

Good things come in small packages

Devotional December 4, 2020

By Major Brian Coles

Psalms 131 is one of the shortest psalms in the Bible – only 3 verses in length. But, as the old saying goes, “Good things come in small packages.”

The 19th century preacher, Charles Spurgeon, said of this psalm, “Comparing all the psalms to gems, we should liken this to a pearl; how beautifully it will adorn the neck of patience...”

This psalm could easily be skimmed over by a hurried reader – considered of almost insignificant value when compared to other psalms.

But nevertheless, it contains a timely message for us all.

David composes lyrics that address a hazardous and dangerous habit: that of being proud as in being arrogant.

He’s saying that he is *not* proud, arrogant, or interested in being seen, heard, or noticed.

In fact, he is announcing his plan to move out of the limelight and away from the public eye.

Genuine humility isn’t something we can announce very easily. It’s not something we announce from the rooftop, “Hey, look at me. I’m so humble!”

Perhaps you’ve heard the rather humorous account of the man who attempted to write a book about his own humility and had trouble choosing a title.

Humility and How I Attained it seemed inappropriate, as did, *How I Become Very Humble*.

He finally decided on *Me and My Humility* – and included 12 full-page pictures of himself!

Humility is not something you announce. It either is or is not a character trait in one’s life.

When David penned the words of Ps. 131, I don't think he was announcing to the world how humble he was.

That's because he is writing exclusively to the Lord, as v.1 indicates. "My heart is not proud, O LORD,..."

We know nothing of what prompted David to write this psalm, but we know how often we feel humbled after we have sinned or made some terrible mistakes.

At those times, we can feel like finding the nearest cave and crawling in.

At other times when we get a glimpse of our own pride, and our deceptive attempts to cover it up,

we can fall before God asking him to forgive us, and even to remove us or hide us from the scrutiny of the public eye.

Perhaps something like that is what prompted David to write this song of humility.

Let's break it down. V.1, "My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me."

In the Hebrew language, whatever appears first in a sentence is frequently placed in that position for the purpose of emphasis.

This is what we find in v.1. There are 3 negative statements at the beginning of 3 clauses: "Not proud" ... "Not haughty" ... "I do not concern [or involve] myself."

David is telling us that his heart is not proud. In other words, he does not have a "look at me" kind of attitude.

Nor are his eyes haughty, a word similar in meaning to being proud or arrogant.

David goes on to say that he does not concern or involve himself in great matters, in things too wonderful [or as some translations have it, too difficult] for me.

The idea David's communicating to us here is that he's not pursuing places of prominence or greatness. He doesn't need such a place in his life any longer.

He reminds me of Moses. According to Ac. 7.22, Moses was educated in the finest schools Egypt had to offer.

He was gifted with a powerful personality. He was a most impressive man – a mighty warrior, brave, brilliant, and heroic.

He was destined to become Pharaoh of Egypt. But after it was discovered he killed a man,

he fled Egypt and wound up in the Midian desert – a forgotten place of obscurity – where he lived for 40 years, leading the quiet life of a shepherd.

Like Moses, David chose to slip away and not involve himself in any great matters requiring public presence.

How did David respond to this time of quietness? Look at v.2:

“But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.”

The word “calmed” in Hebrew means “to smooth or level.” David is telling us that his inner being is not churning and stormy, but calm and smooth.

It's a beautiful description of tranquility and patience. The result is that he is quieted within; he is inwardly still.

After telling us of his inner calm condition, David gives a tender illustration of a child quietly resting on his mother – and twice he uses the word ‘weaned’ to describe the child.

Picture a baby no longer fretting for his mother's milk, no longer demanding and restless. All is calm and contented.

How does this symbolic analogy fit into David's experience? The child is David's inner being. The mother represents his public life.

And David's telling us he is weaned from the desire to be in the limelight; to be in a place of prominence in public life.

Then in v.3 he writes, “Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore.”

David learned a truth he had to share. He wanted his entire nation to enter into this joyous experience with him.

I find this Psalm so comforting. I have needed its message. Perhaps you have too. It is quite possible that God is ‘weaning’ you away from a source of pride.

You may have trusted in the wealth of this world, only to have it melt like a chocolate in your hands.

You may have believed in someone only to have him or her fail you and even turn against you.

You may have been accustomed to people noticing you but now that is all in the past. Perhaps your talent is no longer in demand, your counsel no longer sought.

An arrogant person refuses to accept such situations. But perhaps you are being weaned from the mother of self-importance and of public recognition.

Who does the weaning? The child? No, never. The act of weaning is done **to** the child, not **by** the child. God is responsible for the weaning.

He is removing every crutch upon which you would lean so that you will lean only on him.

He is changing your diet to a new kind of food – from the milk of immaturity to the meat of genuine humility. And he wants you to learn this “both now and forevermore.”

Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to ask yourself, “Do I have to be the centre of attention in order to feel fulfilled?”

Would others think of me as confident and self-assured, or as arrogant?

Can you think of someone you admire for his or her genuine humility? Why not send that person a card expressing your gratitude, and see that the card gets into his or her hands anonymously – leave it unsigned.

