

A God You Can Trust

<i>Text</i>	Psalm 131
<i>Reading</i>	Matthew 18:1-14
<i>Theme</i>	David testifies to a humble trust in God.
<i>Purpose</i>	To direct us to a humble childlike trust and confidence in God.

This sermon is titled, “A God you can trust”. In 1956 the United States adopted as their official motto the words, “In God we trust”. It is a commendable Christian motto and a fine statement. The difficulty is not with the words but with living up to it!

We know from the Bible that God is trustworthy, he is reliable, he is dependable. David put his trust in God. He expressed that in this short but beautiful psalm. It is a psalm of humble trust in the Lord. We are called to do this as well – to have a humble trust in God. Today we will examine these two attitudes of humility and trust.

1. Verse 1 describes his **humility** before God.

First of all, he was humble in **heart**:

“My heart is not proud, O Lord,
and my eyes are not haughty.”

Your heart is the centre of your life. Everything you think and say and do arises from your heart. Sometimes we say about a person, “At least his heart is in the right place.” By that we mean that he is good hearted and he is concerned about the right things. That is a redeeming feature; everything else will fall into place.

This psalm explains that if your heart is right then other things will follow. This is explained using the usual system of Hebrew poetry. The Hebrews wrote poetry in parallel lines. First you get one thought then that thought is repeated, or contrasted, or added to. So David writes: “My heart is not proud”, then he repeats this idea with a slight addition; “my eyes are not haughty”.

If your *heart* is proud then your *eyes* will be haughty or boastful; you will look down on others with a superior attitude. But if your heart is humble then that will reflect in the way you look at others and treat them.

Pride is a sin of the heart and is one of the worst of sins. Proverbs 6 verses 17-18 tell us that “haughty eyes” are one of the seven things the Lord hates. He hates us when we are proud in relation to others and in relation to him. Others may not know you are proud because it is something that you may hide away inside yourself. But often it will show itself in your attitude to other people – it will lead to arrogance and boasting.

Instead we are to show humility in relation to others. The Apostle Paul warns us; “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment” (Romans 12:3). Be realistic, have a sound assessment of yourself, don’t put yourself above others.

And don't put yourself above God. We must recognize who we are – sinners who have fallen short of the glory of God. He knows who we are and what we are like. He sees into every nook and cranny of our minds and lives. Nothing is hidden from him. So we have no cause for pride.

We need to learn to say, “My heart is not proud, O Lord, my eyes are not haughty.” Spurgeon notes that this might be one of the shortest of the psalms but this lesson of humility takes a long time to learn.

Jesus spoke about this humility in the passage we read in Matthew 18. The disciples asked him, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (You can see the attitude of pride even in the question). In response Jesus called a little child and had him stand among them. He said; “I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3)

Jesus not only taught us to be humble but he led us by his example. He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing – he humbled himself. (Philippians 2:6) He said; Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 9:35)

But verse 1 not only describes humility of heart but also of **mind**.

“I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.”

These lines warn us against the sin of **presumption** – of presuming to know too much.

We need to remember that many things are *beyond our comprehension*, beyond our understanding.

We are only human; we are limited; we don't know everything. The rapid expansion of knowledge makes us very aware of that. Knowledge is becoming more and more specialized. Some has said that “a specialist is someone who learns more and more about less and less until he knows everything about nothing!” Compared to God we know nothing at all. He is the Creator, we are his creatures; he is infinite, we are finite; he is all wise, we are foolish.

David was aware of that when he wrote;

“I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.” (v 1b)

He may have been thinking of Deuteronomy 29:29, “The secret things belong to the Lord but the things revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.” There are many things God has revealed to us, and we may explore these to all their depths, and we should obey all he has commanded us; but there are other things he has kept hidden from us that we must not curiously pry into. That is true of doctrines such as God's election and predestination and how that relates to our responsibility. We need to understand these truths as best as we can, but we also need to know where to stop lest we go too far.

This is also true of God's providence in our lives and in the lives of others. Why does God allow a massive tsunami, or a powerful earthquake, or devastating fires? Why does a young woman die of cancer? Why does a young godly couple struggle to have children? What is God doing in this miscarriage, or that cot death? Why does God allow such tragedies?!

The truth is, we do not know. Here we need humility of mind. These are "great matters", they are "too wonderful for me", beyond and above us. Here you and I need to trust in God.

Job came to understand this after his time of great suffering. He had complained to God and raised many objections and questions about what God had done to him! Then God spoke to him.

After that Job said; "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know." (Job 42:3). We need this same attitude of mind; we must accept that there is much that is beyond our comprehension.

There is also much that is *beyond our control*.

Consider what is going on in the world in Syria, in the Middle East, in the stock market, and even all the issues going on in our own nation.

Think about what is happening in the church in this country, in our own denomination, or even in our own family.

Yes, there is often something we can do, even it is just to pray, but there is much that is beyond our control. We must trust in God, believing that he is sovereign and he will work out all things according to his will.

Guard against the sins of pride and presumption; instead, we need humility of mind and heart.

2. Secondly, verse 2 describes David's **trust**

*I have stilled and quieted my soul;
Like a weaned child with its mother,
Like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

It is not easy to quiet your soul, especially in the rush and turmoil of our hectic world. But it's not only the pace and fury of the world that makes this hard, but also what goes on in our own hearts and minds. We are so easily irritated, carried away by our emotions, so quickly angered; by nature we are prone to worry and anxiety. Spurgeon says that it is easier to calm the sea, or rule the world or tame a tiger than to quiet your soul.

Yet David had learned to do this, to be composed, to be calm, to still his heart before his Lord.

He gives us a picture of this; that of a weaned child with his mother. A weaned child is one who has finished breastfeeding. In that culture they continued breastfeeding much longer than mothers do today, even up to the age of four or five.

Little babies still breast-feeding can be very demanding; they are impatient; they can't wait to get their milk and they want it now! A little baby is selfish and self-centred.

But a child who has been weaned is a little older and has learnt to trust his mother and to be patient.

Studies show that the first year and a half to three years are critical for a child to develop bonding and attachment to his parents. "The child learns that if he has a need, someone will gratify that need, and the gratification leads to the development of his trust in others." (*Adoption and the Hurt Child*, Keck & Kupecky) His parents will pick him up, hold him, feed him, talk to him, look at him, change him. This cycle of need and gratification during those first few years builds trust in the child. He becomes confident that his mother will feed him and look after him. Such a child is happy to be with his mother and he feels secure in that relationship.

David uses this as a picture of the believer's relationship with God. It is a picture of trust, confidence, security and peace. Through our experiences of God we learn to trust in him, depend on him and lean on him. We believe he will look after us, provide for us and care for us.

This is based, of course, on what we know about God. We need to know him well enough to know we can trust him.

You can compare this to your relationship with other people. There are some people you get to know well and you find they are reliable and faithful – you know you can depend on them and trust them.

This is certainly true of God. The more you get to know him the more you will trust him; you will find that he is utterly reliable, completely faithful, totally dependable. You can trust him, like a weaned child with his mother.

We know this especially because of what God has done in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. God has kept his promises. He has sent his One and Only Son, Jesus, to be one of us, to teach us about the Father, to demonstrate his love for us, to make him known. Everything that Jesus has done and is doing is proof that God is faithful, reliable and dependable.

You can trust him in times of sorrow and grief, in loneliness and sadness, in trouble and trial, in sickness and pain.

It is true, as William Cowper wrote in his hymn; "*God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform.*" Yet, Cowper also wrote;

*His purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower.*

This truth is also expressed in the well-known poem, "The Weaving."

Life is but a weaving
between my God and me;
I may not choose the colours,
He knows what they should be.

For He can view the pattern
Upon the upper side,
While I can see it only
On this, the underside.

Sometimes He weaveth sorrow,
Which seemeth strange to me;
But I will trust His judgment,
And work on faithfully.

'Tis He who fills the shuttle,
He knows just what is best;
So I shall weave in earnest
And leave with Him the rest.

At last, when life is ended,
With Him I shall abide,
And I may view the pattern
Upon the upper side,

Then I shall know the reason
Why pain with joy entwined,
Was woven in the fabric
Of life that God designed.

In this psalm David expresses a humble trust in God. This is our trust, the trust of all who know God through the Lord Jesus. We are not proud in our hearts nor are we presumptuous in our minds. Rather we trust him like a child trusts his parent.

So, having expressed this truth, David expands it to address all Israel; **“O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, both now and forevermore.”**

The nation of Israel needed to hope in the Lord. They needed to keep looking forward to David’s greater Son, the Messiah, the One Promised. They looked to him for salvation and redemption and freedom and life. They looked to him as their Star and Sun, as a Light shining in a dark place. They looked to him as their Deliverer.

We know that Jesus has come, and gone to heaven and that he will come again. We too put our hope in the Lord. We too look forward to the future, to the *second* coming of the Lord. Each day our salvation is drawing closer. Each day we are closer to our eternal home. So put your hope in the Lord.

The more you know and love Him, the more you will be able to trust in him and put your hope in him.

Live close to God.

Get to know him better as your Father in heaven.

Pray for the presence of his Holy Spirit.

Remain in the Lord Jesus.

Trust him with a humble heart and mind.

Trust him like a weaned child with his mother. Trust him for the future, whatever he sends you.

People of God, "put your hope in the Lord, both now and forevermore."

Amen.