people from Satan’s kingdom. It is based upon faith in what God can and will do through you, if you trust in Him. Verse 33 – “And Saul said to David, ‘You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.’” “But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant used to keep his father’s sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it.’”

So we should see here, that experience is important in relation to great things that we would do for God and to help our country. David did have experience, although it was not military experience, that he had to relate to Saul. But it is very important should we have some practical experience before we undertake a great work, which will involve spiritual battle, for the people of God. Verse 34 – “But David said to Saul, your servant has killed both the lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.” There, once again, we see David’s greatest motive for going out to do this; the honor and

glory of God, and a love for God's people Israel. Let us ask ourselves if we have these highest of motives working in our hearts? Can we say that we are not proud or haughty?

If you would be humble it is very important that you remind yourself, over and over again, that it was God who saved you, and Who it is who has led you and taught you the importance of doing humble tasks to help the brethren. It has been God who has given you this grace. It was He who has given you whatever measure of discernment that you have as a Christian. "It is the Lord who makes poor and rich; it is the Lord who brings low and lifts up." "It is He who raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of His glory." (1st Samuel 2: 7 and 8) Brethren if you will believe in these words, you will never be making a mistake if you are humble. That is, that if you act and speak in a humble way, much good can be done, and God will be glorified. On the other hand, we read in the Scriptures that, "Pride goes before a fall, and a haughty spirit before stumbling." It is when you think yourself to be something when you are nothing; that is the time when you are on the verge of great spiritual danger, and you may fall further into sin. The Lord will help you in your heart, if you take heed as David did, that he would do all for the glory of God, and be humble in the way that he went about to do it. David had examined heart, as it was before God, and he had determined with certainty that there was no pride motivating him in the works that he did.

Now 2nd – Humility is better learned, when by grace, you can calm and quiet your soul, like a weaned child. (verse 2)

"Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me." Now, after David killed the Philistine, everyone was very happy, and they were extremely grateful that David had succeeded in delivering Israel from Goliath, and from the disaster of being conquered by the Philistines. Look at Chapter 18, verse 2. "Saul took David that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore." "Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul." "And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt." "So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely."

There are lessons of humility here, of how a person should react to the success of others, in Jonathan's reaction to David's victory over the Philistine. He made a covenant with him, because he loved him as his own soul. He took off his robe and all his armor, even to his belt, and gave it to David. What was he saying? He was saying – Praise God for you David! We could have never obtained this victory without you. I love you because you did what I could not do. I would like to point out to you that this is also what you and I do when we come to the Lord's Table. We are renewing our covenant with our Lord Jesus Christ, who overcame Satan, and sin, and the world, at the cross. We could have never done it. And so, we ascribe to Him all praise, and glory, and honor. We love Him as our own soul; in fact, we have given our souls to Him, to serve Him forever, and to walk with Him as our closest friend. There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. The love of Jonathan for David surpassed the love of women. He had the love of Christ in him. He was not interested in building his own kingdom. Jonathan had the love of Christ in him. He was interested in furthering God's kingdom and promoting God's glory. He would be faithful to his father, and loyal to him as his son and his subject. But his greatest loyalty was not to his father; it was to God.

In Proverbs 27: 21 it says – "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, and a man is valued by what others say of him"; he is tested by what others say of him", it says in the NAS. But could we not also say, that a man is being tested when he is not the one being praised, but someone close to him is? How humble our hearts ought to be; how holy our hearts will be, if we are walking with Christ. Jonathan could walk humbly with David as his best and closest friend, even though he knew that he would never would become king. This did not bother him because

he had stilled and quieted his soul like a weaned child. As he spent his time with David, as his best friend, he came to find that his highest desire, that of glorifying God, would be attained. He could love David, and in loving him, he would be showing his love to God for the Christ who was going to come in the future to redeem Israel. He would love his God with all of his heart. He would love God more than even his own father; and yet he would still be loyal to his father, even though it would mean his own death in battle with his father. But in making a covenant with David, he was making his covenant with Christ.

And of David, we can say that he calmed and quieted his heart as a child being weaned from the breast. Instead of years of personal glory and honor given to him in Saul's kingdom, for the great deliverance that he wrought in slaying the Philistine, David was hounded and chased by Saul all over the countryside, and he often thought that he would die at the hands of Saul. However, in this difficult situation, he had a holy resignation, that this was God's will for him. He was just like a weaned child. We should all be able to acknowledge that it was God who gave us our mother. It was He who gave us her breasts to feed us, and to satisfy us for a time. But there comes a time when our mother refused the breast because she knew that that time, as precious as it was to us had to come to an end, if we were to grow up into an older child who would assume responsibility for ourselves.

So it is in the Christian life. You and I must be weaned from this world, we must be weaned from the approval of worldly men, we must be weaned from the approval even of close relatives if necessary, in order to do the will of God, in order to go on to defend the honor and glory of God against all opposition. We have come here to remember our Lord at this time, and so let us come down now to the front, and do so. But as we do so, let us examine our hearts to see if we are proud or humble; examine our heart to see if it is calm and quiet in the way that God providentially orders our life. And when we come down front, I will give you a few more words before we partake of the Supper.

3rd – When we are learning humility, we must always remember to hope. (verse 3)

“O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forever.” Dear believer, will you not allow this ordinance to bring hope to you? If you are passing through the difficulties of what it means to do God's will in everything; when you are trying with all your strength to please Him; trying to honor Him with your life and your actions, and others wrongly think that you are proud; will you not allow Christ's victory to give you hope? If you can come to this table, and examine your heart and you find that you are not proud; that you are not trying to establish your own kingdom, or your own glory, or your own righteousness; then I would think that it is a reasonable conclusion that it is God's honor and glory, and Christ's righteousness, which are what you are most concerned about. As you partake of the Supper, let your soul be calm and quiet as you rest in God's Almighty provision of grace and peace to you. Jesus has succeeded where you have failed in your sin. He has been raised from the dead for your justification. It is His life which is in your life. He is the One who you now live to. He is the only One who can raise you up to do great things for God's glory, as you desire. He is the One, and the only One, who gives you all your gifts and all your abilities. He is the One who is the keeper of your soul. He is the One who gives you grace and strength to do God's will and to accept His providential way of ordering things for you.

Hope in him, that your life shall be more holy and more useful to Him in the days to come. Pray to Him often with that request on your heart. And then press on to know the Lord. He will come to your soul to strengthen it through this ordinance. Ask Him today, as you partake of it, to give you the grace to be an encouragement and a strength to other brothers and sisters around you, even as Jonathan was to David. Ask the Lord to give you such a good relationship with Himself that you will be able to say to others, “O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forever.” For it is our Jesus who gives to us eternal hope and everlasting comfort by His death and resurrection.

