

Psalm 131

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- [0 : 0 0] Father, we grieve this morning. And here we are. I admit, I'm cold. But the reality is your word goes forth in all climates, at all times, in all places.
- And as your word goes forth, your voice is heard. And so it is to that end that we pray that the Lord would be heard this morning. We ask these things for Jesus' sake.
- Amen. How do you prepare for church? How do you prepare for this gathering?
- It may consist of cleaning, of washing, of showering, brushing, and a whole number of other things.
- Growing up, my mom and dad had guidelines for what was appropriate or not. I was not permitted to wear basketball shorts to church.
- [1 : 1 2] And on a day like this, I would not have chosen to. I had to remove my earrings. And yes, I did have earrings. And there were prohibitions.
- And whether I agreed or not, it set within me this idea that when God's people assembled, there were expectations and preparations that had to be made.
- It mattered to mom and dad how I spent my Saturday night, because that prepared me for Sunday. It could be said that my preparations for Sunday morning had to begin Saturday night.
- It may surprise you that I had no curfew on any other night. But Saturday night, I did. Well, regardless of whether you perceive it to be strict or legalistic, it's not the matter.
- For what it did was lay out for me that what transpired here required preparation. Why?
- [2 : 1 8] Why? It was when God met with his people. Why? It was my weekly standing appointment I had with my maker.
- How do you approach God? How ought we to approach God? We have been in a segment of the psalm known as the Song of Ascents.
- These songs were sung as people made their journey to Jerusalem to celebrate a festival. Literally, these songs would have been sung as people approached the city where the temple of God sat.
- The playlist would read road trip songs. These songs were to be sung with strength of them and to cheer them as they traveled.
- But ultimately, what these songs were to do were to prepare them for their arrival. They were to be prepared to meet with God.
- [3 : 1 9] Now, I've met some people who can't wait to meet God. They humorously and arrogantly would say, well, when I meet him, I will tell him everything he got wrong.
- I've met others who are terrified of meeting God. Because of the guilt and the fear that bears down on their own souls. And whether it be an attitude of objection or an attitude of obligation or an attitude of ovation, the question is of utmost importance.

What must we do to prepare to meet with God? Far more important than attire, it is an attitude. It's not how we adorn our outward appearance, but it's far more about our inner disposition.

And here it's appropriate to quote the Bible verse, the well-known Bible verse. The Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

And this morning we will see a heart. We will see this heart. A heart that is prepared to meet with God.

[4 : 33] And if the attribution of the psalm is correct, it's a song of David. Here we see David's heart exposed for you and I to look at.

It's the heart of God's selected servant. It's the heart of Israel's leader displayed for you and I, the reader.

It's the heart of God's king on earth before his king in the heavens. As this traveler's songbook was assembled, God saw it fit to embed lyrics for us to establish what our heart should look like when we come before him.

It's a preparatory song to prepare our hearts. But it's so much more than that. And as we look at this psalm together, we will find that when we approach God, we ought to have, one, a humble heart.

Two, a contented heart. And lastly, thirdly, a humble heart, a contented soul, and a hopeful spirit.

[5 : 48] A humble heart. The psalm opens up with this indication, the shout towards God. Oh, Lord. Oh, Lord. My heart is, it's usually associated with lament or a cry out or something's not right.

Usually it's a shout to God like, hey, this is not going how I planned. But we don't find this outcry here. Instead, we find it's an acknowledgement of the psalmist's heart.

Instead of pouring out the heart's anguish, there is a posture that we're supposed to see. It's expressed by three negatives. And there you see it. These not statements.

My heart is not lifted up. It is, my eyes are not raised too high. I do not occupy myself with great or wonderful, marvelous things.

The usage of the heart is equivalent to how we use, maybe, how we presently use the word mind. Our ability to know, to reason, to understand.

[6 : 50] It's tied to our awareness, our memory, our judgments, our comprehension. This heart is not lifted up. In other words, it's not arrogantly looking down upon others.

In relationship to others, there is no pride. There isn't this attitude of, I am better than you. I am greater than you. Here, the eyes are not raised too high.

In the sense that they are not looking over those around them. Not to judge themselves superior to those around them. And from the outset of the Bible, what we find to be the case is God is often opposed to the crowd.

The proud. It began in the garden. Continues in Babel. Runs through Israel's monarchy. God is intolerant of those who proudly and arrogantly enthrone themselves.

For the latest James Bond movie. History is unkind to those who try to play God. For God is opposed to the proud. For he is God and there is no other.

[7 : 54] The Bible actually tells us that there are quite a few things that God hates. Proverbs 6 tells us there are six things that the Lord hates.

And the first, number one, that the greatest abomination to him are haughty eyes. Again, Proverbs tells us everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord.

See, the compounding weight of these images provide us not a picture of an unambitious individual. As someone who is plagued with maybe low self-esteem or worth.

But someone who has come to recognize their standing before God. The psalmist doesn't have an exaggerated or inflated view of themselves. Rather, the psalmist is taking a posture.

A lowly posture. In light of the things that God, who God is. The psalmist is humble. Humble before God.

[8 : 57] Furthermore, the psalmist doesn't occupy himself with things too great and marvelous. For me. More specifically, things too great and marvelous often refer in the psalms as great and mighty acts that God has done.

That these are things that only God does. In this respect, there are facets of life that are mysterious and simply incomprehensible. The narrative of our experiences, our very lives are often unpredictable and precarious.

And here the psalmist says, those things are not things that I think about. Well, I obsess over. Rather, in light of who God is.

These verses can certainly be a commentary on the life of Job. You might know Job.

You might be familiar with him. He was a righteous man, the Bible tells him. And who underwent immense suffering. The loss of his property. The loss of his children.

[10 : 05] The loss of his very health. Next to Jesus, Job is probably the portrait of the well-known adage, when bad things happen to good people in the Bible. Over the course of 40 chapters in the Bible, Job tries to come to grips with what has happened.

And in the end, his disputation ends in this way. He comes to the conclusion, this conclusion, that he uttered what he did not understand. He said things that were too, he consumed himself with things that were too wonderful for him.

And therefore, he's a peasant. He's a peasant.

The psalm gives us a heart that is not set on achievement, attainment, advancement, or arrogance. Rather, it's humility.

It's resignation to one's limited capacity. The psalmist shows us a humble heart before God. Secondly, the psalmist shows us a contented soul.

[11 : 41] As one approaches God, we find that the humble heart is further decorated by a contented soul. The sense that you and I are to get when we read verse 2 is one that is a soul that is settled and at rest.

Tranquil, serene, still, at peace. But I have calmed and quieted my soul. Like a wing child with its mother.

Like a wing child is my soul within me. Now, the image requires some explanation. We don't use the term wing often. If we were to find a contemporary parallel, it would be a child moving from breastfeeding to eating solid food.

In Bible times, the process usually came around three or four years of age. In present days, because of the invention of baby bottles and whatnot, it often occurs sooner.

But the significance of the image is bound up in a hungry infant or an unwinged child. Without words or hand gestures to communicate, an infant largely has one means of communication when hungry.

[12 : 51] It's very clear. It's very obvious. It's very simple. It's an outcry of hysteria accompanied by screams and tears. And it is to that that the mother responds with milk and provision.

This becomes a signal for a nursing infant. As I scream and shout, I receive food that I desire. Sometimes maybe it applies to grown-ups too.

But I'm given attention and I'm rightfully acknowledged. The infant equates protests with provision.

Screaming brings sustenance. Menacing will result in milk. But the process of weaning instructs the child that solid food is found from a faithful mother.

I remember vividly. The Lord has given us four kids. And all four of them it applies to. But I remember placing them in their high chairs at an appropriate age.

[14 : 00] And there, they knew exactly what was coming. The tray table was laid. And they would get so giddy as I fastened their fifth.

They would start to, like, scream or shriek, actually in joy and in anticipation. They would fling their hands up in the air, babbling, bursting out, even in joyous laughter.

Why? Because food was incoming. Food was arrival. No longer are they shrieking and screaming. For they have learned to calm themselves.

They equate sitting in a high chair with nourishment, provision, food, sustenance. This is what a weak child looks like.

Calm and contented in the presence of their mother. Calm and contented in the presence of their mother.

[15 : 01] The striking piece of the psalm is that the psalmist doesn't delight in the provision by the mom, but actually in the presence of the mom.

Did you catch that? The Bible actually reads, I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its meal.

Actually, no, it doesn't say that. I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother.

The child is calm not because there's food. The child is calm because mom is there. The picture that the psalmist is trying to paint for you and I is that the child is okay because mom is there.

Therefore, things will be okay. Here, God is depicted as a mom. And the lesson is astounding that I am contented when God is with me. I have learned quiet and calmness of the soul because I know the character of God and I know he is here with me.

[16 : 15] The steadfast heart pictured here belongs to the one whose trust in God. Therefore, I'm not concerned with all that swirls around me.

I know you, God. I know you, God. And therefore, I'm unfazed by the turmoil about me. I know you, God. And as the wind and the waves and the current rise up and the boat rocks, my soul is calm and quiet.

And whether there be a full table at Thanksgiving or whether there be an empty and I'm alone table at Thanksgiving, I know you, God.

And my soul is calm. And whether there be plenty in the pantry or morsels for my meal, my soul is calm and contented. And this psalm illustrates really the Apostle Paul.

You might remember this, that he declares in Philippians, I have learned what it means to be content. And learned in every situation what it means to be content. And he starts, while I'm abound, when I'm brought low in every and any circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and being in hunger, abundance, need.

[17 : 26] And I can do everything to strengthen me. Why? Because God is with me. I can be still. I can be calm and quiet. It's a picture of a child resting in the tenderness of a mother's embrace.

The picture is seemingly one of invincibility. That it does not matter what life deals to me. My soul is calm and quiet.

It's an astounding picture. Perhaps that's why the pastor, Charles Burton, said this is one of the shortest psalms to read, but it's one of the longest to learn.

Because most of us are laden with anxiety. With frustration. With burdens. With threats. A calm and quiet soul is the last thing you can use to describe us.

We're disappointed with so many things. We are overwhelmed with so much. We approach God with a duty to do this twist.

[18 : 30] We come to God with great restlessness. Because nothing on our end appears to be going well and right. We approach not as weaned babies.

We approach sadly as cry people. We confront God with these childish requests. When we approach God in this way.

We fail to save God for who he is. Lord, may you forgive us. When we scream like unweaned children. Rather than rest.

Satisfied. You're secure. Embrace. A humble heart. A contented soul. And lastly, a hopeful spirit. It's the final verse of the psalm.

The writer directs the line to the nation. The people of God. The first two verses are directed to the Lord. This is my heart before you.

[19 : 30] The last is a charge to the people. To the people. Hope is. The charge of the people is to hope in the Lord.

Hope is most generally defined as. As a look of expectancy to God. And you're going to do something. You're going to do something about this. It's a confident look toward God.

That he will accomplish something great. For his glory and his name. It's a look toward God. Knowing that he has the next move. Hope is an anticipatory act.

I look forward to God's next move. It's rooted in this divine action. He's going to do something. And whatever happens, Lord. I still have confidence in you.

Notice the object of the hope. It's not hope in my achievement. Or my accomplishment. Or my ability. It's hope in the Lord. It would rest on the Lord and him alone.

[20 : 31] This look of trust is not temporary. It's actually this posture that you and I have. That we carry forth. For all of our days. It's to say that whatever happens in life, Lord. Whatever happens.

I will still hope in you. And listen closely. There will never be actually a time in your life. Where you can cease to hope in the Lord. There are never circumstances that you can experience.

That hope in the Lord will not apply. There will never be a situation. You encounter where God is unable to act on your behalf. And this is the testimony of the songwriter.

The songwriter. If it's true. It's David. A shepherd who ascended to the throne. From a humble position. He slew one of Israel's greatest enemies.

There. Along the way. He lost his best friend. From his palace. He committed both murder and adultery. He buried an infant child. He was a fugitive before his predecessor.

[21 : 31] And he was a fugitive before his son. His successor. His kingdom was restored. And he amassed a fortune. To acquire all that was needed. To build the temple of the Lord.

And I recount all that. Why? Because here I think at the end of his life. He is saying. You can hope in the Lord. How do I know? I've been through it all.

And I commend him to you. I commend him to you. I've accomplished much. Lost much. And I've come to this conclusion.

You can hope in the Lord. You can look to God. You can look to God. And as the nation emerges. The king's counsel was simple.

Hope in the Lord. But what happens when the kingdom gets divided? Hope in the Lord. What happens when we are besieged? Hope in the Lord. What happens when the throne is corrupted?

[22 : 25] Hope in the Lord. What happens when the temple will be destroyed? Hope in the Lord. What happens when we're taken to exile? And captivity. The answer endures. Hope in the Lord. Hope in the Lord.

Hope in the Lord. And here we have. When you and I assemble. Before God. These three charges. Come hopefully.

Have a humble heart. Have a contented soul. And have a hopeful spirit. That the Lord is going to do something.

The Lord is going to do something. To close. Psalm 130 and 131 are twin psalms. Meaning they stand next to each other as pillars.

They're tethered together. Really by one line. Verse 7 in chapter 130. And verse 3 in 131. The line is this. Oh Israel.

[23 : 25] Hope in the Lord. And they teach us different things about hope. And I'll summarize Psalm 130 in this one. Lord. Can you deal with my sin?

Psalm 130 answers. Yes. I can deal with your sin. Psalm 131 asks the question. Lord. Can you deal with my life?

Beginning to end. Infancy to maturity. Birth to death. And a resounding question is yes you can.

Yes you does. In the Lord. There's hope. For all. For all. Father we. Come before.

And we often come. Within all sorts of attitudes. All sorts of. That is just. So Lord, as we respond and say to you, pray Lord that you would make us such a people, hope that live well before you.

[25 : 04] We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen.