

**Psalms of the Degrees (Psalms 120-134)
Celebrating Triumph Over Trouble Through Trust in God**

Psalm 131 - The Contented Soul

- 1 *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.*
- 2 *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.*
- 3 *O Israel, hope in the Lord
From this time forth and forever.*

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: Psalm 131 is one of the four Psalms of David which Hezekiah included in the the Psalms of the Degrees. This is how the great English Bible teacher John Phillips suggested why Hezekiah would have selected David's psalm and its relevance to Hezekiah's day.

All this, of course, was especially relevant in Hezekiah's day. The overthrow of Sennacherib's host was a major step in Israel's spiritual development. The danger now was that the nation would become cocky and independent, forgetting that God had given the victory. Or else, horrified and appalled at the devastation wrought in the land by the invader and fearful that the Assyrians might come back, the nation might feel a debilitating sense of insecurity. "*O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forever.*" Words could not be more appropriate to Hezekiah's need at this crisis hour in trying to bring before his people the spirit that should motivate the nation. One can picture him handing this short psalm over to the choirmaster. "Note this last verse," he might say. "When the choir comes to this verse, make them sing it out with all they have. Pull out all the stops." John Phillips

I might also add, it is interesting to remember that God had to humble the prideful heart of Hezekiah after he was healed from his illness & failed to give God the credit when visited by the delegation from Babylon. We read in 2 Chronicles 32: 25-26,

But Hezekiah gave no return for the benefit he received, because his heart was proud; therefore wrath came on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. However, Hezekiah humbled the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord did not come on them in the days of Hezekiah.

Could it be Hezekiah included this Psalm as a reminder of the lesson learned? One of my favorite quotes about this Psalm comes from Spurgeon: "One of the shortest Psalms to read but one of the longest to learn."

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FOR TODAY

1. Proudful Heart: The word translated “proud” means to be “lifted up” and it carries the idea of **UNDERVALUING** people (unless they seem worth cultivating for some advantage), & **OVERESTIMATING** the importance of yourself. The ultimate goal is to be exalted in the eyes of others and receive the **ADULATION** of men.

- Example

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 6: 1

- Consequence

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling...God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Proverbs 5: 18 & James 4: 6

- Corrective

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another more important than himself... Philippians 2: 3

2. Haughty Eyes: The proudful heart focuses the eyes on **SELFISH AMBITION**. The proud person is always looking to compare and compete with others, and scheming in his heart on how to outdo or outperform others to achieve his own selfish interests.

- Example: James 3: 13 - 4: 6

- Consequence

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

James 3: 16

- Corrective

...do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Philippians 2: 4

3. Weaned Soul: Like a weaned child resting peacefully upon his mother, this is the soul resting peacefully on God, totally confident He will **TAKE CARE OF ME**.

- Example: King David (Psalm 62)

- Consequence

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4: 11-13

- Corrective: Five soul searching questions

- What is the condition of my heart before God?

“O Lord, my heart is not proud”

- Where am I focused?

“nor my eyes haughty”

- What am I most concerned about?

“Nor do I involve myself in great matters, Or in things too difficult for me.”

- Am I choosing gratitude and contentment?

“Surely I have composed and quieted my soul”

- Where is my hope placed?

“O Israel, hope in the Lord, from this time forth and forever.”