

Good morning. It is a wonderful morning to gather together and worship our glorious and gracious God. But as always, before we begin, let's pray and seek the Lord's provision for our time this morning. Dear Lord, please grant us wisdom as we look into your word. Lord, give us humble and contrite hearts that trust in you. By the power of your spirit, through the preaching of your word, we plead that you would make us more like Christ. It's in his name we pray. Amen.

Well, it was August 1st, 2007, and my soul was in anguish. It was the day that my dad passed away in the hospital while awaiting a lung transplant. It just didn't make sense to me. He was a good person. He worked hard and always served widows. He'd been a deacon in the church. There were hundreds of people praying for him, and this was before social media, so it seemed like quite a few people. I'd watched the preceding months as my childhood hero had wasted away and become wheelchair-bound, eventually sick enough that he was hospitalized and couldn't leave that for the last two months of his life.

I thought, surely God did not want him to die. Amanda was pregnant with Landry. My dad had been and would be and could have been a wonderful papa to my grandkids, to his grandkids. And I thought, God must not understand how much good my dad could do or that he's a good person.

And we'd earnestly ask the Lord to heal him or bring him new lungs. Doesn't scripture tell us to ask and it will be given to you? Like Job, I asked the Lord, why do you hide your face from me? Deep down, I just wanted to know why is this happening to me?

I'd like to say I snapped out of it quickly and faithfully trusted the Lord right away, but it was a time of spiritual darkness for the next few years. Clearly, I did not have peace and contentment in my soul. My circumstances had knocked me out of any spiritual footing that I had. It was difficult to focus to anything related to the Lord. Did not even want to pray to the Lord for quite some time. And I blamed the Lord for not answering my prayers the way that I wanted them answered. So how about you, saints? Have you doubted the Lord's plan for your life? Have your circumstances in life knocked you off course? Or do you plead, why me, Lord? Some of you likely are struggling with that right now.

Well, the good news is that God has not left us on our own to figure this out. I'm so thankful for God and His wisdom, using David to show us how to process our circumstances, and by the power of the Spirit, to humbly turn to the Lord. So today, we'll hear about that example in Psalm 131, where we see David learn to find contentment and peace in God. And he will teach us to do the same through this process. So we'll start by reading Psalm 131. I'll be reading from the ESV. A song of a sense of David. Oh 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. But I have calmed and quieted my soul. Like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.

O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Notice in the title here in this psalm that it says the psalm of ascents, which makes it one of 15 psalms utilized for this purpose. They're listed in our Bible as Psalms 120 through 134. And these were the Psalms that were sung by the Jews on their pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem for the feasts of Pentecost, Passover, and Tabernacles. Not only did it signify an upward physical journey because Jerusalem sat up on a hill, it also signified a spiritual ascent of the soul of the individual toward God as they approached Jerusalem.

It was designed to repair their hearts and their minds for a correct posture for worshipping the Lord. As a side note, our worship liturgy or service has been prepared with the same intention, to bring us together and worship before our Lord, and then it reaches its pinnacle in our feasting together in the Lord's Supper.

In this short psalm, we'll see how David learned and practiced humble dependence on the Lord and called for everyone else to do the same. David's experience of wrestling and learning to trust yielded the title of the sermon, The Fruit of Humble Dependence. As a reflection of the years of David's struggles and growth, Charles Spurgeon describes Psalm 131 as one of the shortest psalms to read, but one of the longest psalms to learn. Before we jump into the text, let's briefly review some of David's life since it had such a heavy influence on the writing of the psalm.

Thankfully, Brandon and the preaching team over the last couple of years have outlined the life of David very well. David's been in the school of humility for many years, working as a shepherd, fighting off lions and bears. We also recall that after he was anointed to become king, it was 10 years before David rose to the throne. 10 very long and challenging years.

The people chose Saul because they looked at the outward appearance, and they saw this tall and handsome warrior, while it was God that chose David because he looks at the heart. Let's picture these events from David's perspective as well. King Saul tried to pin David to the wall with a spear, not once, but twice, and David did not retaliate or seek vengeance. David is then after that on the run. with no place to call home for many years. Everywhere he goes, David must look over his shoulder and see if Saul or his men are right behind him. David could easily have ended Saul's life. The man who had tried for many years to kill David was at his fingertips in many vulnerable spots, yet David would not kill him. Why is that? Do you think that you just let someone go free after years of hunting you and trying to kill you?

Well, all these things provide the backdrop for our psalm today as we consider David's words and thoughts. So this morning, we'll walk through three points from this psalm that correlate with each verse. And then I'll wrap up with three points of practical wisdom that we can learn from this psalm that

the Lord has provided us. And then ultimately, we want this psalm, this day, this time together to help us to grow in our love and devotion as we become more like Christ. So starting with the text, I'll expound on these following three points.

First point from verse one, David renounces three things that prevent humble dependence on the Lord. The second point from verse two, David lets us know the process by which he developed humility and dependence. The third point from verse three, David exhorts others to become humbly dependent on the Lord. So let's start with the first point in verse one. David makes it clear to us that sinful habits must be put away to depend on the Lord. Let me read verse 1. Oh Lord, my heart is not lifted up. My eyes are not raised too high. I do not occupy myself with things too great or too marvelous for me. One real key in this verse, in verse 1, is to notice the posture and the tone of David. This verse begins with an all-caps LORD in our Bibles, which is translated from the term Yahweh.

David knew this as the sacred covenant name of God. It's a relational name, a name that speaks to our covenant-keeping God whose promises are always kept. David uses this intimate term for God to emphasize that God is present, faithful, and actively involved in the lives of His people. David's not addressing some lifeless idol or aloof God that is far off and cannot or will not be reached. No. David knows the God of steadfast love and enduring covenantal promises. This is the God that anointed him king, protected him from Saul, and brought him through years of hardship. And he did that in order for him to rule as king over God's very own people, Israel.

So let's move to the next phrase, my heart is not lifted up. Or as in other translations like the CSB, my heart is not proud. What does David mean by saying this? David knew the truth as we see it laid out in the New Testament in both James 4, 6 and 1 Peter 5, 5. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. David knows his place before the Lord must be one of bowed down reverence and not rebellion or an apathetic, woe is me, self-pity. David puts voice to this truth in Psalm 119, 16. Incline my heart to your testimonies and not to selfish gain.

In these passages, when David refers to the heart, he's speaking of the inner man versus the outer man, or the physical man. We see that detailed in 2 Corinthians 4, 16. So essentially, all the references we see, such as heart, mind, soul, little s spirit, and conscience refer to the inner man. We could spend hours unpacking this topic, but for our purposes, we'll use that definition this morning. David possessed the same insight as well as Paul concerning the outcome of what happens with the renewal of this inner person.

And we can see that in 2 Corinthians 4.18.

We do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. David, by God's grace, knows that his circumstances are transient or fleeting in the light of the eternity and glory of God. Are you letting the tyranny of right now rob you of the joyful expectation of eternity in the presence of your glorious and majestic Heavenly Father? Well, if you are, then David has told us, follow his example of dying to self and living for God.

And he continues on here in verse 1. My eyes are not raised too high. In this phrase, David affirms that his aim or ambition is not misplaced or beyond where it should be. In thinking through potential context of this psalm, David is not seeking to take the throne as king or make Saul look bad or weak. And since we know from other scripture that the eye represents the window to the soul, we see that David does not strive then to bypass the Lord's plans or make his own way by usurping the leadership of Israel.

Let's recall David's response to Saul in all of these trials. After years of being chased and fleeing, as David humbly relies on the Lord, let's read in 1 Samuel 26, 11, his response as they question whether he should take the life of Saul. As the Lord is my witness, I will never lift my hand against the Lord's anointed. David has a deep and abiding respect for the leader God has put in place. And from other Psalms, we see how David properly directs his eyes.

Psalms 121.1, David says, I lift my eyes up to the hills. Why does he do this? Because in verse 2, my help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 119, verse 6, I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on your commandments. And verse 15, I will meditate on your precepts. I will fix my eyes on your ways. David teaches us much about the right focus of our ambition and goals.

So far, we've seen David has rejected pride and ambition, but now he'll deal with the sin of presumption in the final portion of verse 1, which reads, I do not occupy myself with things too great or too marvelous for me. For David to completely and humbly depend on the Lord, he must carefully and intentionally direct his thoughts and concerns. While we know that pride sees oneself as more important than others, and we know that ambition seeks to overtake or have dominion over others, the sin of presumption is far more deadly. The sin of presumption occurs when someone thinks or acts in a way that shows that they know better than the Lord. They're in control of their own future, the captain of their own ship, so to speak.

David knew this danger. from seeing Saul commit this very sin in 1 Samuel 13 when he did not wait for Samuel to come and he offered unauthorized sacrifices to the Lord. Again, the wicked rebellion of Saul appeared in 1 Samuel 15 when Saul had been told by the Lord to completely destroy everything. But Saul knew better and brought back the spoils and King Agag to give to the Lord. At this point, we remember then that The kingdom was torn from Saul, and we remember the famous quote, to obey is better than a sacrifice. Samuel goes on to tell Saul that you've been rejected because you've rejected the word of the Lord, and now he has rejected you as king.

Dear saints, how dangerous is this sin and presumption? Presuming on God's grace is rebellion and defiance against an omniscient God. Ultimately, David knows that this sin leads to a hardened conscience and spiritual death, which is why he prays to the Lord in Psalm 19, 13. Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins.

Let them not have dominion over me. Does this have application to us today? I mean, I don't believe that any of us have been told by the Lord that we'll be king of Israel. And likely, none of us have been the victims of attempted murder by our president or had to flee for our lives from our best friend's dad. Surely, we do not presume to know better than God. No one would do that. However, we know ultimately things too marvelous or glorious can dominate our thoughts.

I know they did for me when I wanted my dad to receive this lung transplant and not suffer like he did and die. But I know all of you have questions as well, tough questions. I know many of you have struggled with. So why did my baby or child have to die?

Why do I have cancer or chronic pain or this chronic illness? Why didn't I get that job? Why don't I have a spouse? Why can't I have kids? The list could go on and on. These are obviously the most difficult scenarios, but presumption exists in the day-to-day as well. Why can't I have that car? Why can't I have more money? Why is my hair black or blonde? Or why don't I have any hair at all? All of those have the same root problem, a lack of trust or contentment in God's plan for our lives. We think if only God knew better, then surely he would have given me what I wanted. After all, what I want isn't bad or wrong. I work hard and I try my best. I think I deserve it.

Job fell victim to this when he thought that he deserved a trial to acquit him because of his integrity. He thought it was impeccable. However, God shows up and lets Job know who God is. Job is then driven, as we'll see, to repentance from this presumption.

It's in Job 42, 3 and 5 through 6. I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes. So once Job really saw and understood the Lord, what was his response? He despised himself and repented right away. Sounds like Isaiah's experience, right? The Lord's presence, Isaiah responds, woe is me, for I am lost, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. So we see from this that contemplating the greatness of our God keeps us in our place.

Another issue we face as we contemplate the things that would fall under this heading of things too marvelous or too wonderful for me, is really, at their core, these are just things that are out of our

control. We've all been overly concerned at times in our lives with things we could not control, things we think of like natural disasters, floods, tornadoes, the body the Lord's given you, whether it be a chronic illness or pain, or just wanting to be taller or shorter. And we all know people's hurtful words and actions are things we cannot control, but they are sharp. At the end of the day, we all just want to be in control of our lives, especially in America, right? Independence and personal rights are part of the air we breathe. We believe the lie that Satan spread about eating from the tree in the garden.

You will not surely die, for God knows when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. You will be like God. I've heard it said that God created man in his own image, And man has been trying to return the favor ever since. So what we're talking about essentially is God replacements. Just like in Hosea that we heard about. Idols of the heart.

Anything that we can worship that does not demand something from us, but rather can be controlled by us. Each day as we're tempted to occupy our minds with these things that we do not control, we must, we must, By the power of the Spirit, meditate like David on the words of God, especially Deuteronomy 29, 29. The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. So we cannot forget, saints, the secret things belong to the Lord our God, not us.

There's so much benefit and freedom in this wonderful truth We don't have to be anxious for tomorrow. We don't have to doubt the future. We don't have to stress out or try to control other people because ultimately, we can't do that. So as we trust in this truth of a sovereign God, consider this quote from R.C. Sproul. If there is one single molecule in the universe running around loose, totally free of God's sovereignty, then we have no guarantee that a single promise of God will ever be fulfilled. Can you see then the benefit of trusting the truth of God's Word, that He is sovereign over everything, all things?

It's everywhere in Scripture. I'm sure you'll see it more hopefully after this sermon even. So we see places like Psalm 103 19, Psalm 115 3, Daniel 4 35, sorry 4 35, Ephesians 1 11, and that's just to name a few. It's everywhere. So we can trust our holy and sovereign God as we meditate on passages like Romans 8 28. And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose. All things work together for good. Memorize that verse. Rest in it. Humbly depend on it.

What is God's purpose for us in all these situations? Well, in verse 29 then, it tells us, following that one, to be conformed to the image of Christ. That is the ultimate goal and ambition, as we learned in the new members class, sanctification, yesterday.

So I think this now leads us nicely into verse two, Psalm 131, where David lives out his purpose, lives out this purpose. So verse two, but I have calmed and quieted my soul. We'll get to the rest of the verse in a little bit to see the analogy provides, but let's first digest this initial portion here. So far in this Psalm, David has forsaken pride, ambition, and presumption. But now we get to see David's technique for developing humble dependence on the Lord as point number two of three in this sermon. Calming and quieting his soul is not a totally separate event from all that we've just seen that David has been able to do in verse one.

In Psalm 119, we find fuel for this tranquility of the soul that David has. So listen and learn now from how the Spirit's working in David's life and the resulting thoughts and actions of David. In verse 20, my soul is consumed with longing for your rules at all times. Are you longing for God's word at all times? The striving and ambition within David's drives him closer to God so that he relies on the Lord then for all of his thoughts, actions, and attitudes. Verse 76 continues, let your steadfast love comfort me according to your promise to your servant. David's ability to practice calmness flows from meditation on God's promises. Take note of that.

Also, we see that David directs his heart towards God instead of pride in Psalm 119.58. I entreat your favor with all of my heart. Be gracious to me according to your promise.

David's heart thrives under God's favor and promise. This is in contrast to David's enemies we see in Psalm 119, 69, and 70. The insolent smear me with lies, but with my whole heart I keep your precepts. Their heart is unfeeling like fat, but I delight in your law. We see David continually relies on joyful, obedient heart that is refreshed by God's teaching. We see what this calmed and quiet soul looks like then in Psalm 119, 81.

My soul longs for your salvation. I hope in your word. We see here, as we've mentioned before, in order to calm and quiet his soul, David directs his inner being toward the promises of salvation, which was ultimately fulfilled, as we know, in Christ. So let's go back now to the example of the weaned child with its mother in verse 2. the final part of verse two. Why does God give us this picture to represent the state of his soul?

Picture of a child makes sense, right? Jesus tells us the importance of childlike faith. A child has no pretense or arrogance, but remains humbly dependent on its parents. But why does David include a weaned child in this descriptor? Well, we do know that a child that is not weaned will be searching and looking for that source of food, the sustenance for life. A child is constantly seeking to gain something from its mother. In contrast, the weaned child is content just to be in the presence of its mother, to rest its head on its mother's chest and just be calm and quiet.

It's this picture of Psalm 131 that has always captured my attention. So often I just imagine how wonderful it would be to rest my weary head and just be fully satisfied right where I am. More often though, I have this inner tension or restlessness that distracts me and prevents me from focusing on what really matters.

Ultimately, it's just an issue with the sin of idolatry, just like the Israelites. We're no better. We say, I want God plus the Assyrians to fight my battles for me, as we just saw in Hosea. It's a God plus attitude. I can trust and abide in God, and I really need this job too. I can rely on God, and I need to make sure my 401k can get me through retirement. For me, it was, I know God can carry me through this trial, and I need him to make sure my dad gets a lung transplant. It's like the child that is not weaned. We desperately want something from God, and oftentimes we want that more than we want God himself. We start to think a right relationship with God is okay, but the benefits are what I really want.

David reminds us of the solution to this wrong thinking, going back to Psalm 119, 36. Incline my heart to your testimonies and not to selfish gain. Further instruction in verse 37, turn my eyes from looking at worthless things and give me life in your ways. Do you see earlier how David prayed for these things and the Lord answered? We saw the results in verse one. David's heart is not lifted up. It is inclined to the Lord's testimonies. David's eyes are not raised too high.

They're given life in the Lord's ways. Thank you, Lord, for answering these prayers. So when you're doubting and when you're unsatisfied, look to the Lord. Meditate on his word and seek him in prayer. Remember Peter's instruction to the saints to cast all your anxieties on God because he cares for you.

One more consideration of the weaned child. Many of you are thinking about the obvious. What about the weaning process? The mothers in the room that have weaned children are acutely aware of this. The child didn't just wake up one morning and say, Mom, I'm gonna go get breakfast on my own. I'll see you later. The child did not ask to be weaned. The child did not voluntarily stop nursing. It's a painful process, both for the child and the mother.

And David has learned this lesson. Fighting off bears and lions, fleeing from his life from the king and his very own son, not taking vengeance into his hands, and many more things we could outline. David gives us insight into how this was developed in his own life. Back to Psalm 119, verse 67. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep your word. Verse 71, it is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. See the benefit of affliction there. Can't see that on our own.

What was David's response then to this suffering? Not rebellion, not defiance, not running away by God's grace, David humbly learned from the Lord and obeyed the Lord. This was possible only as God had empowered David to renounce pride, ambition, and presumption in verse one. The fruit of humble

dependence had been planted, then it was watered, and God was providing the growth that would produce the fruit.

In this process, through suffering, the truths of Hebrews 12 come to light, where we see that a father disciplines the child he loves for the child's benefit, just as a mother, in this instance, brings the child through the discipline of being weaned. Why, you may ask? God faithfully gives us answers. Hebrews 12, 11 tells us, for the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Amen.

David has learned, just like the child, how to progress then from milk to solid food by the schoolhouse of suffering. As far as my father's affliction and illness and subsequent death, God used that trial to bring myself and our family to the knowledge and practice of dependence on the Lord. Though obviously there are ups and downs, nothing's perfect this side of heaven. I have been able to have true contentment and peace, but only by humble dependence on the Lord through his word and by his spirit.

To our last point in verse three, David can no longer contain himself. Having learned the glorious benefits of humble dependence on the Lord, David's compelled to share this truth with his brothers and his sisters in the Lord. This exhortation's an outpouring of David's joyful excitement. Having learned the secret of contentment, just like Paul and Philippians. Verse three reads, O Israel, put your hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.

David knows that hope in the Lord is the only way in which they can make it through suffering and trials. It's the only sense in which they can be truly satisfied or content in life, by having a deep and abiding relationship with the Lord. Remember, hope means anchored assurance. It means one that is not movable or going to change with circumstances or any turn of events.

David knows this value, especially of the future king, in calling all his people to rely on and depend on the one true source of life. His life is a living testimony and a grace to the grace and mercy and the goodness of God. who is willing to train up his child to faithful reliance on the giver of all things.

David knows the benefit of this testimony. Back to Psalm 119, 74, those who fear you shall see me and rejoice because I have hoped in your word. Dear saints, listen to David. Learn from David. Place all of your confidence in the Lord. Trust in his good provision for you. It's the only chance we have to become like a weaned child with its mother.

David sees that he was taught these things in order to promote the glory and beauty of the name of God and to share it with everyone in order to spread the glory of God over all the earth. So we've seen

through Psalm 131, David, by God's grace, has shared three points of practical wisdom here that we can learn from.

These points highlight the fruit of humble dependence. But first, we ask, what is this fruit? Well, that fruit is both contentment and peace. These are two very closely related things, but they are not the same. I'll attempt a brief explanation. Contentment is a settled satisfaction, trusting that our sovereign and wise God rules over all circumstances, both good and bad.

For peace, one aspect is this inner calm that we have that comes to us because we have been reconciled with God. Now that we are no longer enemies of God, we have peace with God. The other feature of peace comes to us as the fruit of the Spirit, whereby now we can live out our experience of greater trust and faith in our sovereign God. Paul refers to this peace that surpasses all understanding in Philippians. And it's this peace then that guards the heart, which ultimately then is expressed in contentment in the daily circumstances of our lives. Here's a summary of these two interdependent realities, borrowing from John Calvin.

A believer becomes content not because circumstances are ideal, but because God is sovereign, wise, and good. That trust quiets anxiety and produces peace. I'll read that one more time. A believer becomes content not because circumstances are ideal, but because God is sovereign, wise, and good. That trust quiets anxiety and produces peace.

So to summarize the three points of Psalm 131, in conjunction with these three points of wisdom, in my best efforts at alliteration, they are positional peace, practiced peace, and perfect peace. Positional peace. Positional peace, in verse one, demonstrates how God is God, and we are not. By knowing our proper place and having our hearts, eyes, and minds in the proper posture, we can rest with peace and contentment. Practice peace. Practice peace, in verse two, illustrates our need to actively direct our inner being to God's promised truths in his word.

It's a disciplined process of depending on the Lord for who He is and what He has promised while making sure we're not seeking God for our own selfish gain. Perfect peace. Perfect peace in verse three can only come from the Prince of Peace. The finished work of Christ provides our only assurance of salvation. As we look forward to forevermore, We joyfully anticipate living and worshiping then in the presence of our holy and righteous God, and that does deserve all of our focus and attention.

Dear saints, may the Lord continue to provide us the strength to become more humbly dependent upon him until that day when Christ comes again. Let's pray. Dear gracious Heavenly Father, grant us the humble dependence on you that provides both peace and contentment. As we look to your word and

rely on your spirit, please continue to make us more like Christ. And may all of this be done so that you get the glory. It's in Christ's holy name I pray, amen.