

# Romans 4:1-25: Abraham Prefigures Paul's Gospel of Faith

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[ 0 : 00 ] Today's scripture reading is Psalm 131 on page 519.

That's Psalm 131. Please stand for the reading of God's Word. A Song of Ascents of David 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. But I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother.

Like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good afternoon, everyone.

[ 1 : 09 ] It is good to have you here. It's good to be here with you. And I pray that the song that we have just sung would be true of all of us as we listen for the will of God through the Word of God.

And we're glad to be able to share it with you. Would you join me in prayer, please? Oh, give thanks unto the Lord for he is good.

His mercy endures forever. For that mercy, Lord, we give you thanks today. Pray, Lord, that the words of my mouth, meditations of my heart would be acceptable in your sight.

May that be the same for these, your people, as we humble ourselves to listen to what the Spirit of the Lord is saying to our church this day.

Bless your name. Amen. Amen. The 12th out of 15 of the songs of ascents.

[ 2 : 17 ] We are journeying and we just about can see the end. There are good things in store as we wrap up over the next few weeks.

And then there are some good things ahead as we head into the fall. David reminded us early in the service today about that these are travel songs.

These are songs that we have sort of couched as songs that we're singing as we go. The songs of the ancient Israelites as they went to their annual festivals.

These songs reflected their past, their present, and what they were hoping for in their future. And on either side of Psalm 132, which is the longest of these songs, we have the shortest of the songs.

If you would notice there, the chapter today, if we really can call it that, three verses. On the other side of that, 133, three verses, and I get to preach the short ones.

[ 3 : 29 ] David has the long one on next week. And he will wrap up with a short one himself. But our passage today, just three verses. The 19th century Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon noted that Psalm 131 is one of the shortest psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn.

What makes this short psalm so long for us to learn? It's because it challenges one of the most difficult aspects of human behavior.

Pride. Pride. It challenges our pride. Eugene Peterson defined pride as the sin of thinking too much of ourselves. Ever wrestle with that?

Who among us has not felt the inward pull of pride at our hearts, in our minds? Who among us has not been pinned to the mat at one time or another by the mass and muscle of our own pride?

Daily, friends, you and I are tempted to put price tags on ourselves that overestimate our looks, our learning, our abilities, and our value.

[ 4 : 59 ] And I know that I'm not preaching to the choir. And I know that I'm not preaching to the choir. I'm preaching to all of us because all of us, perhaps even today, have wrestled with and been wrestled to the mat by our own pride.

Well, this journey to and through Psalm 131 enables the faith traveler to see that our journey along life is not only one of the feet, but it is also a journey of the heart.

We come face to face with the internal dimensions of our journey through life. What it is that happens in the unseen regions of our hearts and of our minds.

The Psalm helps us to see that. And there is great value in listening and learning from short psalms like 131 and 133 that's going to deal with unity.

You and I cannot underestimate the value of the truth that comes from these verses. Critical lessons for life's journeys.

[ 6 : 17 ] Well, one of the first things we note that there is a lot of common ground with Psalm 130, David preached on last week, and Psalm 131, which is before us on this afternoon.

Now, in addition to it having the same major title, the songs of a sense, like Psalm 122 and 124 and 133, it adds the dimension of David.

The sweet psalmist is visual, and some credit this particular psalm as being a Davidic psalm. Not all would agree with that. Some see him as being the author and view of the fact that we see on the manuscript itself, it includes of David, but not all the manuscripts include that.

Others question it because they feel that most, if not all, of the songs of a sense were written in a time that was centuries after the time of David.

But as we look at Psalm 130, we can see several obvious connections with Psalm 131. Look there with me. Both are prayers addressed to the Lord.

[ 7 : 37 ] Look at Psalm 130. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. O Lord, hear my voice.

Look at verse 2. It says, O Lord, hear my voice. And twice in verse 3. If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand? Both of them progress from prayers to the Lord to exhortation to our encouragement for the Lord's people.

You see that in chapter 130 and verse 7? O Israel, hope in the Lord. For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful love, King James.

Plenteous redemption in him. That same encouragement is seen in Psalm 131 and verse 3. O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.

We see, note also the common structure. Look at Psalm 130 and verse 6 and Psalm 131 and verse 2. Notice how the parallelism that is there.

[ 8 : 49 ] My soul waits for the Lord more than those who wait for the morning. More than watchmen who wait for the morning. Also, you see a similar, a different in content, but a similar kind of structure in verse 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. Common kinds of structure that's there.

Psalm 131 and 2 focuses on the humble childlike trust of the writer. But Psalm 130 and verse 6 stresses the writer's expectancy and anticipation of the Lord's attention and care.

The common author cannot be ruled out. But on the other hand, neither can there be different authors and those who place this psalm in the songbook, just like we place songs of common themes together.

Similarly, in the Psalter, the songbook of the ancient Israelites. One thing is certain. Both of these are good for believers who are journeying through life today.

[ 10 : 03 ] And with that in mind, you and I can humble ourselves before the word of God that comes to us through this particular passage.

The experience of the psalmist has changed or the psalmist, let's say plural from 130 to 132. In chapter 130 and verse 1, it is out of the depths that the psalmist cries to the Lord.

He's in over his head. And his cry reflects the fact that he is overwhelmed. Again, we heard that cry. We heard it on last week.

And we see it again. Huh? When you're in over your head, what is it that you do? Huh? I trust that you do what the psalmist did on last week where we saw on 130.

That you find yourself crying out unto the Lord. When your journey in life finds you by the road in a deep ditch. Huh?

[ 11 : 10 ] You cry out for help. When you find yourself crossing the center lines of life. You find yourself, I trust, crying out for help.

Huh? We cry out for help when there is a need for confession and forgiveness, as we saw on last week. When we're faced with the reality that if the Lord doesn't help me, huh?

There is no help. Huh? Huh? That's the situation of the psalmist in Psalm 130. But then on today, we see the Psalm 131 experience.

Huh? It is noticeably different. It could be called the post-Psalms 130 experience. We really know that some, we know something about these kinds of experiences.

They're not foreign to those of us who go through life's journey. Look at the way it begins. He said, oh Lord, my heart is not lifted up. My eyes are not raised too high.

[12:11] Notice the negatives there. What he's not. Not raised too high. I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. These things are not foreign.

His situation is not foreign to us. Someone who has been in the depths is no longer there. The prodigal son is home. Huh?

He has returned. He is out of the depths. He is out of the pig pen. But he's come home. The experience of one who has come face to face with human, the human frailty of their sin.

Huh? Perhaps there has been a devastating and deep crisis or a deep defeat that the psalmist and it has humbled him.

Huh? Has there been a setback, a defeat, a crisis here? Has the overconfident person been defeated? Has one who had encountered waters that are too deep?

[13:10] Huh? Picture, perhaps, a situation where the white collar executive, the well-known politician who's had shady dealings and those dealings have caught up with them and they find themselves in deep waters.

Or the unfaithful man or woman whose moral indiscretions are discovered and found themselves in deep waters and humbled by such situations and they're coming out of them.

Huh? Humbled by them. Huh?

Huh? Huh? My eyes are not lifted up. Huh? I'm not reaching out for things that are too marvelous or too wonderful for me. Here is a person humbled by a life situation whose ambitions are tamed.

Huh? Huh? And we can find ourselves in those kinds of situations tamed by life. Huh? Life has given us a black eye.

[14:36] Huh? Or worse. And we're tamed by that. And this seems like the kind of situation where a person has been, you might say, conditioned by circumstances.

Tamed by circumstances. And here they are. The Psalm 131 travelers has tasted and been humbled by the experience of the steadfast love and kindness and forgiveness.

It's the voice of one humbled by grace. One who has tasted and seen that the Lord in fact is good.

Huh? Huh? And we hear here the very conversational prayers of a person who is recently out of the depths. And he's on his way home or perhaps at home.

And as we journey, we find ourselves walking similarly in the shoes of the psalmist. And we learn as we do so, we learn some very valuable lessons.

[15:41] They are what I could call as you travel lessons or travel tips, if you will. All are good for the journey today. And all of those lessons in the psalm, they concern humility.

And that's what this psalmist was. He was forced into a humble situation. And from there we see several things.

Here's some tips for getting back on the road. Good for those getting on the road for the first time or those who haven't been rescued or for those getting back on the road again.

Equally good for those of us who are on the road and really want to stay there. Here's the first thing. As you travel, be humble, not prideful.

See that in verse 1? I believe that's one of the things that you and I can take away from. As we travel and all of us are on this road, this road of faith, this world of life.

[16:43] And again, picture here. The person who has been rescued from the depths. See this person wrapped in a towel, still shivering from the experience. The heart is not inflated with pride.

Their eyes reflect no haughtiness. A clear biblical example of this is the prodigal son, back from the pig pen. His journey had taken him far away from the father's house, but he found his way home.

And when he returned, his heart was not proud. His eyes were not lifted. His aspirations were in fact tame. And such ones are careful where they walk and how they walk.

Here is the rescued person. The person with an adjusted agenda. The pilgrim who is careful as to his pursuits. Careful as to where she walks. And perhaps the experience of the depths is still on their mind.

How easy it is for us to forget our experience of the deep. And we forget and we begin to act like that it never happened.

[17:56] And pride returns. When we forget from whence we have come. The conduct of the Psalm 131 person reminds us of how those who have been rescued from the deep need to walk, need to walk in humility.

The words of the old song are mindful. I was sinking deep in sin. Far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within.

Sinking to swim no more. Then the master of the sea heard my despairing cry and from the waters rescued me.

Now safe am I. Lifted from the depths. Huh? The Psalm 131 traveler is one who has embraced the grace of God. The forgiveness that comes from God.

And his feet are back on the road now. Like him, you and I must never forget our distance. Our alienation from God. And how easy it is for us to not remember.

[19:06] And I had, as I was writing my sermon out, Lord, forgive us for forgetting. Forgive us for forgetting from where you have brought us from.

Forgive us for forgetting when we were in the depths of sin. Forgive us for forgetting when things were not so good and we were humbled by that experience. And we find ourselves, again, not mindful of that.

But we find our eyes. We find ourselves haughty and pride-filled. As if we are responsible ourselves for where we are and where we're going.

Huh? Whether that is the initial rescue or subsequent rescues. Because along the journey, you and I have been tripped up in some way.

We must never forget it. Here, in verse 1, pride is rejected and rightly so. No wonder his eyes are not lifted up.

[20:03] No wonder he is not plagued with wild ambition now. He knows where he's been. He knows how he's been rescued. And such should be the case with all of those who have been rescued from the depths.

Huh? We're headed this afternoon to the Lord's table. And if there's anything that should remind us of Christ's work on our behalf.

And how very needy you and I are. And were it not for the grace of God. Where would we be?

We must never forget. We must never forget. Whether it is rescue from sin. Or rescue from sickness. Or rescue from others.

Some other kind of life situation. What is our response to that? Does it appropriately and rightly humble us? And set us in the places that we need to be.

[21:09] Huh? When the grip of grace is fresh. It has a way of blunting. Human pride.

Huh? We must be ever mindful that all is of grace. Every good and perfect gift comes from above.

Huh? As Paul reminding the Corinthians. What do you have that you didn't receive? Well why in the world are you boasting as if you have not received it?

Huh? Who of us can lay claim to whatever it is? I mean we are an extension of other people. People have passed on different things.

Even your nice looks. Just happen to be in the jeans. Huh? It's all of grace and the kindness of God.

[22:11] Huh? Verse 1 expresses these things negatively. It helps us to see what we are not to be as we travel.

These things should not occupy the hearts and lives of all who are on the faith journey. We are to be humble. Not prideful. Huh?

Verse 2 puts things in a positive light. We see that in contrast with what we see in verse 1. We see the conjunction there.

But. Look at verse 2. I have calmed and quieted my soul. Huh? Be humble folks.

Not prideful. But also as you travel. The second thing. Be humble. And. Childlike. Humble not prideful.

[23:09] But humble and childlike. Notice the shift from what the pilgrim was not engaged in. To what he did. Two words are used there. Calmed and quieted.

Huh? And notice. It's something that he did. Huh? I have calmed and quieted my soul. Huh? Rather than being too big for one's britches.

The psalmist. The psalmist. The psalmist hushes his soul. The soul that is waited in anticipation for the Lord. Listen to how he. We see that in chapter 130.

He says in verse 5. I wait for the Lord. For the Lord. My soul waits. For. Him. And in his word. I hope. Look at verse. Six.

My soul. Waits for the Lord. Huh? He had waited for the Lord. And here he says. But I've calmed and quieted. My soul.

[ 24 : 07 ] You ever calm and quiet your soul? And how do you. Calm and quiet your soul. Huh? In the noise. The road noise of life. There are steps that you and I can take to quiet our soul.

Communion is one such thing. There are other ways in which we can do that. By just. Stilling ourselves. Be still my soul. Be still and listen to the Lord.

The word picture that describes his quiet waiting is a well chosen one. His readers are. He takes his readers to a very familiar venue. He takes them to the home.

Mother and child are in the picture. The child is the post. The post. Nursing. Child. Huh? It's weaned.

Now. I said. I was talking to Shirley and she nursed. All five of our children. We had twins also. So she. So she knows she was carrying a great load in that regard and seeing that they were fed.

[ 25 : 12 ] She did has. She was telling me about her. The system that she had in order to feed the twins. A combination of breast and bottle. And I said, honey, what is it like to wean a child?

She had one word. Hard. And some of you ladies know that. Whether it's breastfed or bottle fed. It's a difficult thing. Huh? You know how difficult the shift can be from milk to solid food. You hide the bottle.

Huh? So that the little one can't see it and you do other things. You. You're doing so as ultimately for the growth and the development of the child. By the fussing and fretting of the child.

It's clear the child just doesn't get it. All they want is. Milk. And they want it. Now. Huh? But here you see that.

[ 26 : 16 ] The days of suckling are over. But the days of caring remain. It's not a termination of care. There's just a shift in how that care is delivered.

Huh? But here. You have the rescued soul. It's not overly ambitious but cautious. Careful to exercise personal soul care.

He takes the initiative for quieting and calming his soul. His soul. As we see here. It's not confused. But it's a composed soul. It is content.

See the picture? It is of contentment and trust. The child is no longer a suckling child. But it's still content. No longer. Content no longer to fuss and fret.

Because of what it's not getting. But content simply to be with the mother. Satisfaction remains. But not on the basis of what is being received.

[ 27 : 14 ] Is your soul like a child whose satisfaction comes from the presence of the mother versus the provision of its mother? The unwinged child is satisfied with what its mother gives.

The unwinged child is satisfied with what its mother gives. That goes with the stage of life. But the weaned child is satisfied with the mother. See them as they walk hand in hand.

There's this measure of safety and security and satisfaction and contentment. The satisfaction of the child is maturing and progressing.

Rather than being fretful and fussing. It is contentment and fulfillment that is in view. You see that there in verse 2. The child doesn't have its bottle.

But it does have its mama. And that's enough. The contentment of the weaned child is based on the knowledge of who it is with. And so the contentment of the child of God is based on their knowledge of their heavenly father.

[ 28 : 17 ] Are you satisfied with him? The psalmist put it well. Whom have I in heaven but you? There's nothing on earth that I desire beside you.

My flesh and my heart fail. But God is the strength of my life. My heart and my portion forever. As you travel. Be humble. Not prideful. Be humble and childlike. Look at verse 3. As you travel be humble and hopeful.

It's clear. You see the exhortation there. It mirrors the exhortation that we've already highlighted in Psalm 130 and verse 7. O Israel, hope in the Lord.

The people of God are called to put their trust in him. The object of hope and trust is none other than the Lord himself. The covenant keeping redeemer of Israel.

[ 29 : 24 ] The one in whom forgiveness is found. It's a call to put your trust. And hope in him. And not only is it that, but it's a call for continuing trust.

You see that from this time forth and forever. Well, as we make our way to the Lord's table, I want us to see several things about Jesus and his journey through life to glory. How it was perfectly executed. How it was perfectly executed. He was never in the depths for himself. But he certainly was there for us. And from thence he was resurrected. Can you imagine him awaiting resurrection more than watchmen that wait for the morning as we see in Psalm 130? Through him, all who believe are forgiven of their iniquities. The words of the psalmist in Psalm 131 could be those of the Lord Jesus who did not seek great things for himself. When offered the kingdoms of this world, he rejected them choosing to do the will of God.

[ 30 : 36 ] His was a single ambition. I've come to do your will, oh God. If there was anyone who was free from anxious ambition, it was Jesus.

And so the Lord was humbled for a season. His heart was not lifted up. His eyes were not raised. He did not march by the drumbeat of this world that beckons us to scale the heights and to build monuments to self.

Rather than being driven by selfish and blind and self-promoting ambition. Ambition that's personal name building and personal kingdom building. Jesus was driven to do the will of his father.

And in doing so, he was given a name that was above every name. He listened closely to his father's heart and he was content to do his father's will.

If there's ever a time when a soul was weaned from its own desires and satisfied with the desires of the father's will, it was Jesus in Gethsemane, wasn't it? Huh?

[ 31 : 39 ] Jesus asked for the suffering cup to pass. But he was ordained to drink the bitter cup for you and made for us. And yet he opted for the father's sovereign will rather than deliverance from his suffering.

What a savior. So we come to the table on this afternoon. We come to the feast of one who was humble and hopeful and in no way prideful.

He has invited you and me to come to his table. And when we do so, you and I are strengthened.

As we look on the big picture of what these very lowly emblems picture. Picture is the work of Christ on our behalf.

And I would encourage you on this afternoon. To allow your soul. To be calmed. And quieted.

[ 32 : 49 ] As we come and look on these humble elements. But think about. The great work that is behind them. These are visible things of the invisible realities.

And Jesus wisely gave them to us. Speaking of the bread. That stood for his body. And the drink that stood for his shed blood.

Huh? We can be strengthened for the journey. And we need that kind of strength friends. We need that kind of strength.

And not the least of which. Because of the pride that. That often wells up in our own hearts. Huh? Things that you and I wrestle with.

And no one even knows it. But you and I know well the tension of our own souls. You and I know well the pride of our own hearts. And may we come in humility to the one who was the epitome of humility himself.

[ 33 : 55 ] Who humbled himself unto death. Even death on a cross. In order that you and I might live. Huh? You and I.

Through the Lord's table. Can be strengthened. To be humble. And hopeful. And not be prideful. As you do so. If you're on the faith journey. If you're a believer in Jesus as Lord and Savior. That invitation is for you.

And I would dare say. That all of us need that kind of strength. Because the world beckons you and me. There is this. There is this sort of.

False call out there. To greatness. Whatever that is. Huh? I think Jesus really shows us what it is. Doesn't he? And may we follow in his footsteps.

[ 34 : 51 ] Huh? He is the bread of life. And he invites us to partake. Of his table. So we can be nourished. As we by faith.

Continue our journey. Shall we pray? Lord we love you. And we give thanks to you this afternoon. For showing us the way.

How to be humble. How not to be prideful. But also to be hopeful. Along the journey. Lord as we come to.

This. Table. Lord you know. The noise. The life noise. The road noise. The road noise. Of our own souls. And I pray Lord.

That. Rather than being. Enamored. By the beck and call. Of. The sirens. As it were. Of this world. [ 35 : 55 ] That. Call us. To one. Pursuit. And another. Pray Lord. That we would hear you. Today. I pray that you would.

Enable us to. Hear you. Both in corporate ways. But also. Ways that are. Very. Customized. To each individual. Here this afternoon. And.

As we quiet ourselves. May we find our contentment. Satisfaction. In you. In you. Alone. Pray these things.

In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.