

Contentment- Psalm 131

Spurgeon said about this Psalm, "It is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn." In this short Psalm there are three verses and three things to learn that correspond with each verse.

The first verse shows us that we need to learn to denounce pride. This means first that we should denounce the attitude of pride. The attitude of pride is rooted in the heart and revealed in the eyes. Jesus described himself by saying "I am meek and humble in heart." Becoming like Christ means being able to say, "O LORD, my heart is not lifted up." The attitude of pride is rooted in the heart, the center of our being. This is evident in Prov. 4:23, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." We must guard our heart with all vigilance from the attitude of pride. The attitude of pride is also revealed in the eyes. This is seen in David's next words, "my eyes are not raised too high." Our eyes communicate what our heart contains. Therefore in Prov. 6:16-17 we are told "There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him." Then he begins this list of seven with "haughty eyes". Denouncing the attitude of pride should also be accompanied by denouncing the ambition of pride, "I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me." Clint Eastwood's character famously said, "A man's got to know his limitations." This is what David is saying at the end of verse 1. There are things beyond our ability to perceive and achieve as humans. We need to be humble enough to realize this and admit "God is God and I am not...God is God and I am man...for only God is God." Someone said, "To be humble is to have a proper perspective of yourself." We need a proper perspective about ourselves in relationship to God and in relationship to others. The call to denounce pride is huge because, "At every stage of Christian development and in every sphere of Christian discipleship, pride is our greatest enemy and humility is our greatest friend." (John Stott)

The second verse of this Psalm indicates that we need to learn to practice contentment. David writes, "But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me." If it is true that "To be humble is to have a proper perspective of yourself" then "To be content is to have a proper perspective of your circumstances." What is a proper perspective of your circumstances if you are a believer? It is the perspective that our circumstances are governed by God. This is more than thinking that God has general control over your circumstances, it means believing God has total control over my circumstances and He is perfectly wise and perfectly good. When we have this perspective, we can be content in all circumstances like David, and later Paul (Phil. 4:11-13) The picture of contentment we see in this verse is that of a weaned child with its mother. The weaning of a child is part of a child growing up by moving from milk to solid food. The weaned child is content to be with its mother without getting her milk. God wants you to grow up so that you no longer come to him for what you can get out of him, but so that you come to him because you want him. Our circumstances may be difficult and disappointing, but we should practice contentment because "I can do all things through him who gives me strength."

In the last verse, as those who are God's people, we see we need to learn to embrace hope. David had learned, at this point in his life, to stop putting his confidence in himself and to put his confidence in God and his providence. David accepts his present circumstances as coming from God, is content with where he isn't and where he is in his life, and anticipates his future with the hope that God, with perfect wisdom and love, would direct his path and dictate his place. He exhorts all of Israel to join him in hoping in the LORD.

The words, "O Israel, hope in the LORD" are found at the beginning of the next to the last verse of the previous Psalm and at the beginning of the last verse in this Psalm. These two Psalms end on the same note but are different tunes. In the Psalm 130 the exhortation is to hope in the LORD to experience redemption from our sin. In Psalm 131, we are exhorted to hope in the LORD to experience contentment in our lives. When we put our hope and trust in God's provision for our sins, Jesus Christ, we experience redemption from sin. Then, as we put our hope and trust in God's providence in our lives, we experience contentment in life, as described in this short Psalm.