**“A CHILDLIKE SPIRIT”**

**PSALM 131**

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INTRODUCTION

Leupold justly speaks of this rather obscure and neglected psalm as “one of the great gems of the Psalter” (p. 907). As Perowne states, in this psalm we find “a childlike simplicity, an unaffected humility, the honest expression of that humility as from a heart spreading itself out in conscious integrity before God” (p. 406). In Psalm 131, David expresses humble dependence upon Yahweh like a weaned child satisfied and content, leaning upon his mother’s bosom. He renounces pride and arrogance and haughty pursuits in life that go far beyond what Yahweh intends for His children. David does not make the mistake of many by becoming “proud” of his humility, but presents his case simply and briefly, but yet with tremendous spiritual insight.

David’s name in front of this psalm and his claim of humility and patient hope in Yahweh instead of powerful selfish ambition, puts him in the place of examination as to the accuracy of his claim in the light of what we know Biblically as to his life. In II Sam. 6:22 David determines before his wife Michal that he would “be humble in my own eyes,” even though honored by the “maids” of the nation. In his early days when chased by Saul, he did refuse to pursue things that were “too great and too difficult” for him; in Saul’s court as well as in numerous other situations he had to display humility. From the beginning, David did not push himself forward, but was chosen by Yahweh. Delitzsch points out that Saul’s persecution of David lasted “about ten years, and his kingship in Hebron, at first only incipient, seven years and a half. He left it entirely to God to remove Saul and Ishbosheth.” David was willing to travel “the long, thorny, circuitous way of deep abasement, until he receives from God’s hand that which God’s promise had assured to him” (p. 276). Later, David was not aggressive to attack other kings; his wars were defensive wars. He allowed Shimei to curse him, and he allowed Absalom to take Jerusalem.

David’s emphasis upon humility here reminds us of Jesus’ later teaching about the greatest in the kingdom—that is a humble little child (Mt. 18:1-4). Other New Testament passages reflecting a similar teaching are Jas. 4:6 and I Pet. 5:5—“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble,” both reflecting Pr. 3:34.

**THE WAY OF HUMBLE TRUST IS THE WAY TO GENUINE SUCCESS AND MEANING**

1. THE PERSONAL LESSON (1-2)
2. Humility (1a)
3. From Pride (**undervalues** other people)
4. Of Heart—the source of the issues of life—thought, feelings, will.

Literally—not lifted up my heart

1. Of Eyes—one of the obvious evidences of a haughty spirit—see Pr. 30:13.

Literally—not high, lifted up my eyes.

1. From Presumption (1b) (**overestimates** and **overreaches** oneself)

Compare Dt. 29:29

1. Don’t involve myself with/walk after “great things.”

* What is beyond what Yahweh intends for him—thus inappropriate. The motivation is the attitude and spirit of pride, and presumption.

1. Don’t involve myself/walk after things too marvelous or too difficult with me.

* What is too marvelous or wonderful for him, and that is beyond what he is supposed to be involved with. The idea could also refer to what he does not know or understand, and should therefore leave alone and leave to God Himself.
* For all such things he must trust God and live in humble obedience toward God.

All the verbs of v. 1 are past tense, with the idea of a continuing situation in his life.

Scripture shows us the correct response to points 1) and 2):

* Point 1: Phil. 2:3-5—be humble and regard others as more important, maintaining the mind of Christ in being a servant.
* Point 2): Phil. 3:7-16 in counting all of our natural human advantages “as loss for the sake of Christ” in order that we might know Christ more surpassingly, and experience “the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings…in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” The believer in Christ learns to forget what is behind and to reach forth “to what lies ahead”—and so “press toward the goal for the prize” to which God is calling us upward.
* Such should be the primary goal of each believer—not worldly aspirations of success and fame. Moreover, the believer must have humility about his knowledge and wisdom, valuing those things taught by the Spirit of Christ (I Cor. 2:1-16). The end result does not involve “stifling adventurousness but by rightly directing it” (K. 447).

1. Trust (2)
2. The soul is ­composed and quieted (2a)
3. “Composed” is literally causing something to “be even, smooth.”
4. “Quieted”-- from life’s agitations, turmoil, and troubles, and from all voices intended to stir feelings of anxiety and unease.
5. The two verbs together paint the picture of a soul “levelled or made smooth…so that humility is its entire and uniform state” (“composed”), and “calmed it so that it is silent and at rest, and lets God speak and work in it and for it” (“quieted”). Delitzsch compares this picture to that of a **lake with both a smooth surface and a calm surface** (p. 276).
6. Like a weaned child resting upon its mother.

* The “weaned child” spoken of twice here is the child of 4 or 5 years of age who is content and happy being with and beside his mother—more literally “upon” his mother, maybe held by her arms in her bosom, but not intent on being fed. He has been thoroughly sated with his mother’s milk during his time of nursing in the past and is now perfectly “composed and quieted” and happy to be with her; so is David with his God. Such a person like the baby now more grown “no longer frets for what it used to find indispensable” but now finds higher and better pursuits (K. 448). David has been weaned from his ungodly ambitions.

1. Like such a weaned child my soul rests upon me.

* The verb literally means “deal fully or adequately with, deal out to,” and then by further application it comes to mean “wean,” since a mother has dealt fully and adequately with such a child once nursing and other training is complete.
* He carries, caresses, and comforts his own soul with the reality of his spiritual relationship with Yahweh as does the mother with her child.

1. Paul shows in Phil. 4:11 that the believer must learn like him to be content. His soul has been “weaned from all discontented thoughts, from all fretful desires for earthly good, waiting in stillness upon God, finding its satisfaction in His presence, resting peacefully in His arms” (P. p. 407).
2. THE NATIONAL APPLICATION (3)

* The nation needs this lesson also.
* “Hope,” don’t fret. Same verb used in 130:5 and 7—patient and expectant waiting and hoping.
* The hope is in the direction of Yahweh—“unto” Him. He is the faithful God who has entered into covenant with His people and consequently has established a relationship with them. As the mother mentioned in v. 2 has a natural care and concern for her child, Yahweh even more so cares for His own.
* Give up prideful ambitions—**from this time forth and forever**!

CONCLUSION

This figure presented by David is “graceful, touching, original, [and] beautifully expressive of the humility of soul chastened by disappointment.” Such humble rest comes after much “cost…pain and strife” and results in such a pure and unselfish relationship with Yahweh. The child when weaned often experiences grief, disappointment, and confusion at the absence of his “joy and comfort” found in nursing, but now taken away—but why? When finally his head submissively lays in his mother’s bosom after learning true contentment and trust in her goodness, he has learned a true lesson in humility (P. pp. 407-408).

The humble believer who is delivered from pride and self-seeking learns that his true food “is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work” (Jn. 4:34).

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