

## Humility and Hope

Scripture Reading: Psalm 131

What are the Songs of Degrees or the Songs of Ascents? They are also called the Gradual Psalms or the Pilgrim Psalms. The Hebrew word for “*degrees – ascents*” means “*to go up.*” What was going on in Hebrew liturgy more than twenty-five hundred years ago is a bit of a mystery. There are several theories about this special group of fifteen psalms (Psalms 120 – 134). It is very probable that they were organized and used as a hymnal in a processional, going up to Jerusalem during three different annual feasts – the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Exodus 23:14-19; Deuteronomy 16:16). This special “hymnbook” is a guide for worship. It forms an important digest of Israel’s spiritual journey. The “Pilgrim Psalms” speak of the hardships and sufferings that they experienced from other nations, God’s gracious care and protection, and the privileges of being able to come to Jerusalem to worship God, who continues to give them forgiveness, guidance, protection, and provision.

We do well to remember Israel’s story. As God was blessing and providing for Israel, God was also blessing and providing for us to have the Scriptures as the foundation of our gospel, and to receive our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It would also be profitable for Christians to adopt these psalms as a digest of our spiritual journey. As with Israel, Christians are also described as pilgrims on a spiritual journey. Our citizenship is in heaven. We are here on a mission. We experience tribulation from the world. God forgives, guides, protects, and provides for us too. We, too, have the privilege of worshiping God; of being Christ’s church. The local church is described as God’s house or temple. See Hebrews 11:8-10; 13-16; I Peter 1:1-2; 2:11; John 17:16; 16:33; Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 2:11-22; I Timothy 3:14-15.

We will be considering three of these psalms, which are only three verses long. The first one we will consider is **Psalm 31 – Humility and Hope**.

### Psalm 131

<sup>1</sup> *Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.*

<sup>2</sup> *Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.*

<sup>3</sup> *Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever.*

**Humility of heart and mind (eyes) – Psalm 131:1**

*“Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.”*

Key ingredients for humility are honesty and reverence. We don’t need to focus on acting humble. Humility is primarily a perspective on ourselves, on this life, and on God. If our perspective is correct, humility will find many ways to express itself – without drawing attention to self. What we think about God is the most important thing about us. From our thoughts and understanding of God we can then build our thoughts and understanding of ourselves, of our fellow man, of this world, and of this life.

See David express modesty about the ambitions of the inner man. He will not exercise himself in matters *“too high”* (*“too great, too profound, too wonderful”*) for him. Remember that this is a king speaking! There is a healthy ambition and industriousness that we should have in life. There are areas where we are supposed to inquire and be visionary. There is also a drawing line, where we must not presume to be the authority in life and intrude into things that are not our business. Worry, fear, frustration, and desire for control are often intrusions into things that belong to God. Give careful attention to Deuteronomy 29:29. May God help our ambition to be in submission – making us industrious, but humble servants!

**Emotional maturity – Psalm 131:2**

*“Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.”*

When it comes to spiritual hunger, we are encouraged to be like newborn babes (I Peter 2:1-3). When it comes to emotional maturity we should be like much calmer children, who are weaned from the breast. This means we need God’s Spirit to give us control over our desires, passions, fears, and frustrations. This means that we should be self-contenting – not content with ourselves, but content **within** ourselves. Spiritual maturity should make us rational, peaceful, patient, and focused (Galatians 5:22-26; Ephesians 4:30-32; II Timothy 1:7; James 3:17-18). We should operate with the mind of Christ. Looking unto Jesus should give us strength, endurance, contentment, and godly order in our spirit and in our lives. See Philippians 2:5; 4:4-9,11-13,19; Hebrews 12:1-3.

**Hope in the Lord! – Psalm 131:3**

*“Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever.”*

We must stay connected to the source of humility, modesty, and maturity. We cannot simply train ourselves to have these qualities. These are graces given to those who seek the Lord and walk with Him. See Isaiah 26:3; 30:15; 55:1-3,6; Jeremiah 2:13; 9:23-24; 29:11-13; Micah 6:6-8; Psalm 16:11; Proverbs 3:5-8; John 15:1-8; Romans 5:1-5; II Peter 1:2-11.