

The Childlikeness of True Faith

Psalm 131

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We're in the home stretch on our series on the Pilgrim psalms. This is a series of fifteen consecutive psalms, all labeled "**A Song of Ascents.**" We began several months ago with Psalm 120, and we are working our way toward Psalm 134. Today we're looking at Psalm 131, so we'll have three more to go after we finish this one.

These fifteen psalms constitute a book of short choruses within the psalter. They are verses that were sung by pilgrims on the uphill journey to Jerusalem. Three times each year, pilgrims from all over Israel would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate with feasts. They came for Passover, for the Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost), and for the Feast of Tabernacles. Those were the Pilgrim Feasts, when everyone who was able would come. And the journey from every direction was uphill—a hard, steep day-long climb. Jericho, for example, is a town less than 16 miles (as the crow flies) from the Temple in Jerusalem. (Same distance from here to downtown Los Angeles.) But Jericho is 1200 feet below sea level, and the Temple Mount is 2450 feet above sea level. So the journey from Jericho was a long, steep, uphill climb—more than a kilometer's rise in elevation.

Pilgrims coming from Galilee had at least a two- or three-day journey. The last leg of that journey took them on that steep road from Jericho to Jerusalem. And along the way, to pass the time and prepare their hearts for worship, they sang these 15 psalms. If you sang one psalm every half hour on the road from Jericho, these fifteen psalms would fit the journey perfectly.

We've already looked at psalms 120 through 130, so we have four psalms left. Three of the four psalms remaining in this series have only three verses each. Psalm 131 is the first of the really short choruses.

Three verses, so it's a simple chorus with a very simple theme. See if you can recognize the theme when I read the psalm. Here's a hint: It echoes something Jesus taught. Now, here's our psalm:

Psa 131:1 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.

The theme of that chorus is the childlikeness of true faith.

That, of course, is *also* the theme of Matthew 18. Here are the first four verses of Matthew 18:

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

2 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them

3 and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And then Matthew 18-19 goes on to expound on the childlikeness of believers. That child whom Jesus placed in the midst of the disciples was symbolic of believers—all believers, not just those who are still literally children, but everyone who truly believes in Christ is a child of God—childlike in spirit. Two verses later, in Matthew 18:6, Jesus refers to believers as "**these little ones who believe in me.**" And the point Jesus is making there is that true saving faith is inherently childlike. Authentic believers have an implicit trust in God, exactly like the absolute trust of an infant who looks to father and mother for every need.

Still in Matthew, a chapter later, in chapter 19, verse 13, we read this:

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people,

14 but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

15 And he laid his hands on them and went away.

That, of course, shows God's special care for infants and little children. When Jesus says, "**to such belongs the kingdom of heaven,**" I am convinced he is speaking both broadly and literally. That text is one of several clues that undergirds our belief that infants who die in infancy are graciously received by Christ into heaven. Yes, children are born fallen. Babies inherit the same sinful nature you and I have. They look so sweet and innocent as newborns, but just wait. You won't have to teach them to lie or be self-centered or throw tantrums. It's in their nature. They are just like every one of Adam's natural offspring—fallen, guilty, self-willed, and enslaved to sin. They have no more merit than you or I.

That's the doctrine of original sin. We inherited a sinful nature from our ancestors. We didn't *become* sinners by sinning. We sin because it is our nature to do so. And that's true of our children and grandchildren as well. I know.

And yet scripture tells us repeatedly that God is mercifully tender toward little ones. We believe that if they die they go straight to heaven—not because they somehow

deserve it; not because they are guiltless. But they are received into heaven because God is abundantly gracious toward little children. Jonah 4:11, for example, speaks of God's special care for little ones too young to "**know their right hand from their left.**" In 2 Samuel 12:23, David states his expectation that he will see his infant son again on the other side of the grave. Scripture is full of indications that God shows a particular grace to children who die in infancy. Here Jesus blesses little children and states emphatically that the kingdom of heaven belongs to little ones such as those.

It's appropriate to take that in its literal sense. But we also need to interpret it as broadly as Jesus Himself does. He isn't speaking only of little children, of course. Those words ("**to such belongs the kingdom of heaven**") apply to everyone whose faith in Christ has that childlike quality of implicit trust.

Mark 10 is Mark's account of that same incident where the disciples tried to rebuke people for bringing their children, but Mark adds an extra detail that shows how broadly this promise applies. Here's Mark's account, from Mark 10:13-16. Mark writes,

They were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them,

for to such belongs the kingdom of God. [Then Mark adds this: Jesus says,]

15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

16 And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

In other words, Christ pronounced a formal blessing on the children who had been brought to Him (in Matthew's words) "[so] that he might lay his hands on them and pray." But He also makes another explicit call for all believers to trust Him with faith that is pure and childlike.

This took place in Galilee, among people accustomed to making those annual journeys to Jerusalem for the feast days. They knew these psalms—and had known them well since childhood. They could no doubt sing Psalm 131 from memory. So the idea of childlike faith would not—or *should* not—have been new to them, because that is precisely what psalm 131 describes. It is a song about the childlikeness of true faith.

Notice, also, that this psalm is from the pen of David. We are told that in the inscription. I tell you this frequently, but it's worth restating: The inscriptions are part of the inspired text. They exist in all the very earliest Hebrew manuscripts. Not every psalm has an inscription, but those that do will often tell us the author or the circumstances under which the psalm was written. Psalm 3 is the first psalm with an

inscription and it gives us both the author and the circumstances under which the psalm was written. Psalm 3 is a sad psalm, a prayer from a man in trouble, and the inscription tells us it is "**A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.**" So we need to read that psalm in its historical context. Though it's only the third psalm, it pertains to a later period in David's life and his reign as king.

Around the early part of the nineteenth century, a certain class of critical scholars began to question the authenticity of the inscriptions, for no other reason than that they *sound* like annotations from a hand other than the author of the psalm. But all the manuscript evidence we have indicates that they belong to the inspired text. The inscriptions are found in the earliest Hebrew manuscripts. And in Hebrew, unlike what you find in English Bibles, they are part of the text. They aren't marginal notes, or comments written in smaller type. They are penned like the rest of the text.

Signatures such as these (identifying the author or other pertinent details) are common features of ancient writings. You see it even in New Testament times. We sign our letters at the end. The New Testament epistles identify the author at the start, and that is part of the inspired record. So it is with the Psalms' inscriptions. It's a bit misleading to have them set in a different typeface, as if they were merely marginal editors' notes. They bear the same relation to the body of the

Psalm as Paul's personal words of greeting and introduction do to the rest of his epistles.

Only five of these fifteen Psalms of Ascent include the author's name. Four are psalms of David. One (Psalm 127) is a psalm of Solomon (either written by him or dedicated to him; it's not clear which).

This is the third of four Davidic psalms in the collection of 15, and it fits perfectly with what we know about David. First Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22 famously refer to David as **"a man after [the Lord's] own heart."** Psalm 131 gives us, in David's own words, perhaps the most simple, succinct description of what it means to be **"a man after [God's] own heart."** It's a heart that appreciates the beauty of humble, eager, compliant, childlike trust.

What this psalm describes in many ways is the polar opposite of every value venerated by this world—and by our generation in particular. David takes a not-so-subtle poke at the popular brand of skeptical scholarship that has been encroaching on the church at least since the dawn of modernism. He clearly understands that **"the wisdom of this world is folly with God"** and that **"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."**

David has no interest in winning the admiration of people who value power, wealth, wisdom, or fame—even though he has all of those things. God sees through all the trappings of earthly prestige anyway. David knows that God sees all

things—even the hidden things of the heart. And David does not care what men think of him. Like the apostle Paul, who in Galatians 1:10 wrote, "**Am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ,**" David doesn't care to be celebrated by other people as renowned or sophisticated. He wants to be seen by God as childlike—poor in spirit, repentant, meek, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, merciful, and pure in heart.

That, by the way, is how Jesus described authentic faith. Those are the beatitudes, and they paint a sweet and perfect portrait of pure-hearted childlikeness.

David's psalm here is shorter and simpler than the beatitudes, but it draws a similar picture.

Because of the brevity and content of this psalm, and since it was sung in group settings with families of fellow pilgrims, I would guess that this would have been one of the first psalms learned by many Hebrew children during that long era when sacrifices were being offered daily on the Temple Mount and feasts were regularly celebrated in Jerusalem. It sounds like a child's chorus.

But it's a lesson for *adults*—about some virtues that flatly contradict every tendency of our fallen nature. These childlike qualities, by the way, are harder to cultivate the older we get. Spurgeon said of this psalm, "It is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn. It

speaks of a young child, but it contains the experience of a man in Christ."

Here in three verses, according to David, is what authentic faith looks like: It's not arrogant (v. 1); it's not unruly (first part of verse 2); it's not driven by unhealthy or unwholesome appetites (end of verse 2). It's settled and focused on the LORD (verse 3) and on eternal things—"**from this time forth and forevermore.**"

There are three elements of childlike faith that I want to single out and examine closely with you this morning—three virtuous characteristics of true faith that David exemplifies for us in this prayer. Like a newly-weaned, child who is satisfied to rest in the arms of his mother, he is humble; he is hushed; and he is hungry. Let's look at those features in this text. First (verse 1):

1. HE IS HUMBLE

This is my favorite feature of this prayer. Verse 1: "**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.**" David declares his humility, and he finds a way to do it that doesn't sound like a boast. That's not easy to do. My best friend sometimes jokes that I should write a book and title it *Humility and How I Attained It*. (I think that's his backhanded way of scolding me or reminding me that I'm not exactly the paragon of gentle meekness.

Then there's the famous preacher (whose name I won't mention here) who wrote a book on humility, and just a couple of years later the leaders of his denomination disciplined him for being arrogant.

Humility is the most evasive of virtues. It's too easy to be proud of your humility. About the time you think you have mortified your self-righteous sense of self-importance, pride will rise from the dead to tell you how wonderfully meek and humble you are.

But David isn't saying this with any kind of swagger. This isn't a boastful claim; it is a thankful testimony from a man who deeply feels his indebtedness to divine grace. It's a statement that perfectly embodies what we know of David's character. His heart *wasn't* haughty. Though he was God's own anointed choice as the messianic dynasty's first true King, his demeanor *wasn't* lofty. He didn't scheme or conspire to obtain power and greatness; the royal office was given to Him by God. When Samuel first anointed him, no one, including David himself, thought very highly of him.

Notice, by the way, the thoroughness with which David repudiates pride. He names three distinct symbols of human egotism and disavows them all. First, a haughty heart. That's the hidden conceit of those (like the Pharisees in Luke 18:9) **"who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt."** Then he mentions lofty eyes. There he refers to an arrogant countenance—the opposite of that

publican in Luke 18, who **"would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'"** Finally, he disclaims any hint of egotism in his mind or motives or ambitions. **"I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me."** He uses a Hebrew verb for **"occupy myself"** that literally means "to walk."

In other words, true humility (as David describes it here) will tame the heart, the eyes, and the feet. The *heart*, of course, is the seat of evil pride. *Lofty eyes* are where pride shows itself most clearly in visible form. And the *feet* are a metaphor for all our actions.

True humility ruled David's heart; it was reflected in his physical posture; and it framed his thoughts and ambitions and activities.

A humble heart was indeed the defining feature of David's unique character. This is why Scripture describes him as **"a man after [God's] own heart."**

And I love how David himself describes his humility: **"I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me."** In the King James Version, **"neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me."** Here's the New American Standard Bible: **"Nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me."**

That's an unusual attitude. First of all, he freely admits that there are **"things too difficult for [him]."** Second, he isn't wasting his time trying to unscrew the inscrutable or explain

the incomprehensible. The things that are plain and straightforward are hard enough to master. He is devoted to what he knows is true, not the speculations and lofty opinions of theorists and philosophers.

It's extraordinary even to meet a seminary student with that kind of humble worldview. (In fact, let me say this specifically to the seminarians in our midst:) I can't tell you how many gifted young men I have observed over the years who have de-railed spiritually because they were seduced by the lure of prestigious academic degrees or enthralled with theological novelties. In their eagerness to impress *people* with philosophy and speculation, they forgot they were supposed to be serving *the Lord*, who **"chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."**

I've recently corresponded by e-mail with a young man who hasn't even started in seminary yet, but he has written a book on the ontology of the Godhead that he is hoping he can get published—and if not, he says he will publish it himself. He thinks every theologian in the history of Christianity has been wrong about the Trinity. His book is full of bad arguments, misunderstandings, simplistic reasoning, and bad interpretations of Scripture. But he's

absolutely unteachable, because he is in his early 20s, and he is quite certain that he is smarter and understands better than all the men in church history who have ever studied theology before him. He is way over his head and sinking fast, but you will never convince him of that. He actually told me he doesn't think there's anything unfathomable or impenetrable in Scripture. He says he has never been stymied by any theological conundrum. Everything in the Bible is plain as day to him.

I know plenty of old guys who think like that, too. According to them, *nothing* is too difficult for them. They always seem to want to make their mark and seal their reputation by tackling some arcane theological question and coming up with some outlandish doctrinal scheme no one has ever thought of before. That, frankly, is how cults get started.

But David ("a man after [God's] own heart") despises that attitude, and he flatly disclaims it here. David, who was used of God to write some of the key biblical texts on the infinitude and unfathomable greatness of God, freely admits that there *are* "**things too difficult for**" him. He says the same thing in Psalm 13, that great psalm on the omniscience and omnipresence of God. In Psalm 139:6, David says, "**Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it.**" In 2 Peter 3:16, the apostle Peter writes, "**There are**

some things in [Scripture] that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction."

Quire simply, there are mysteries and enigmas in Scripture, and some of the hardest questions simply are not completely answered for us. And we're *forbidden* to inquire into matters that God has kept hidden. Deuteronomy 29:29: **"The secret things belong to the LORD our God."**

Childlike faith accepts that limitation. It's self-evident, really. There *are* things too difficult for us. We can't figure everything out. We ought to admit it, anchor ourselves in the truths we do understand, and occupy our hearts and minds with things that are clear.

By the way, it's not humility to pretend that *nothing* is clear or certain. That's the postmodern corruption of humility. Lots of people today have the false idea that everything we believe about God is a matter of personal opinion; nothing is really settled and certain. Therefore, they think, to say someone else's religion or worldview is wrong is inherently arrogant. We shouldn't be dogmatic about anything.

That's not humility at all; it's spiritual suicide, because it is a denial of the authority of God's Word. That false notion of humility is certainly not what David is describing here. If you want to know what David means, simply look at the record of his life. Because the childlike attitude he describes in verse 1 of our psalm is a virtue that colored his life and

character—except in a couple of well-known but uncharacteristic incidents where he sinned in notorious ways.

In fact, it's ironic (isn't it?) that David's greatest sins occurred because his greatest strengths failed him. That's significant, and we see the same phenomenon frequently in Scripture. Moses, for example. Numbers 12:3 says, "**Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.**" And yet Moses sinned away his opportunity to enter the Promised Land when he lost his temper in front of the whole nation.

David's most outstanding qualities were his purity of heart and his humility. But his two most notorious sins were the incident with Bath-Sheba, compounded by a diabolical conspiracy to cover it up involving the murder of her husband, Uriah. That was hardly an expression of pure-heartedness. David also sinned when his kingdom was at the peak of prosperity by taking a census designed to publicize the nation's numerical strength and prosperity—precisely the kind of arrogance David condemns in this psalm.

But those were deviations and irregularities in the character of David. For most of his life and career, the humility he extols in this psalm was the dominant feature of his character. "**[His] heart [was] not lifted up; [his] eyes [were] not raised too high; [he did] not occupy [him]self with things too great and too marvelous.**"

Remember, David didn't seek the throne in the first place. In his early adolescence, he was called in from the fields while he was tending his father's flock, and anointed by the prophet Samuel to be king.

Even then, David did not take the throne for himself. He spent years—at least a decade—as a fugitive and refugee, living in hiding while Saul pursued him relentlessly—trying to kill him. And although David had opportunities to end Saul's life, he refused to raise his hand against God's anointed.

Later in his career, when his son Absalom tried to usurp the throne, David left Jerusalem rather than fight his son for the throne. When Shimei cursed David, the King bore it patiently. The humility he extols in this verse was clearly reflected in David's character throughout most of his life.

In fact, David's character makes a stark contrast to the typical kings of the ancient near east. Their besetting sins were dominated by the arrogance and pomposity that usually characterize the rulers of this world—even to this present day.

David repudiates all of that. Most men crave respectability and status—especially men who have tasted power and prestige; they tend to seek it all the more. David was the polar opposite. His crowning virtue was humility, and even though he was the most eminent man in the nation—king over God's chosen people, and therefore the

most favored man in the world—he desired to be seen by God as childlike. This was what made David truly noble.

This psalm is reminiscent of that incident when David was returning the ark to Jerusalem, and Scripture says (2 Samuel 6:14), "**David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod.**" In other words, he removed the regal robes and put on a simple linen garment like the priests wore. Rather than being carried at the head of the procession with all the royal pomp of a king, he dressed so as to blend in with the priests, and he traveled on foot with the procession, dancing and celebrating the return of the ark a hundred years after it had been captured by the Philistines in the time of Eli. The stress here is on his joy and exuberance. David quite simply doesn't care what people think of *him*. He's totally overwhelmed with joy that the ark of the covenant is finally coming to Jerusalem.

But 2 Samuel 6:16 says, "**As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart.**" *Her father, Saul, was more concerned with kingly dignity than that!* And when David arrives home, she gives him an earful. Verse 20: "**And David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, 'How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows**

shamelessly uncovers himself!" She makes it sound as if he was indecently exposed or something. All he had done was lay aside his kingly robes—exactly what Christ did for us (Philippians 2:5-8):

**though he was in the form of God, [Jesus Christ] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.**

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

That was a scandal, too, you know. The God of the universe and rightful king of kings coming to earth in such a lowly fashion. But (Proverbs 15:33) "**humility comes before honor.**"

I love how David answered Michal (2 Samuel 6:21-22): "**It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the LORD. I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes.**" Franz Delitzsch, the great 19th-century Lutheran Old Testament scholar, paraphrased David's words to Michal this way: "*I esteem myself still less than I now show it, and I appear base in mine own eyes.*" *You think I look childish instead of kingly? Before God, I am more of a little child than you would ever imagine.*

That's the spirit of this psalm. David understands the childlikeness of true faith, and he purposely cultivates a childlike spirit before God. It's a holy self-abasement—the very thing Jesus spoke of in Matthew 23:12, when He said, **"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."**

Everything Scripture tells us about David affirms his testimony here. Even when he sins a horrific sin, we see his humility in the way he repents. The biblical epitaph on his life acknowledges his sin, but Scripture records it in a way that reminds us that presumptuous sins were not what characterized David's life. Listen to God's own summary of David's uprightness in 1 Kings 15:5: **"David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite."**

So David's character and his track record are such that he can say this about himself—declaring his own meekness without forfeiting it. Even the way he speaks of humility is humble. He claims humility without a hint of pride—and that's something only a truly humble man could do.

So that's the dominant characteristic of childlike faith: *humility*. The person who is truly childlike stands out first of all because *he is humble*. Second, according to our psalm,

2. HE IS HUSHED

Notice verse 2: **"But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother."**

Again the stress is on the child's implicit trust. A calm and quiet heart—a soul totally at rest—is comparable to a sleeping child, well-fed, with no fear or disquiet, because the child knows mother is there to meet any need or avert any crisis. It's a beautiful picture.

This is not one of those three-year-olds you sometimes get seated in front of on a cross-country flight—screaming and fidgety because they feel the motion of the plane and the changes in cabin pressure.

This is a weaned child—one who has moved past the anxiety and uncertainty of the weaning process. This child now knows that even when a mother says no to her child's pleading and complaining, every need will be met. And more than that, the parent knows better than the child how best to satisfy that gnawing hunger. It's a picture of a child who has learned to trust and be satisfied.

It's also an illustration of absolute dependance and unquestioning trust. That's the nature of authentic faith. The crying, complaining, and fidgeting restlessness that are part of the weaning process belong to the past. This is a child at rest in the tender lovingkindness of parental arms. It is the picture of pure satisfaction.

The spiritual weaning process disengages our hearts from everything that is selfish, every appetite that is sinful, and every fear that foments doubt and distrust. It has a quieting effect on the soul. It fosters a sense of security. David wrote often about this: (Psalm 27) **"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"** Psalm 46:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

**2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains
tremble at its swelling. Selah**

Psalm 56: **"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?"**

That, by the way, is a common expression, repeated in both Old and New Testaments. **"What can flesh do to me?"**

Psalm 118: **"The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"** Hebrews 13:6: **"We can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'"**

Security. That's one of my favorite theological terms of all time. I think I have told you before that this was the first theological dilemma that I ever pondered, almost as soon as I turned to Christ in saving faith: *Can I lose my salvation?* Which is to say, "Am I secure in Christ?" And to ask the

question that way is to reveal the absurdity of it. Scripture places so much stress on the security of the believer that frankly, I don't see how any Bible-believing individual can hang on very long to the notion that it's possible to be lost again after Christ has saved you.

Frankly, if you *could* sin in some way that would mean you forfeit salvation, you *would*. We're too weak to stand on our own. Every one of us is prone to sin and powerless to keep ourselves. But Scripture says God is the One who keeps us. First Peter 1:5: "**[We] are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**" That's speaking of our ultimate glorification. God Himself is keeping us safe eternally. He holds us in a manner comparable to a mother rocking a sleeping child—only with infinitely more strength and security. John 10:28: "**No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.**"

If you are truly saved, you are secure in Christ. In Paul's words, "**I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**" Belief in that promise should certainly hush all our fears.

That same sense of security is precisely what causes David to say, in verse 2 of our Psalm, "**I have calmed and quieted my soul.**"

There's another implication in this word picture. The imagery of a weaned child means growth is steadily taking place. The child is coming to maturity. In the words of 1 Peter 2:2, "**Like newborn infants, [we] long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it [we] may grow up into [full and finished] salvation.**"

There comes a time, however, according to Hebrews 5, when we graduate from the milk of God's Word to the meat of it. The writer of Hebrews scolds his readers for demanding milk rather than solid food. Their spiritual appetites were not developing properly. Hebrews 5:13: "**For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature.**"

And that brings up the third characteristic of David's childlike faith. First, he is humble. Second, he is hushed. Now third:

3. HE IS HUNGRY

The image David draws for us is a weaned child peacefully asleep in the arms of his mother—fully satisfied, wholly at rest, well-past the fidgety restlessness every child goes through when mother finally starts to say no to every request for nursing. The child now knows the variety of flavors available with more solid foods, and he has learned that grown-up food satisfies longer.

But trust me (because we've had a few babies go through this stage in our family), a weaned child actually gains a bigger appetite. Solid food awakens a taste for more. Crying and panic at feeding time gradually recede into the past. But the child doesn't stop eating. In fact, for a couple of years, you will continually have to remind the weaned child not to put *everything they touch* into their mouths.

This is true in the spiritual realm as well. The restful security David describes in the first part of verse 2—that feeling of pure satisfaction—doesn't nullify the spiritual appetite. In fact, the appetite grows. If your faith is truly childlike, you will stay spiritually hungry and never lose your appetite for the meat of the word.

One more thing about this: Even after weaning, an infant is *still* totally dependent on mom for food. You can't give an 18-month-old a jar of baby food and expect him to feed himself. The absolute reliance of that child perfectly pictures the childlikeness of true faith, even after the child is weaned.

The psalm closes in verse 3 with a short refrain that echoes the end of Psalm 130: "**O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore.**" It's a call to faith. The psalmist's testimony was brief and simple (two verses long). Now he turns to the congregation and appeals to them to join him in making YHWH the singular focus of their hope and trust.

Now let's look at this in light of the gospel, and consider *why* all true faith is inherently childlike. The only legitimate response to gospel truth is humble, quiet, hungry faith. That's because the gospel itself is a rebuke to human pride. The gospel as set forth in Scripture rips every artificial covering off our fleshly pride. The starting point of gospel truth is the utter hopelessness of fallen humanity. It starts by telling us we are condemned sinners, and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves. **"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." "We are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags."**

We are totally dependent on Christ to save us. We have no real righteousness of our own. In the words of Scripture, **"Where then is boasting? It is excluded." "By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."** The gospel is antithetical to human arrogance, and that is why true faith has this quality of childlike humility. **"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."**

For those of you who are believers, cultivate this spirit of childlike humility. Don't give into the arrogance of our self-centered culture, but clothe yourself in humility.

If you are not a believer—whether you are a guest with us today or a long-time attender who has never truly humbled yourself in the sight of the Lord, remember that it was Jesus

who said, "**whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.**" Ponder that, and ask God to open your heart to believe—with true and childlike faith.