

PSALMS

Chapter 131

I Have Calmed and Quieted My Soul

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. 2 But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. 3 O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore.

Ps 131 A confession of humble trust in the Lord—appropriately placed next to Ps 130. (CSB)

Because Ps 132 refers to David’s triumphant entry with the ark of the covenant, some scholars relate this song of David to his expression of humility in 2Sm 6:20–22. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–2, humility and quietness; v 3, hope in the Lord. (TLSB)

The 131st psalm is a psalm of instruction. It speaks against the proud, stiff-necked saints who comfort themselves by placing confidence in their great services of worship and their great holiness, and not in the forgiveness of which the preceding psalm speaks. In contrast to the proud saints, the psalmist is declaring: “I cannot travel so high and boast of my holiness as these people do, who rely on themselves. For whenever I have wanted to do so, not grounding and stilling my heart on God’s grace (which is what means to ‘be still’), I become like a ‘weaned child.’ Without the milk of the promise and grace, I cry day and night and have no peace in my conscience.

Therefore, this is the psalmist conclusion: Let Israel and everyone trust and hope in God and depend only on his grace. Let no one take this sustenance from you. I commend it to you, for the promised and coming Christ is in it. (Reading the Psalms with Luther)

131:1 *O Lord, my heart* – In the presence of the covenantal God, the psalmist has experienced how wonderful complete submission to God is. Submission implies an attitude of humility (cf. Mic. 6:8) (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary – Psalms)

proud ... haughty. More than all else, it is human pride that pits man against God (cf. 2Sa 6:21–22). (CSB)

He does not exalt himself. He has given up on pride. (TLSB)

The parallel verb is “raised” or “high” (s.v. Ps 46:10). The idiom “haughty” or “high eyes” expresses ambition, an overreaching ambition; it is the “proud look” of Proverbs 6 that the Lord hates. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

My eyes – The term “eyes” means more than an arrogant look; it includes the ambitious thoughts. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)

concern myself with. (Presume to) walk among, live among, be party to. (CSB)

The humility expressed is not false humility which refuses God's calling as Moses did. It is not a lack of confidence which leads a person to idle his life away. It is not negligence of the duties God has given us. It is rather the recognition that some works remain in God's sphere, not ours. We cannot repay for a single sin by heaping up zealous works or by burdening ourselves with self-punishment. We rest in peace, confident of God's forgiveness. (PBC)

to great... too marvelous for me. Heroic exploits or achievements to rival, if not substitute for, the mighty works of God. The focus seems to be on not claiming Godlike powers (thus trusting in God for deliverance and blessing) rather than on seeking (or claiming) Godlike understanding. (CSB)

The human mind is small and limited, a vessel too small to take in the mysteries of life or to understand the workings of the infinite God. (TLSB)

131:2 *weaned child.* A child of four or five who walks trustingly beside his mother. (CSB)

Not a nursing baby, whose fretting and crying are only stilled by the mother's milk, but a weaned child, who is content simply to be with its mother. Likewise, the soul is calmed and quieted simply by being in the Lord's presence. (TLSB)

God's people are still children who depend on their Father's care and provision, but they are not spiritual babies who demand satisfaction according to their timetable. Like respectful, trusting children they wait on the Lord. (PBC)

The psalmist has been like a child in the presence of God. Oh, the wonder of quiet contentment with God! He has enjoyed the walk with God in which he "stilled" (composed") himself and "quieted" (i.e., "silenced" or "found rest," 62:1, 5) his soul. (The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

131:3 As he has done, so ought all Israel—for all time. (CSB)

Hope in the Lord – The individual's childlike humility and trust is applied to God's people. The Church must always remain humble and rest in Christ, the ground of its hope. (TLSB)

This word "hope" (s.v. Ps. 31:24) is the same word used in the exhortation in Psalm 130; there the people were encouraged to hope for full forgiveness of sin. Here it is more general, encouraging people to put their full trust in the Lord rather than delude themselves into thinking they have the ability to solve all the problems of life. (A Commentary on Psalms – Ross)
Based on his wonderful relationship and walk with the Lord, David calls on Israel to trust in the Lord forever-more (cf. 130:7) (The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Psalms)

Ps 131 Before God and the mysteries of existence, we are like little children. And like little children, we can find solace in God's love for us in Jesus Christ, who likewise became a little child on our behalf. While some believe that a child cannot have faith, Christ points to children as models for faith. • Give us the faith of children, Lord. Calm us and quiet us by Your presence in Word and Sacrament. In the name of the Christ Child. Amen. (TLSB)