

Peace

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Bible Text: Psalm 131

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Please take your Bibles and go to the old part of the book, Psalm 131. Would you go there? Psalm 131. We're not sure what the occasion was when David wrote this Psalm. Some scholars feel that he was writing it upon the installment to the office as King of Israel. But it has some great Gospel truth and a great practical word for us, one that we talk about quite a bit but in church life and in Gospel work, this is a thing you must talk about a lot because without this, there is no salvation. Without this truth, there is no sweetness, there is no love, there is no harmony, there is no unity in the church.

Let's look at it together. Psalm 131. A short Psalm. Spurgeon said, "It's a short ladder but it reaches awful high." Verse 1,

1 O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; Nor do I involve myself in great matters, Or in things too difficult for me. 2 Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child rests against his mother, My soul is like a weaned child within me. 3 O Israel, hope in the LORD From this time forth and forever.

The Psalmist here, King David, writes about humbling himself and being humble before the Lord and in the presence of the Lord. You know, that's a challenging task. First of all, there is no true humility without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in a man's heart. If the Spirit of God has not wrought within you a humbling and a transforming, then there is no true humility. And there's a lot of false humility, there's a lot of fake humility out there but true humility is the fruit of the work of the Spirit of God in the heart of men.

David talks about not only does God do that work but there is a part of our work in cooperating with God that we humble ourselves. It's kind of a deceptive thing and a difficult thing. As a matter of fact, about the only way to know that you're humble is to admit you're proud. I have been accused of being proud before, maybe you have too, and I've learned through the years that I am no match for my pride. Have you learned that? But God is. My pride is no problem for God. He can knock it right out of me whenever he wants to and you're no match for your pride.

Someone said this is one of the shortest Psalms but it's one of the longest to learn. He speaks as if he's a young child yet it contains the very experiences of adult manhood. Let's talk first of all, very briefly, there's a difference between humbling and humility. In other words, humiliation is when a proud person is embarrassed. Humbling is when a Christian is mindful of who he is before God.

Notice first of all, the Psalmist talks about a humble heart. Now, one of the overriding themes if I had to give this a title I'd just say, "Peace." He's walking in a peaceful condition. First of all, I. It's because he had a humble heart. He says in verse 1, "O LORD, my heart is not proud." Someone said this is either gloriously true or an astonishing exhibition of self-deception and that's true. I mean, I've seen both. I think I have woefully experienced both. He says, "My heart is not proud." Genuine humility is an elusive virtue. Very often, we can be deceived by our own hearts and think we're putting on humility when we're really proud of our humility so we're putting on pride instead. It's a challenging thing. Humility, someone said, is an exceedingly difficult plant to grow in the soul's garden of grace. You see, pride has ruled the heart of man since the fall.

Years ago I found this and I jotted it down and put some of my own thoughts in it. You see, no man is free from pride. There is no thought which makes a man more unpopular and no fault which we are more conscious of in ourselves than pride. And the more we have it, the more we hate it when we see it in others. All other vices are mere flea bites in comparison to pride. It was through pride that the devil became the devil. Pride, you see, leads to every other sin and every other vice. Pride is the complete anti-God state of mind. If you want to know how much pride you have, then ask yourself how much you hated it when old So-and-so got the attention or was the big noise at the party. The point is that your pride is in competition with everyone else's pride. It's because you wanted to be the big noise at the party that you were annoyed that someone else was the big noise at the party. Two betrayed never agree. Pride is essentially competitive and it's the comparison that makes us proud, "I want to look better than you." Nearly all the evils we put off as agreed or selfishness are really the result of pride. Other vices bring people together: you can get drunk with other folks; you go gambling with other folks; there can be immoralities with other folks. But pride always means enmity, division, separation. Enmity between man and man and also enmity between God and man. We must remind ourselves that in God you come up against someone that is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself and unless you know God is that and therefore know yourself as nothing in comparison, you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud, you cannot know God because a proud person is always looking down on others and that's right the opposite of looking up to God. All other vices come from our animal nature but pride comes straight from hell. It's a spiritual cancer. We will not be well as long as we love and admire anything more than we love and admire God and the first step in being humble is to admit that we are proud. Nothing can be done before it. If we think that we are not conceited, it only means that we are. Sometimes when we are full of "woe is me" and down on ourselves, it is nothing but pride because pride is when you're focused on yourself. Humility is when you are forgetting yourself.

David here said he was humble before the Lord. You're studying about David in Samuel, I guess you covered the passage where David brings the Ark back and he's dancing and just having a spell, dancing before the Lord and his wife, Michah, ridicules him and says, "Oh, how you embarrassed us. How you shamed us and yourself today." David basically says, "Oh, I'm going to be more humble than that." It's as though David is kind of like saying, "I know the secret to being pleasing to God is being humble." It's a figure of speech. I don't think he really believed that he was shameful or humiliated but he was saying, "As far as being humble, I want to be more humble than I was, at least more humble thing you think I was."

Before this time, David had submitted to the wicked Saul for ten years. That's an amazing feat to know that David is running for his life; he's hiding in caves; this totally godless, arrogant one, Saul, is trying to ruin him and kill him, yet David would not put his hand against God's anointed. In humility, he just stayed under Saul. You know, I'm convinced, you young people listen to what your pastor is telling you on this Sunday night, I'm convinced that in the world, if God is going to use you, he's going to put you in a spot where you need to learn to honor, obey and submit to somebody who's not worthy of it. He'll put you in a spot. He'll give you a supervisor. He'll give you an employer. It may be a parent, it may be, I don't know who it may be but there is going to be a position of authority and that's your testing ground. If David had not had the heart of humility and honor of God to say, "God made that man king. He may be wicked but I will not put my hand against God's anointed." If David had not had that disposition of humility toward Saul, he would have never been anointed king himself. I'm convinced of that.

I think David wrote this Psalm alone to the Lord. I don't think David ever thought it would see the light of day. It was actually 300 years later when this was added to the Canon of Jewish sacred Scripture. So here we remind ourselves about having a humble heart and remind ourselves that pride is essentially independence from and disobedience to God. Now listen, you cannot ever have a heart that honors God and dishonor the human authorities God places over you.

Well, a humble heart and then a humble countenance. A humble countenance. It's interesting what he says here in verse 1 as we continue. He says, "O LORD, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty." Nor my eyes haughty. You see, the seat of pride is in the heart but the manifestation of pride is very often in the countenance. He says, "I have a humble countenance." It means he didn't have a puffed up, arrogant or cocky look to him or a cocky walk. He wasn't always looking down on others. David was striving to keep his eyes fixed upward on God and not downward on men. The Psalmist looks high because he only looks to please his Master, his God in heaven. David is talking here like a slave would revere or respect or submit to his master.

We've got to be careful when we talk about this because as you look at this you think, "Well, wait a minute, here is a man that has been anointed king, he is an absolute monarch. He's talking as if he sits back in the corner sheepishly and let's everybody else do everything. He's just humble and meek and doesn't do anything." Listen, there is a

difference between David seeking a proud position and God placing him in a prominent position. God made David king, David didn't make David king. Now, once God puts you in a position, you do what David did, he carried his office with boldness, with conviction and with authority because God put him there and that's what we should do if God puts you there.

You know, very often when those are in God ordained positions of authority, whether it's a parent or a pastor or whoever it may be, those who are in wickedness often look at you and accuse you of being proud. A lot of times what they're doing is they want to accuse you of being proud because you won't affirm their sin. They want to shift the argument away from themselves and onto, "Well, you're not quite qualified so I can kind of go on unaffected in my sin."

But David said, "My eyes are not haughty." Just a few things the Bible says about eyes. Proverbs 6:17, the Lord hates haughty eyes. Proverbs 17:24, the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth. Proverbs 27:20, the eyes of a man are never satisfied. Proverbs 15:30, bright eyes gladden the heart. One man said, "We speak of sin and misery going together, holiness and happiness go together, peace and prosperity go together and war and desolation and among these may be numbered the proud heart and the haughty look."

You know, I am, it's just the truth, I'm going to tell you it's just the truth, as I thought on this text and I thought about what I run into and I'm not exaggerating, every week talking to pastors trying to encourage them and they talk about the difficulties and the challenges and the warfares. We've been down those roads at Grace Life but it's been a good while ago and there's only one reason why we have the loving, sweet unity that we have: God has dealt with most of our pride. That's it. It's not a seminar. It's not a conference. No, God has dealt with our pride. Now, we're not exempt from it and we're not all done yet but he's kind of cut the Achilles' heel of the pride of our hearts and our souls and we're thankful, amen?

Well, thirdly, not only does he have this humble heart and a humble countenance, he has humble ambition. There is a humility about his ambition, of what he is going to be and do and accomplish in life. In verse 1 he says in the last phrase, "Or in things too difficult for me." The middle part of verse 1, "I don't involve myself in great matters, Or in things too difficult for me." The great matters or the difficult things have the idea of when we aspire to be or to do that which is beyond our reach, that which is not within our calling or our capabilities. David said, "I just have learned." He doesn't suggest that he was born this way, he's saying that, "I've come to the place. God has dealt with me enough that I have come to the place where I don't want to achieve anything, I don't want to be in any position, I don't want any leadership place, I don't want any of that that God doesn't want me in. I am perfectly happy to let somebody else take the rule or the role or whatever it is." He said, "I don't spend my time looking for a great things." Really the seat of pride is the heart and the expressions of pride are in the eyes but the sphere in which pride diligently exercises itself is in great things. "I want to do great things. I want to be known. I want position. I want power. I want authority." Now, God may give you that

but if he doesn't, don't worry yourself about it. Learn to be content. He had a humble ambition. The sailor wants to be the captain and the soldier wants to be the colonel and the politician wants a higher office and the young preacher wants a big church. Junior Hill used to say that when he was young he asked God for a big church and a pretty wife. He said, "So many of us get a big wife and a pretty church." That is funny but isn't it true that as we go about whatever task we're about, God has a way of humbling us?

A lot of you know that I've been at this for 34 years with you and it's amazing how God has had to change my ambitions of what I thought I wanted to be and what I thought I wanted to accomplish. I'm so glad he didn't give me, didn't let me go too far in the things that I would have pursued. Now listen, there is nothing wrong with goals. There is nothing wrong certainly, we must teach, we must hope, we must encourage our young men to be men of initiative and men of vision and men of diligence, men who get stuff done and build things but at the same time, they should carry within them that humble yieldedness to God that says, "God, but I don't want to be anywhere you don't want me to be. I don't want a position if you don't want me in that position. I don't want that office if you don't want me in that office." Humility. "Well Pastor, how do you keep both of those?" I don't know but it's God's truth that you keep both of them and initiative and a drive and a work ethic but a contentment of, "God, put me where you want me to be."

Years ago, I was sitting down and talking with Dr. John MacArthur at Grace Community Church in Los Angeles, California and just talking about life and talking about ministry. He's quite a bit older than I am and he just basically looked at me and said, "Look, if God has given you a desire to do something, go for it. Go for it." It probably was in that conversation where we kind of sealed our commitment to say we want to be a biblical church that God might use as an example for others. Now, he didn't mean go for it in arrogance but you can't spend all your time either constantly holding back wondering if my heart's right. Look, you check your heart. You seek the Lord and then you go on. You go on, head out. God is perfectly capable of grabbing you by the nape of the neck and throwing you down if you need it. We don't need anybody meditating up on the side of the mountain trying to seek God on this. We need folks to get busy and do things for God but be humble in the process.

But we don't want to be yearning for things that we're not created to do or things that we are not endowed to do and we know that we're doing that when we're in it for self. You know, Moses spent 40 years in schools in Egypt, the finest schools in the world and at the end of those 40 years, he murders an Egyptian. The Egyptians and even his own people, pretty much turn against him and he runs and he spends 40 years out in the wilderness in God's school being humbled. You understand this was one of the mightiest men in all of Egypt and now he's keeping sheep out in the wilderness. Then God appears to him and says, "Moses, it's time for you to go and do something great for me." His humility came first.

David was a shepherd. David was not concerned with the palace affairs. David was not concerned with high and lofty things. His dad said, "Keep the sheep." He went and kept the sheep. He was fine with that. He's just saying to the Lord and meditating to the Lord

and praised God for his role. One of the things, my little girl played her first basketball game this afternoon, played the University of Georgia. She actually made a basket, by the way. Is that pride? I hope not. I completely lost my place when I said that. I completely lost my place. You've got to be willing to do the little things and the things when nobody sees you and things when nobody is looking at you and say, "God, whatever you've got planned is fine with me. I'm not going to be concerned about great things."

Then, if God puts you there, do your very best. Then what happens? The day comes when the prophet comes to the household of Jesse and says, "Jesse, one of your boys is going to be king of Israel." Jesse marches all those fine, strapping, handsome, strong boys by and the prophet kept saying, "That's not the one. That's not the one. That's not the one." They all came by and the prophet in effect says, "Jesse, is this all your boys?" He says, "I've got one little old boy, David. He just keeps the sheep." The prophet said, "Bring him in." He walked in the door and the prophet anointed him king of Israel. If God puts you there but don't be one who seeks the ambition and thinks you are to be involved in all kinds of great matters all the time. This is the person that is always looking for the big public event. They want to be where the attention is and where the applause is. Where is the next big hoopla? You live from one big thing to the next big thing to be seen of men. You can't expect any behind the scenes night shift or dirty work out of these folks unless they think ultimately it will get some public credit. Don't attach yourself to things because you've got an agenda. Be faithful where you are and say, "God, if you keep me here, I'm fine. If you want something better, I'm fine with that too."

But here David was an absolute monarch, the king of the whole nation of Israel. How could he say, "I don't involve myself in great matters"? It's very simply, he kept sheep and God one day gave him the responsibility of great matters. There's a real difference. Some wanting to be seen of men will take on projects or take on tasks that they have no ability or no gift to accomplish. I know where I was going a while ago when I thought about basketball, one of the best coaches I've ever heard said one of the key things he teaches his players, "Know your role. Do your role on the team. Don't do somebody else's, do your role. If you know your role and you'll work hard at your role and you'll do your job, we'll be a great team." That's true in all things and that's what David means here about, "I don't involve myself in things that I have no business being a part of. That is somebody else's role and that somebody else's job." Some spend all their lives reaching into areas that God did not want them to and they end up ending their lives frustrated and unsatisfied and really what happens is, their whole life satisfaction was robbed by their own egos. Spurgeon said, "Were all that the world contain spread out before me, I do not know a thing that I would take the trouble of putting out my hand to reach." To become a truly humble person, knowing your place in life and having no self-glorifying purpose is really a hard place to get to but God can get you there.

But David had gotten there by the grace and the power of God. Let's remind ourselves about the sovereignty of God in this. David didn't just decide, "I'm going to be godly. Watch me." David was the runt boy, if you will. He was put out there with the sheep. He

was a lowly nobody while his brothers got the praise and applause and attention. Trust me, if somebody is putting themselves up that God didn't put there, God can bring them down and put somebody else up in their place. And God picked David out of the sheepfold and put him in charge of great things. God apprehended him and that's true of every child of God. This is a picture of sovereign grace that finds us, that converts us, that draws us, that changes us, that places us in God's family with the spiritual gifts and the roles we are to achieve.

Notice David expresses this in a powerful way in verse 2 when he says, "Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child rests against his mother." You find when you're weaning a child that that which the child craves, it soon comes to be content without. The soul of David craved the walk probably in unfitting ways but he learned to not crave those things and now in quietness like a weaned child, he knew contentment. He had gotten dead honest with himself that he needed to give up and let some things go. What a struggle to fight the pride filled soul.

Just a little transparency on my part on this Sunday evening, when we first began together, I guess the first 15 or so years together as church and pastor, at least as senior pastor, God had let us build some really impressive stuff. The things we built in small groups, the things we built in world missions, was really really effective and God knew that though none of that was evil that in my heart I had too much importance in it and God brought me through many difficult days, days when weeks, months, perhaps years when I barely had the strength to come to this pulpit and preach twice a week. But God was teaching me something very, very valuable. He said, "I will build my church through my truth, not through your systems and you will learn that my means primarily is the preaching of the word in the power of the Spirit, not all the systems and structures that you have developed." And so he brought me to the point, do you understand, that was my life's work and I just had to let it go. He wouldn't let it go because we had good people that could keep it going but in my heart I had to let it go and I had to say, "God, if you don't build this church on the pulpit and the preaching of the word and the power of the Spirit, we're sunk." And God brought me to that place, "Yes, that's how I'll build my church." Now today, he's given those things back because he got me humble about it. I was like a weaned child and said, "Here I am. Here I am. I'm going to do what you called me to do and what you told me to do."

Weaning a child is a struggle, isn't it? There is crying. There is fighting. There is bitterness. There are tears. And then finally there is yielding. So it is when we fight our proud hearts. The man who has manfully taken in hand his own weaker and more yearning nature and directed his desires away from the earth by fixing them on God is freed from the misery, the misery of hot desire and then he passes into a beautiful and perfect calm. A weaned child. You know, the weaned child doesn't raise his head and announced his strength and his greatness. He cares not about the applause of men. He doesn't mind if he looks humble and dependent. There is no arrogance. There is no pride. He just knows his place. He knows he's in the perfect place. He knows he's calm there on his mother's bosom and that's where you need to see yourself wherever God has put you,

just resting in the peace, security and the calm that your God has for you and not concerning yourself with things God doesn't want you to be concerned about.

A few Scriptures as we close. In Psalm 138, the Psalmist said that God has respect for the lowly though he's opposed to the proud. In Isaiah 57:15, he says God likes to dwell with those of a contrite and humble spirit. In 1 Peter 5:5 he says, the younger kids ought to submit themselves unto the elders. He says, all of you ought to be subject to one another. All should be clothed in humility, again, because God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. 1 Peter 3:4, he says, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great value. James 4:10 talks about humbling yourself in the sight of God. Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Where has God got you? What's your role? What's your place? Are you contented there? Now, for us parents and grandparents, there is a nasty little curveball that's thrown to us where we might have gotten over ours but then we start trying to live through our children or our children's children and that can be just as deadly and just as discontending and just as harmful for the glory of God. Humility. That's the only way to really have peace in this life.

Let's stand together in prayer, alright?