Psalm 131: Battling for contentment

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Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0:00] Good evening and a warm welcome to the service this evening those who are watching and listening in to the service it's good for us to worship God again as we come together. We'll begin this time of worship by singing to God's praise in Psalm 131. My heart not haughty is O Lord mine eyes not lofty be nor do ideal in matters great or things too high for me. I surely have myself behaved with quiet spirit and mild as child of mother weaned my soul is like a weaned child.

Upon the Lord let all the hope of Israel rely even from the time that present is unto eternity. Psalm 131 we'll sing the whole of this psalm and after we've sung this psalm Neil Cameron will lead us in prayer in Gaelic.
My heart not haughty is O Lord mine eyes not lofty be nor do ideal in matters great or things too high for me.
I surely have myself behaved with quiet spirit and mild as child of mother weaned my soul is like a weaned child.
upon the Lord let all the hope of Israel rely even from the time that present is unto eternity.
[2:35] Lets see. My son of a ander findet upon. Ash Hack ..and all the time to say it dosages because for the sake of his forgiveness..

..that was the .. verse to my contribution of the sacrifice of the people...
..and took a photo of his■■ak, your cultural gaze.. This is my father, I would like to speak, but not πα ion sefant, my father looked out very from the belongs Genau, Yisut andwasserine brought in his avant judgment and Russia that was often the destarch, which is theazte in the enferm point.
He got many years and she got ready to teach me enough They are manyoths, I willrahman a while he is alive.
the end of the day... he lives..
[4:37] ... I'd say great or I listened to the minister. Our pastor, and our pastor in the in the■■ area.

He has believed us, and his teacher eventually troisième and makes us happy in this town. Our stronger Currently Christ said, father wore wasty God Thomas Amen.
For the farther and farther and farther and farther the average people in place after you gain their words, for the average andlimit amount of numbers that are involved for learning the world.
In the next years, what was going on? I got up I had to go by the next year.
How var your life was on... In the next year, it was really nice.
[6:49] Thank you because of receiving?

A voice that made me song? ...
I -... hacCne regel, I went to hospitals and started And it would be easier for me to create a visionary I continued to hear I gave thee We sir made of spirit Make praise the Dolphins.
Really! Which doesn't come to us!
Listen Tee Oh My soul and waste it comes to me■■miln that would've workedread them?
[9:01] zorbaauth or escribyirdi därhhhh cadast■■■■ cadastor cadastor cadastor We've got that tree and a lot of trees here.

There's trees that don't be growing out and the spirit has huge kinds of trees.
And with so many trees. no bigills we just gave up bara show risers We earned a range of people on our Mother's Day and mostlocks Rashad Your scotch the use. Amen.
Well, let's turn now to God's word and we'll read the psalm that we sang, Psalm 131, just a short psalm. A song of ascents of David.
My heart is not proud, O Lord, my eyes are not haughty. I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.

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[11:06] But I have stilled and quietened my soul like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, both now and forevermore.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. We'll pray for a moment again. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word that we have sang and which we've read and which we now turn to meditate upon.
We thank you, Lord, for the contentment, for the peace, for the stillness of soul that we are able to receive when we are trusting in you, when we are putting our hope in you.
So enable each one of us, we pray, to have our souls quietened, our minds cleared, our hearts touched, as we open your word.
We pray that the Holy Spirit himself would be our teacher and that we would know your presence. As in our own homes, we sit together with families and in different places.
[12:23] We ask, Lord, that we would be bound together by the same spirit. And, Lord, that you would mould us and shape us and speak to us through your word. So help us, Lord, we pray, and cleanse us from sin.

We ask this in Jesus' name and for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. This world that we live in, as you know, is full of battles.
We don't have to look hard. We don't have to look far. We don't have to live long to know that it's a world that's full of battles. I flicked on the news in the last day or two.
And the first story that came into my feed was a strange little story about a battle to save a landmark red phone box in a Somerset village.
It was a bizarre little story where the village of Luckham and the local MP were working together. They were battling, it said, in the story to save this red phone box.
[13:35] You know, if you follow football, you'll have watched various games over the last week or so as European teams battle it out to see who will progress in the Champions League.

Or if you open your phone and you go to Facebook and if you glance at the Isla Harris Facebook page, you'll see day after day there's battles about camper vans and ferries and wild campers and any manner of things.
It's just filled with battles. That's just a few examples. We could go on at length about the battles that we see, that we're aware of, that we watch from a distance, although we try as much as we can not to enter into them.
But if we're Christians, if we're Christians and as we operate in the spiritual realm, we cannot help but be involved in battles.
They're an unavoidable thing. And there's a very real sense, as this psalm begins, Psalm 131, that David, who is identified here as the author, he's been battling with various issues in his spiritual life.
[14:57] And I think before we even dig into the psalm, just as we stand back from it and move towards it, we can take encouragement from that. There is a sense of battle in the psalm, and we'll come to that as we progress it.

But we can be encouraged by that, because that helps us to remember the fact that it's not just you that has battles. It's not just I that have battles.
David did. It wasn't all plain sailing. It wasn't all easy and smooth. In David's Christian experience, he had battles.
We can think about the Apostle Paul, as we've been in Romans in the past few weeks, in the mornings. In Romans chapter 7, Paul opens up his diary to us and he tells us with great honesty about the battles that he was having.
The good that I want to do, he says, I can't do it. The evil I don't want to do, I've done it again. He's battling. We could go to the Gospels and we could look at the disciples.
[16:04] And we see in all the Gospels that Jesus' disciples back then, and Jesus' disciples still now, they have battles.

So we're to take encouragement from that. We tend to get discouraged when we're in the battleground, but we should be encouraged when we're in battles, because it's part of our Christian walk.
It's part of our spiritual lives. And perhaps we should be readier to give encouragement to each other in this area. And how can we give encouragement to each other?
Well, perhaps we can give encouragement to each other by being a little more honest with each other about the battles that we're going through, rather than telling each other that we're always

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fine, when sometimes we're not.
Sometimes there are battles. So what battles does David write about in this psalm? Well, the first battle that we can note here is the battle of the heart, verse 1.
[17:10] My heart is not proud, O Lord, says David. And he's in prayer here as he speaks to the Lord. And he says, My heart is not proud, O Lord.

Now, what's the heart in this verse? Well, I think you'll know that David is not speaking here about the organ that pumps blood around the body. When David refers to the heart, he's speaking about the root.
He's speaking about the center. He's speaking about the core of his being. As David speaks about his heart, he is speaking about his real self.
He's speaking about what makes him tick. And he says to the Lord in verse 1, My heart is not proud, O Lord. And I don't know what you think of that, but on my first reading of that psalm, and as I listened to the prayer of David here, on first hearing it, it sounded a little strange.
It almost sounds a little bit like the Pharisee. Remember in Luke chapter 18, verses 9 to 14, the Pharisee, he prays, and he says, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even this tax collector.
[18:34] Now, is that David's attitude? Is he saying, I'm not proud like the rest of them? Well, no, he's not saying that at all. David comes before God, saying that his heart is not proud.

Because David knows, and God knows, that there were times in the past when his heart was proud. And we'll come to that in due course in this psalm.
But at this time, at this moment, as David bows before God, as David comes into the presence of God in prayer, he's asking, he's asking the Lord to search him.
He's asking the Lord, in the opening line of this prayer, that the Lord will scan his heart for the pride that he battled with. Eve's in the commentator, says, David comes before God like an open book. And as Peter confessed to Jesus, Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. John 21, 17. So David's confession to God is sincere and true.
[19:48] So there's a battle of the heart. There's a battle with pride. And that shouldn't really surprise us when we think about who David was, how gifted he was, how handsome he was, how strong he was, how skilled in battle, how clever as a tactician.

He was a man who was greatly gifted. And so there were seasons in his life where it would appear that he battled with pride. And yet, as we look at this, we look at this battle, and we have to recognize that this is not one of these battles that we just simply look at from a distance, as something peculiar to David.
This is a battle that's real in all of our hearts. Every human being battles with the sin of pride. Culturally, I think we've sanitized pride. We're maybe not as sensitive to this as once we were. However, we don't think in today's world that pride is a very bad thing.
Low self-esteem, we think, is a very bad thing. But pride, generally, our culture says pride is no problem. You only have to switch on the apprentice or the X factor just to see how brazen and how acceptable pride is.
[21:17] But it doesn't matter what the culture says. Pride is something that is not to be harbored in the Christian heart. It's debilitating in the Christian life.

James Montgomery Boyce says, Learning to subdue pride is the most important of all lessons in Christian character, since pride is the most serious and pervasive of all vices.
Therefore, the Bible has much to say about him. We can think about 1 Peter 5.5, where Peter says, All of you clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.
So this is a battle. It was a battle for David. It's a battle for all of us, but it's a battle that we must keep fighting. None of us are immune from this sin of pride.
And so like David, I think with this psalm open before us, we are encouraged to come before the Lord this evening, with our lives, with our hearts opened.
[22:27] We're to come as an open book, praying, My heart is not proud, O Lord. And as we pray that, as we do that, we are asking the Lord to search us and to show us any pride that we may need to repent of so that our hearts would be cleansed and made right with him.

So that's the first point. We see the battle of the heart. And the second thing we see here is the battle of the eyes. David says, My heart is not proud, O Lord.

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My eyes are not haughty. They're not high. Michael, the commentator, says, Pride has its seat in the heart, but its principal expression is in the eye.
Of all the passions, pride is most clearly revealed in the eye. Derek Thomas, the commentator, he's of the opinion that this is a psalm that David wrote towards the end of his life.
I don't think we can be sure of that. But that's his opinion, that this is David writing as a more mature believer. And he's writing, looking back over the years.
[23:51] And if that is the case, and if David is thinking back, could he remember a time when a wayward, haughty, high look ever caused him to fall into sin?

Well, we know that he would be able to remember that. And we could go to 2 Samuel 11 to get a full picture of that.
We could read in that chapter about how David, as he looked lustfully at another man's wife, and as he had that proud assumption that he could have her, he falls deep into sin.
So for David, this prayer, this psalm that he pens, it's no desktop study, it's no impersonal essay piece that he's writing for somebody else.
David, as he pens Psalm 131, he's opening a window for us to look into his life. He's sharing with us something of his battles. He had a battle of the eyes on various occasions.
[25:04] And maybe it's a battle that we are having as well. I think it has to be a battle that we are having.

Our battle may not be with lust. It may be that your eye or my eye is drawn all too frequently in the direction of eBay or Amazon or Facebook or Instagram or Netflix.
And that's where our eyes are straying. And that's what's being used to shape and mould us. Or it may be that this takes us into the territory of gossip and slander, which is a problem in any small village.
It's the haughty eyes and the proud heart that cause us to look down and speak down to and about our neighbour.
Psalm 101 and verse 5 says, whoever slanders their neighbour in secret I will put to silence. Whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart I will not tolerate.
[26:17] And so for David we get a sense here in this psalm. As brief as it is we get a sense of past battles both of the heart and of the eyes.

But at this moment as David comes before God as he makes his approach to God his eyes are not straight. That's what he says.
He says, my eyes are not haughty. Perhaps once they were but today as he bows before God his eyes are not haughty. He's not looking down on his fellow man with a critical eye.
He's not looking lustfully around at a woman that caught his eye. Rather he's looking to the Lord. That's why he's drawing near in prayer. Thomas Chalmers wrote a book entitled The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.
And I think that's a key lesson here. If we are to win the battle of the eye it's not simply a case of not looking at the things that would ignite our pride or our lust or our greed.
[27:28] It's not simply a case of trying to put out the fires of these affections. It's not just a negative thing. We close our eyes to the things that we know are a problem to us but there's a positive thing here.

There needs not just to be a turning away from old affections. There needs to be a new affection. There needs to be a new focus. That affection for the Lord.
that focus on the Lord which takes us into His Word. Now without that expulsive power of a new affection we're never going to win that battle of the eyes.
Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 1 speaks into that. Therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race that's marked out for us.
We might ask how do we do that? How can we have that spiritual progress and perseverance? Verse 2 Hebrews 12 says let us fix our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before Him endured the cross scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
[28:54] Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

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The battle for our eyes will only be won as long as we are making the Lord Jesus our vision our focus. Yes we look away from the sins that pull us down but we look to the Lord Jesus who lifts us up.
I've got a tool on the phone a little app on the phone which I think is built into it and every week I get a message and it tells me if my screen time is up or down on the last week and if I click on the thing it tells me what I spent the time this week that I've been on the phone what I've been doing on the phone whether it's emails or whether it's Kindle reading books or whether it's social networking and it's a useful tool that kind of holds one to account in terms of how much time you're on the phone and what you're doing on the phone.
Well Psalm 131 I think is a tool that helps us to think about where our eyes are focused in that spiritual sense. How much time we spend not on the screen but in the book and looking to the Lord. So there's a battle for the heart or the battle of the heart there's the battle of the eyes and thirdly here there's the battle of the mind. Still in verse 1 David says I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.
[30:38] And so we pause there it's sensible for us to ask the question well what are these great matters that David is careful not to concern himself with or what are these things that are too wonderful for him to be preoccupied with.

That's the sensible question to ask at this juncture and I think the answer to that question is it's God's purposes for David's life. God's plans.
David recognises that these are great matters these are wonderful things that he cannot always grasp and understand. And so he says I'm not going to try to.
Now if we think back over David's life we can understand how that would fit. 1 Samuel 16 we have that familiar passage where God promises that David will become king.
Now what happened after that? Well actually not very much happened after that in terms of this promise being fulfilled. After the promise is given to David and he's anointed he goes back into the fields.
[31:56] He's back with the sheep. He's still the wee brother. And he continues in that vein for a period and for a period of ten years Saul continues to be king.

Now if we go from 1 Samuel 16 to 1 Samuel 17 we see David in that episode where he comes to his brothers and he ends up slaying Goliath and at that point the nation started to notice David.
He started to become popular and as David's popularity rose Saul the king became alarmed and he started to hate David and Saul spent much of the ten years that he was still king in pursuit of David. David's running for his life. These are hard years. And then after Saul dies there's still another seven years that David has to wait as he rules over the tiny principality of Hebron before God's promise is actually fully realized.
So there's seventeen years between God's promise and that promise being experienced for David. Now in that seventeen year period did David huff and puff and sulk?
[33:12] Did he demand that the Lord explain to him why he wasn't king yet? Well I don't think he did. I think David he determined not to concern himself with the great matters of how God engineers providence.

And rather David rather than peering into the things that were too wonderful for him to understand and to compute in his own mind he determines to trust God on the details and the timings of how God's promises will be delivered and how God's plans will be worked out.
There's a battle of the mind which David entered into in his life. James Montgomery Boyce says David had learned that he did not have to understand everything God was doing in his life or when he would do it.
all he really had to do was trust God. Now we think about this in terms of our own life and experience.
I mean let's ask the question what is it that causes you and I to fret and to stress and to doubt in our minds? Well very often actually it's not the things that do happen to us that have the greatest impact.
[34:47] It's the things that don't happen to us that cause us stress. It's the things that we had hoped would happen that don't seem to happen that cause us all the anxiety and the grief.

It's the things that we don't understand. It's the providences that we can't make sense of. It's the timings of God that don't seem to fit with our diaries. And as we focus on these things we get

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ourselves into a state.
Whereas I think the teaching that we're given here is that we're not to concern ourselves with these great matters. We're not to fixate on these things that are too wonderful for us to grasp because God's ways are higher than our ways.
His plans are higher than our plans. Now for David I expect this was a battle at times. as he writes this and says I do not concern myself with great matters.
There's a determination in that do not. And I think it's a learned determination because there would have been seasons when he probably did. When he was on the run.
[36:00] When he was in the midst of danger. When he was struggling and Saul was in pursuit of him. I expect there was a battle of the mind as he tried to figure out how God's promises would come to pass.

But he resolves or he had come to that position of resolution where he would not concern himself with great matters or things too wonderful for him.
And that's a lesson that we need to keep on learning as well. I don't think it's a lesson that we learn and we've learned it for life. I think this is a day by day by day lesson that we have to learn.
We need to keep on learning it. We need to keep on battling in our minds to trust the Lord more sometimes than our eyes can see. Deuteronomy 29.29 says, the secret things belong to the Lord our God.
But the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may follow all the words of this law.
[37:12] There is a battle of the mind. There is a battle of the eyes. There is a battle of the heart. The fourth thing here is that there is a battle for contentment.

Verse 2, he says, I have stilled and quietened my soul like a weaned child with his mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.
The picture here is an unusual picture. It is not a common picture in scripture, but it is a memorable one. The psalmist is here painting himself like a weaned child.
The child that hasn't been weaned, if we just think about the example that is used here, the child that hasn't been weaned, when she gets hungry, what happens?
Well, she cries. If she doesn't get food instantly, she cries and she gets furious and desperate. That is what babies do. They get hungry, they let you know. If you don't respond immediately, they'll let you know with great volume.
[38:22] That's the child that hasn't been weaned, but the weaned child has grown somewhat in maturity. And yes, the weaned child still gets hungry, but no longer is there that instant rage and frustration at not getting what she wants immediately.

There's a trust in the mother that the child will be given what she needs at the time. That she needs it. There's a greater contentment that's evident in the life of the weaned child.
There's a greater trust, you could say, in the mother to give her what she needs when she needs it. Boyce, the commentator, says, weaning, sl tekrar to care for him and provide for him.
Not on David's own terms, but on God's terms. And for us as God's children, even though we sometimes still feel these pangs of hunger for things that we may see and we may want, even though we will still experience waves of frustration at times when we don't get what we want at the time that we want it.
If we're like a weaned child, we don't fly into an infantile rage. We don't allow our souls to fly into a stormy state.
[40:11] But as we look to the Lord, and as we trust in the Lord, we still and we quieten our souls.

And note the action there in this verse. It's on David. He says, I have stilled and quieted my soul.
There's an echo of this, I think, in the book of Philippians, where the Apostle Paul, as he explores the whole area of contentment in greater length, he says, I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.
I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether welfare or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.
I can do everything through him who gives me strength. So even in that point, there's an application for us.

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[41:24] In the battle for contentment, we don't sit back and say to God, well, you do it to me. You just give me this contentment.

We don't sit back in a stationary state. We work out this as we trust in the Lord. We still, we quieten our souls.
We are those who have to be disciplined to learn from God this lesson of contentment.
And just like any lesson that's worth learning, it's not easy. It can be a struggle. It can be a battle.
Lane, the commentator says, I have stilled and quietened my soul indicates that this had been a struggle as other Psalms have shown.
But it has been a six, but it has been successful. Like the weaned child with his mother, David is content just to be near God. The Puritan writer Burroughs, Jeremiah Burroughs I think is his name, wrote a small booklet which is entitled The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment.
[42:51] It's perhaps not something that we know all the time throughout our lives. It's not something that's evident in every Christian that we pass. It's a rare jewel.

That jewel of Christian contentment. And David, as he pens this Psalm, as he comes in prayer, on the day of writing, he has it. It sparkles within the Psalm.
And the question is, do you and I have it? Do we have this contentment? You know, the world says to us, you need to do more.
You need to get more. And then you'll have more reason to be proud. And then you'll be content. Or the world says, you know, look at all this stuff.
Don't turn your eyes away from it. Look to it. Fixate on it. Try and get it. Then you'll be content. Or the world says, aim high. And try to achieve and try to understand wonderful things.
[43:56] And then you'll be content. And we know from our experience that it's all lies that comes from the world and from the prince of this world.

Contentment comes from trusting in the Lord. Contentment comes from depending on the Lord. It comes from being near the Lord.
Godliness with contentment. The two go together. It's great gain. Galatians 6, I think that is. And that's actually the key message of Psalm 131.
Spurgeon said of this psalm that this was one of the shortest psalms to read. But one of the longest to learn. But the battle for contentment.
The battle to become like a weaned child. Although it takes a lifetime to learn. It's a necessary, it's a well worth learning lesson.
[45:00] Final thing here as we finish is the battle for convergence. David, he looks within his own heart and within his own soul.

And he praises God in this psalm for the contentment that he's found. But then as David looks around and presumably as David in looking around sees many discontented people, he preaches.
He calls out to them. And he says in verse 3, O Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore.
He wants to see discontent souls converted. And brought to that place of contentment and trust in the Lord.
Now we look around today, don't we? Do we see a world that's content? Do we see a world that is settled and is in a contented state?
[46:00] Well, we see anything but, don't we? And so we should actually take this text and we should preach this sermon that David preached.

We should say, not O Israel, but O Harris. Or O whatever it is that we are living. Put your hope in the Lord. Both now and forevermore.
And as we preach it, as we seek to live it out, we pray that God will convert many people. Now will that be easy?
Will people thank us for highlighting their discontent? Will people thank us for telling them about their need of Jesus?
Often no, they won't. To preach Christ is to enter into a spiritual battle. But it's a battle that if we are Christians, we are called to engage in.
[47:04] We are in the midst of this battle for conversions. If we believe there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun, then we must be in this battle for conversions.

There are people that we know. There are people that we love. They come into our mind's eye even as we speak. And they have money. And they have health.

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And they have everything that this world can offer. But they have no contentment. And they need, we need, to put our hope in the Lord, both now and forevermore.
Because as we trust in Him, He is the Lord who converts the soul in sin that lies, as it says in Psalm 19, I think. And He is the one who gives us the contentment that enables us to sing what we'll sing at the end.
It is well. It is well with my soul. Amen. Thank you.
[48:45] Attendeth my way When sorrows like sea billows blow Whatever my lot You have told me to say It is well, it is well with my soul It is well with my soul It is well, it is well with my soul Though Satan should buffet If trial should come Let this blessed assurance control

That Christ has regarded my helpless estate And has shed his own blood for my soul It is well, it is well with my soul It is well, it is well with my soul I sing, O the bliss of his glorious Lord My sin, not in part but the whole His nail turned across and I bear it no more Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Praise the Lord, O my soul It is well with my soul It is well, it is well with my soul For me, be it Christ, be it Christ Christ, be it Christ, be it Christ He is well with my soul If children of God, be it Christ If children of God, be it should come Your bank shall be mine Born in death as in life You will whisper your peace to my soul It is well with my soul With my soul With my soul It is well, it is well with my soul
It is well, it is well with my soul But Lord, it's for you For your coming be great The sky, not the grave, is a goal O tram, my angel, O voice of the Lord Blessed hope, blessed rest, O my soul With my soul It is well, it is well with my soul It is well, it is well with my soul It is well, it is well with my soul And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus
Christ and the love of God the Father And the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit Be with us all, both now and forevermore Amen

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