

Psalm 131

Humility leads to contentment

PRAYER:

Vs 1-3 *Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. 2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." 3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.*

(Remember, if anything is good in your life, its and miracle of grace!)

What are all the good things in your life? (family, friends, healthy, etc.) now fill in the blank as you pray:

I have no _____ apart from you.

Vs 4-5a *The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips. 5 The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup*

(What are things, people, feelings you have unintentionally placed at the center of your life?)

Lord, I have let my spiritual legs run after _____, but you are my chosen portion – grant me repentance as I am resolved to worship only you.

Vs 5-6 *The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. 6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.*

Philippians 2:14 (ESV) 14 *Do all things without grumbling or disputing.* In what ways have you been grumbling, complaining, murmuring about your life, relationships, ministry, work, living situation, etc.

Lord, you hold my lot in _____, help me see you draw the lines in pleasant places – all the while you being my beautiful inheritance.

SERMON:

INTRO:

- A Song of Ascents. Of David.
- These fifteen short psalms were the songs the people of God sang as they walked up to Jerusalem for the great feasts. They were the soundtrack of pilgrimage — songs for people on the way, people who needed their hearts reoriented before they met with God.

OPEN

- Would you say you are a content person?
- Two schools of thought:
 - Contentment comes from thinking less of yourself.
 - Contentment comes from thinking more of yourself
 - The 'self-esteem' movement has largely faded. But the undercurrent of individualism never left. Today it shows up as self-care, self-love, "protect your peace," and the growing practice of going "no contact" — cutting people off (sometimes even parents) in the name of emotional safety.

Contentment is not thinking more of yourself or thinking less of yourself — it is thinking of yourself less.

- David discovered that truth — the way to contentment was humility.

Humility leads to contentment

(1. David humbled himself, David found contentment, David lived in hope)

1. David humbled himself

1 O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.

- When the heart is "lifted up," the person is proud (the same phrase appears in 2 Chronicles 32:26 and Ezekiel 28:2). When the eyes are "raised too high," they become haughty eyes (Psalm 18:27; Proverbs 6:17; 21:4). David is saying: "I refuse the posture of

self-exaltation. I will not live as if I am the center, the judge, or the one who must control outcomes that belong to God.”

- David begins this Psalm with a clear renunciation of pride.
- Pride is an all-consuming infatuation with self, making much of ourselves, life is all about me and the rest of humanity and creation revolve around me.
- Pride is like living in front of a mirror. Everything is about how I look, how I am being seen, how I compare. The more you stare into the mirror, the less you see anyone else — including God.
- In the Garden, Adam and Eve’s sin was fundamentally pride: they refused to stay under God’s authority and grasped for the knowledge and status that belonged to Him alone, deciding they knew better than their Creator. Their desire to “be like God” was the original act of lifting the heart and eyes too high.
- Jonathan Edwards on Pride: “the first sin that ever entered into the universe, and the last that is rooted out.”

David’s humility was not theoretical. Again and again God brought him low and left him no choice but to walk in humility:

- When he had to flee Saul’s palace and live as a fugitive.
- When Nathan confronted him after the Bathsheba scandal: “You are the man.”
- When he fled his own palace and family because of Absalom’s revolt.
- When his prideful census brought judgment on the nation.
- When God told him “No” — he would not be the one to build the temple.
- You can let life events make you bitter or better – pride makes you bitter, but humility makes you better.
- Scripture is clear: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6)
- Pride destroys contentment. David chose the opposite path.

Pride destroys the ability to have any real contentment.

2. David found contentment

2 But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.

Two meanings from the imagery of a weaned child with its mother:

a. Primary:

- **A weaned child still wants the mother** — but for her presence, not primarily for what she provides in the moment. The craving has been quieted. The relationship remains. David says his soul has become like that: no longer frantic, no longer demanding, simply at rest.

Psalm 16:11 (ESV) *11 in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

- Paul describes the same reality in Philippians 4, “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:11–13)
- Notice Paul’s language: “I have learned...” Contentment is not automatic. It is not a personality trait. It is something that must be learned — usually through the very humbling experiences we looked at in David’s life.

b. Secondary

- **We often use others to feed our ego.**
- Ego is our sense of self-worth and identity — the inner “me” that constantly monitors how we are doing, how we look, and how we compare with others.
- Tim Keller describes the ego in *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*.
- Paul uses the Greek word *physioō* (to inflate or puff up) to describe pride.
- The ego is like a balloon — constantly inflated by praise, success, and comparison, and just as quickly deflated by criticism or failure.
- Every day we walk into an invisible courtroom where dozens of little verdicts are handed down: “You’re successful... you’re not.” “You’re liked... you’re not.” “You’re important... you’re invisible.” Each verdict inflates or deflates the balloon and leaves the soul restless.

C.S. Lewis saw the same dynamic:

- “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next person... If everyone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking there would be nothing to be proud about.”
- Pride is comparative by nature. That is why it can never produce lasting contentment.
- How do we reach the point where we are no longer controlled by what people think of us, or by our own fluctuating self-verdicts?
- We have to get out of the courtroom.
- As long as we keep looking for the next verdict — “You’re enough... you’re not enough” — the balloon of the ego will keep inflating and deflating. The gospel offers a different way. In Christ the final verdict has already been given: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). When we humble ourselves and receive His justification, we are freed from the endless cycle of self-justification.

A humility that leads to contentment is not thinking more of yourself or thinking less of yourself — it is thinking of yourself less.

3. David lived with hope

3 O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore.

- The psalm does not stay private. The man who has quieted his own soul now turns outward and calls the whole people of God to the same posture.
- C.S. Lewis observed the same thing. If you ever met a truly humble person, you would not come away thinking, “What a humble person.” You would come away thinking how interested they were in you. Because the essence of gospel-humility is freedom from self-preoccupation.
- This is significant. True humility and contentment are never meant to end with us. A quieted soul becomes a witnessing soul. David essentially says, “What I have found is available to you too. Stop looking elsewhere. Hope in the Lord.”
- Biblical hope is not wishful thinking. It is confident expectation based on the character and promises of God. It is both present (“from this time forth”) and eternal (“forevermore”). Jesus invites us into the same reality:

Matthew 11:28–30 (ESV) **28** *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

- Notice the connection. Jesus is “gentle and lowly in heart” — the very posture David has chosen in Psalm 131. When we take His yoke, we stop striving to control the direction, the pace, and the outcomes. We walk with Him. The final verdict is already in. There is no condemnation. We are free to rest.
- That rest produces hope. And hope, in turn, deepens contentment. It becomes a positive cycle: humility leads to a quieted soul, a quieted soul strengthens hope, and hope keeps the soul quiet even when circumstances are hard.
- David has walked the path. Now he invites Israel — and us — to walk it with him.
- Hope in the Lord. From this time forth and forevermore.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS:

1. Where do you most often catch yourself “living in front of the mirror” — seeking verdicts from others or from your own performance — and what would it look like this week to step out of that courtroom and rest in Christ’s finished verdict?
2. The weaned child no longer uses its mother primarily for what she can give, but simply for her presence. In what area of your life are you still treating God (or people) more like a means to feed your ego or meet your demands, rather than resting in relationship with Him?