

A Portrait of a Heart Surrendered to God

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Grateful to the pastors of this church for their friendship, partnership in the gospel, as well as the privilege they've given me to bring God's words to you.

Let me ask you to turn your Bibles to Psalm 131. Psalm 131. As we consider this morning, a portrait of a heart surrendered to God. A portrait of a heart surrendered to God. What do you do when the facts of your faith and the reality of a life do not seem to match up? What is your reaction when the storms and certainties of life rage? Are you going to put God in the dark and demand answers from him? Are you paralyzed by anxiety? Are you driven to despair, trying to figure out why things are the way they are? Do you lose hope in God and stop submitting and serving him? Or do you live in humble surrender?

What does a heart that is surrendered and submitted to God look like? Psalm 131 says, "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. 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. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forever."

Psalm 131 is a Song of Ascents. This is a category of Psalms from Psalm 120 through to Psalm 134. And these were Psalms or songs that the Pilgrim sang as they made their way to Jerusalem. At times even the Levites, the priests would sing these songs in the temple. These were songs of worship, songs of praise to go God.

There were also songs of commitment and declaring their dedication to God. But they were also songs of comfort, songs of assurance to them as they made their Pilgrim. And this particular, Psalm, Psalm 131 describes for us a heart that is surrendered to God as it lives to worship God.

So what does that heart look like? **Firstly**, we notice that *a surrendered heart is a humble heart*. He says in verse one, "O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty, nor do I involve myself in great matters or things too difficult for me." So he states it in the negative, that he is not proud. He is not arrogant. He does not lift himself up. He does not seek to exalt himself because he instead worships God. He exalts God.

You see friends, pride has to do with worship. It's whom are you going to worship? And a proud heart chooses to worship self over God. A humble heart does the exact opposite. It submits itself to God and decides to worship God.

Someone has said pride is when sinful human beings aspire to the status and position of God and refuse to acknowledge their dependence upon him.

At the core of human life, and the core of human nature is pride. In our hearts of hearts, we all seek to exalt ourselves, but not just to exalt ourselves, we seek that others exalt us. And that the core of every sin lies pride. It is a refusal to acknowledge who God is, and instead seek to lift ourselves up. Is about worship and whom you will worship.

The worship of self, someone has said is a great disturber of the soul's peace and sweet communion with Christ. It's the most hidden secret and deceitful of all lusts.

It is a disposition that seeks to put itself at the center of everything. And that thinks everything and everyone exists for you, and life revolves around you. And therefore, you should receive the attention. You should receive the praise. And when that's your disposition, you definitely will not worship God.

In the Bible, we have several examples of people who God dealt with as a result of pride. And one example is a fascinating story in the book of Daniel, that of the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar.

Now, someone mentioned in the previous service that they didn't realize that that's how you pronounce Nebuchadnezzar. However way you pronounce it, this is how you pronounce it. The name is Nebuchadnezzar.

But Nebuchadnezzar was the superpower of the day. A proud man, arrogant man. Everyone worshiped him, paid homage to him. And God warns him through the prophet, that if you continue on this path, you will be judged. And you think that having received the warning, he would change. But in typical human fashion, he continued in his pride.

And so, one day he's walking on top of his roof. Roofs in those days were different from the way we make them, they would be flat. So you could actually walk on the roof. He sees the vastness of his kingdom, and he's filled with pride. He looks at it and he thinks, wow. Have you ever had that experience where you see something you've done and you think, huh, I'm pretty awesome.

And so Nebuchadnezzar glories in the fact that he has conquered all, and he is the king of kings. And the true King of kings strikes him. And for seven years he lives like an animal. At the end of those seven years, Nebuchadnezzar says, "I came back to my senses and acknowledged the Lord that he is God. And to his reign there is no end."

He moved from worshiping self, to worshiping God. He realized that though he was the king, there is a King of kings. And friends, you can't worship God unless you humble yourself and acknowledge that he is the King.

A proud heart can't worship God. A proud heart will not acknowledge God. And unless the Lord deals with the rebellion in our heart, and unless we humble ourselves before him, we cannot truly worship God.

Jesus in Matthew 5, a Sermon on the Mount begins the sermon by saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall inherit the kingdom of God." And the word poor there is not just a mere lack of things. It is total bankruptcy. You are unable to do anything about your situation. You are hopeless and helpless. And the only thing you can do is cry out for help. That is humility. That is a humble spirit. One who realizes without God, I can do nothing. And unless the Lord helps me, I am bound to fail. And I am lost and miserable. And that's what David says.

And the Bible warns us that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. And the word resists there, literally means God becomes your opponent. Think about that for a moment. God, the almighty God becomes your opponent, all the best. That's not a battle you're going to win. He resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. And so, unless we humble ourselves, we cannot truly worship God, and we are bound to fail because the almighty becomes our opponent.

But notice, in describing this humility, David says he knows his limits. He says in the second part of verse 1, "... nor do I involve myself in great matter or in things too difficult for me." So, he is not proud. He is not lifting himself up, but he also acknowledges his limitations. David is not saying every time he finds something difficult, he stops and says, "Oh, I'm proud. I'm humble. I won't, I won't do this." That's not what David is saying. David is saying he acknowledges that he is a creature who is in the hands of the creator. He acknowledges that he has serious limitations, and he is not in control of what goes on in life, and he's okay with it.

We have control, don't we? We love to be in charge. And the last two years have taught us in a very powerful and painful way, that we are actually not in control. But we still try to convince ourselves. We carry the illusion of control, self-sufficiency, independence. And every now and then the Lord has to show us that we are actually not in control. And unless you learn your limitations, you are bound to live a very fruitless and frustrating life. It's miserable to want to be in control and not be in control. Every now and then my wife will sit me down and say, "You are not the Messiah. Stop trying." It's painful, but it's true. And we have to stop playing God. We are children in our father's world.

Have you ever found a toddler worrying about bills, or the price of fuel? They don't care. All they know is that they are hungry and they should be fed. And it's your job to provide the food. Where you get the food, how you get the food, that's your business. It's liberating, isn't it? To know that you are not responsible. You are not in charge. You are not in control. My son one day wanted pizza and kept crying for pizza. So I said to him, "I don't have money for pizza, eat whatever is here." And then he says to me, "Go buy money. Whatever you do, you know, go buy money." The beliefs of being a toddler.

But, you know, we being children are constantly trying to be the father. But friends, we are in our father's world and we are in his hands. We should not concern ourselves with things that are too difficult for us, with things that are not within our control. With things we should, I mean, it's hard enough to take care of what you're responsible for. Why do you want to take on God's responsibilities? So David says, "Hey, I know my limits, and I am content with it."

A surrendered heart is a humble heart. But *secondly, a surrendered heart is a content heart*. He says in verse 2, "Surely I have composed and quieted my soul or calmed my soul, like a weaned child rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me." So he says he knows his limitations, and he is at peace with it. And he is content because he knows who God is. And he is at rest in God's presence. It's interesting that David says, "like a weaned child". See, there's a difference between a nursing child and weaned child. A nursing child only wants the mother for one thing, food. Give me my milk, and when we are done, you can go your way. I will call you again when I need you. That's the relationship.

A weaned child on the other hand, wants the mother for who the mother is. Because the mother is a source of comfort, security, and assurance. And you often see toddlers going to the mother you know wanting to cuddle, wanting to be held. Because they find security, comfort and assurance in their mother's presence, in their mother's arms. And David says, "I am like a weaned child in God's presence." I want God for who he is, not for what he gives me. I find comfort, security and assurance with God. Because if I have God, I have all I need. He knows that in his presence, there is fullness of joy, and that his right hand there are pleasures ever more.

David knows that the Lord is his shepherd, he shall not be in want. And even though he walks through the valley of the shadow of death, he will fear no evil. Why? Because God is with him.

And he can go through the storms of life and be at peace because God is with him. He knows he's God's child. And he is in the father's hand. And nothing can happen to him that the Lord has not allowed. And if the Lord allows it, he knows it, he knows it is for his good. And so he is at peace. He is content because he knows that the Lord will hold him fast. So he says, "I'm like a weaned child. I am content. I am at peace. I find comfort and satisfaction in who God is."

Now, in our Christian journey, there are moments when what God is doing does not make sense. And there are moments when, what the Lord allows in our lives is extremely painful. And we cannot understand. You, you're like Job thinking, why is this happening? But you still trust him because you know who he is. And you can say with Job, though he slay me, still I will praise him. Because you know who he is. You don't always understand.

And the interesting thing is God does not always call us to understand, he calls us to trust who he is. In fact Job's life, Job's account, Job, Job had questions. And the questions were why? Why is this happening? And that's a fair question, right? Why? And the Lord at the end of the book responds to Job. And it's interesting that the Lord does not answer why, he asks who. So he says to Job, "Stand up and answer me if you are a man. Who created the universe? Who set the stars in their place?" Who, and he goes on a series of questions. "And where were you when this was happening?" And Job realizes this is awkward. No Lord, sorry. I didn't know what I was saying. And the Lord says, "No, stand up and answer me. I have more questions for you." And he gives him more questions. And at the end Job says, "You are the Lord. I'm a man. I have no right to question you." And that's what God calls us to do, understand who he is.

Few years ago our daughter got burnt. And part of the process was to clean her wound every day. And it was painful. So the moment she knew it's time to clean the wound, she would run and scream. And plead with you not to do it. But, but it was for her good. It was for her own health. And even though it was painful, she needed it. Because if we let it like that, she would land in more problems. And so you would hold her, and clean, and she would scream. And interesting thing is, after you are done, she did not run away. She actually wanted you to hold her because she knew mommy and daddy love me. I don't know why they're doing this to me, but they love me. And that's the way it is even in our relationship with God and in our Christian lives, there are moments when we don't know why God is doing it, but we know that whatever the Lord ordains is right. And we run to him.

And so, we're called to trust in the Lord with all our heart and not lean on our own understanding. And in all our ways to acknowledge him and he would direct our path. Find contentment. And the word lean there means, it's the idea of someone who relies on clutches to walk. If you remove the clutches they fall. He says, "Don't lean on your own understanding." The Lord knows best. Don't try to be God's counselor. He knows. Trust him and trust his ways.

The surrendered heart is a humble heart. A surrendered heart is a content heart. And thirdly, a surrendered heart clings to hope. Verse 3, he turns around and calls the entire congregation, "O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forever more." Hope in the Lord not just now, but forever. Hope in the Lord always. And the word hope is not you know the way we use the word hope these days. I hope the fuel prices go down soon. I hope the weather will be favorable tomorrow. Not that kind of hope. And I hope my team wins. Whatever sport you follow. This hope is confident expectation. It's an assurance that comes from a certainty knowing God and knowing his plans and purposes are yes and amen. And it produces a contentment.

You see the message of hope is an important one in the Bible, because we are a people of hope. I mean, we are not of this world. We are pilgrims. And what keeps us going is the hope in us that we find in Christ. It's a hope that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion. It is a hope that you know that causes to look forward to that day. And so, we can say it is well with my soul. Why is it well with my soul? Because you are looking forward to that day when the faith shall be sight, and it's the hope that keeps us going.

And in many ways, that's what sets apart God's children and those who are not God's children. They go through the same circumstances in life, but God's children have hope because they cling to God and they know that the Lord's promises and purposes are yes and men. You know, and this comes from knowing God. Not knowing about him, but knowing him intimately, knowing him experientially, knowing him as your father. And he calls you his child because your sins have been forgiven. And you've born into the family of God, by faith, by grace, through faith in Christ Jesus. And you are a new creation. And you've been given the right to be called a child of God, because your sins were placed on Christ and his righteousness was placed on you. You were born again.

And that's what Jesus Christ says in John 17:3, "This is eternal life, that they may know you, and Jesus Christ whom you sent." And when you know God through Christ, you have hope. Because you know that you serve an all-powerful God, an all-faithful God, who is faithful even when we are unfaithful, because he cannot deny himself. You know that you serve an all-wise God who makes the right and best decisions every single moment.

You know, there is no "uh oh" moment with God. He never wakes up one moment and he says, "Yeah, that went south too quickly. Sorry, people. I meant well. However, you know, back to the drawing board." Every decision the Lord makes is the best. And he is all loving. And he demonstrated his love towards us in that while we were still sinner, Christ died for us. And he works every day to work all things for our ultimate good. And we know and can be assured that he will finish the work. I mean, aren't you glad that your salvation is not dependent on you? I mean, aren't you glad that your perseverance is not dependent on you? I mean, that would be miserable, wouldn't it? Every single day you are not sure whether you're in or you're out. But thanks be to God, that IN Christ we can be sure and certain. So we can say with Paul, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. To be absent in the body is to be present with the Lord. So what should you fear?

You cling to hope. You have confidence. Not confidence in yourself, in your abilities, not confidence in your relationships or connections. No. Not confidence in your job or investments. No. Not confidence in your government. But in the one true living God, a faithful God who keeps his covenant promises.

And so, those who are in Christ can sing, in Christ alone my hope is found, he's my light, my strength, my song. This cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm. What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fear are stilled and striving cease, my comforter, my all in all, here in the love of Christ I stand.

I love the fourth stanza. No guilt in life, no fear in death, here in the power of Christ I stand. From life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. No power of hell, no scheme of man can never plaque me out of his hands. That is hope, dear friends. And that's what you cling onto because you know him.

Do you know him? Do you know him? Is he your father? Does he call you his child? Three implications for us to consider. Firstly, we must seek to grow in our knowledge of God. We have to know this God. We have to know this God. And know dear friends, you can never get to a point where you've exhausted your knowledge of God. There, there, there is so much to know. Paul says, "All the depth, and height, and breadth, and width of the wisdom and power of God." I mean, there is so much to know.

He says to the Ephesians, "I want you to know the love of God, which is beyond comprehension." Did you get that? He wants you to know the love of God, which is beyond comprehension. There is so much to know. And dear Christian, we have to daily grow in our knowledge of God. Daily pursue him. Daily seek to know him so that we may love him. And we may be strengthened in our hope.

But secondly, we must trust the Lord at all times. Have you noticed how we easily trust fellow human beings, who are fallible, and you know unfaithful, but we still trust them. How much more should we trust the Lord? We must trust the Lord. Even in the crazy and uncertain times, trust the Lord.

And lastly, we must devote ourselves to making him known. The world is full of hopeless people, miserable people, discouraged people, discontent people. People living in despair, and they need the message of hope. They need to know this God who will liberate them from their sins, and who will liberate them from their worship of self and give them hope. Friends, we have to make this God known until every single soul, that there is a God who loves them and a God who created them to live for him. So, a desperate world needs a savior. We should proclaim him so that they too may hope in God now and forever.

I was asked to share in closing, an update on the work going on in Zambia. So the needs, the challenges and the opportunities. The continent of Africa is home to 1.6 billion on people. And that number is projected to double by 2050. 2050 there will be 2.6 billion people. Of those 1.6 billion people, 379 million are unreached. To give you perspective. The population of the US is 332 million. So you are talking of the entire population of the US plus 40 million more unreached, never had the gospel. And only 12% would claim to be evangelical, meaning gospel, believing.

Three challenges to reaching these people. ***One is the charismatic movement***, the prosperity gospel, health and wealth, claim it. And many are flocking to this message, which is an enslaving message, not a hope giving message. And so, there is need for the true gospel to be proclaimed. ***Secondly, is African tradition religion***. African religion with its spiritism and animistic belief. An African tradition religion has no problem with adding on other beliefs. So you find that a lot of the Christianity that is prevalent on the continent is basically syncretism, and people are still lost. ***And then we have the spread of Islam***. Islam is advancing and their goal is to have 960 million followers by 2050. So what's the strategy for reaching these people?

Well, number one is church planting. Seeking to plant gospel preaching churches in every city, town, and village, so that every soul can hear the gospel proclaimed. And that's one of the things we are committed to as a church, is to see churches planted in areas where the gospel is needed. And one area, a number of provinces in Zambia that are desperately in need of the gospel and one province is Luapula Province. So a province would be your equivalent of a state. And this province is largely enriched, has 10 districts. And our goal is to plant a church in each of the 10

districts so that those churches would then plant more churches, and every soul is reached with the gospel.

And then, the Lord gave us an opportunity to plant a church in Sudan. So in that continent, on that map would be the country at the top in blue. Sudan is largely a Muslim country, 92% Muslim. And was closed for over 30 years. And recently it's opened up and you know you can easily and freely do gospel work. So, we sent a man, a Sudanese to begin church planting last year. And in April, while the nation was celebrating Ramadan, he was baptizing people in the Nile river.

So that's a plan, church planting, sending men, sending families to go in these areas where the gospel is needed. Now, in order to send people, they need to be trained. And that's the second ministry, Central Africa Baptist University exists to train the next generation of servant leaders for great commission living in Africa. And so, we train people with the hope that they will go out and be pastors, missionaries, church planters, trainers, and so that the gospel is spreading. So, we have a Bible program equipping people in theology. We also have a chaplaincy program that trains chaplains. And then what we call theological school by extension. We go into rural areas, in specific locations, and train pastors where they are. So you know it's those pastors who are pastoring, but they are untrained, and they can't enroll full-time at school. So we go to them and train them and give them resources.

And then one of the unreached people groups on the continent are the deaf. And so we train people in sign language so that they can be able to reach the deaf as well. And the last ministry is orphan care, and it's ministry called Faith Children's Village, a ministry that you gave towards last year. And basically the setup is, we have homes and we bring in children who will live in the homes with a mother or a father, and kind of give them a family atmosphere and environment. And we have children from two through to their mid-twenties who are in college and university. And we seek to train them and raise them up in the fear of God and help them become responsible citizen so that they can make an impact in the country and make an impact for Christ. We currently have 87 children, and of those 87, 18 are still needing sponsorship. So, all that is to say, people need the Lord. And so, we do all we can to proclaim him to them so that they may know him. Amen. Let's pray.

Our Father we are grateful. We are grateful for your love and goodness, we're grateful that you consider us your children in Christ. And we're grateful that in you we can have hope. And we're grateful for the privilege you give us to proclaim your name to others, so that they may also have this hope. So help us in this. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.