

**Revive our Hearts**  
**Give me a humble heart**  
**Psalm 131**  
**15th August 2021**  
**Preacher: Pastor Roy Summers**

On Sunday mornings over the summer we're thinking about our hearts - not the one that beats 80 times a minute - but the unseen one where the real me and the real you lives. Our guiding Scripture has been Proverbs 4:23

*"Above all else, guard your heart,  
for it is the fountain of life."*

Solomon urges us to watch over what's going on inside, because all we say and all we do flows out of what's going on in our hearts. That's the amazing insight of Scripture—start on the inside! The Lord wants his children to have and to enjoy a good heart: a calm heart, a forgiving heart, a clean heart, a peaceful heart, a humble heart, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled"* Jesus once said to his disciples, (John 14:1) - he did not want them to languish, with a troubled heart. And that is the Lord's wish for all his disciples, not just the Twelve. So all our summer sermons have been targeted at the various diseases which prevent us from enjoying the good heart God wants for his children, diseases such as anxiety, unforgiveness, impurity, and today the plague of pride.

**Today's Disease—pride**

So the malady before us this morning is the peace-shattering disease of pride, God wants us to have a humble heart.

**(1) What is a proud heart?**

God had cured David of a proud heart, so he's able to say, "my heart is not proud!" He's now in a calm place! But before we can get there, we need to understand what pride is, because my guess is that many listeners may not recognise this as a malady they suffer from and for sure, the world does not categorise pride as sin.

There is of course, a good pride, let's start there. If you have worked hard for your GCSE or A level results, and looked back on the results with pleasure and satisfaction, that is what we may call a good pride.

If you undertake a task at work or enjoy a productive day in the garden, and again, look back with a sense of achievement and fulfilment, that is a good pride. Remember how the Lord, the cosmic craftsman, reflected on his own work, at the end of six days: *"God saw all that he had made and it was very good."* (Genesis 1:31) (In our case, we should always acknowledge that the brains or the brawn came from God; but an enjoyable meditation on our work is a good thing)

No, sinful pride is something different, and Scripture asks three groups of people to listen up especially. Rich people. If you have lots of money, you are more susceptible to the sin of pride: "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant" (1 Timothy 6:17). I don't know why, but perhaps a rich person thinks, "since I've got more money than that person, I must be up here." Knowledgeable people, educated people. If you know a lot, you are prone to pride, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." (1 Corinthians 8:1) "I know more than she does, so I must be up here?" Super-gifted people. If you are super-gifted, you are susceptible to pride. God gives a level 5 gift to some of his children and a level 1 gift to others; the danger of a 5 gift is that we could so easily boast. Joseph, knew from a young age that he was super gifted by God and he made the mistake of boasting to his brothers about the dreams of future greatness God had given to him. Big mistake! He drew out their fiery jealousy and hatred. So if you are rich, knowledgeable, or gifted, especially listen up this morning! But pride can so easily beset anyone and everyone.

So what does sinful pride look like?

*(1) Boasting is sinful pride.* Whenever we go about telling everyone what we have achieved, how much stuff we own, what good deeds we do, how good looking we are, what promotions we have been given, and so on and so forth, we sin. Social media is full of boasting! I am sometimes shocked -though if I am honest, more often amused! - at the claims people can make on LinkedIn: someone who has a very humble job boasts about being a consultant or an expert or a specialist! That's boasting with a pinch of exaggeration thrown in, right? *"Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."* (1 Corinthians 1:31) *"when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing"* (Matthew 6:3).

(2) *Wanting a gift or position that God has not given us is sinful pride.* The Spirit of God distributes gifts and offices as he sees fit. In Corinth some Christians wanted the showy public gifts, the upfront gifts, rather than the background hidden, no-one ever sees, everyone overlooks, kind of gifts. But God gives public gifts to whom he chooses and he gives background gifts to whom he chooses “the same Spirit gives them to each one, just as he determines.” (1 Corinthians 12:11) and we must all learn to accept the gifts God has given to us.

(3) *...self-righteousness is pride.* Thinking that we are better Christians, more holy, more loving, more doctrinally pure Christians than someone else is pride. Looking down our nose at another Christian, is sinful pride! This can be a problem for those who have been on the road for many years! We can so easily see the flaws in younger believers and judge them!

The Gospel truth is that in God’s eyes we are all wretched hell-deserving sinners saved by God’s grace alone. “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners —of whom I am the worst.” (1 Tim 1:15)

Self-righteousness is a real killer in relationships like marriage, isn’t it? “I’m never wrong, you are wrong” “I don’t need to say sorry, I’m waiting for you to apologize!” I wonder how many marital conflicts are caused by wretched, sinful pride!

(4) *Resisting God’s will is pride.* This may seem a strange manifestation of pride, but whenever we judge God for allowing this or that into our lives, whenever we think the Lord has got it wrong, whenever we resist his will or question his providence, are we not setting ourselves above God and is that not sinful pride? God, our loving Father in heaven, knows what is best for us? Does he not? “*He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.*” (Deut 32:4) If we say to God, “I don’t agree with what you have allowed or are allowing into my life” are we not putting ourselves above him?

*The Lord is King! who then shall dare  
resist his will, distrust his care,  
or murmur at his wise decrees,  
or doubt his royal promises?*

This malaise of the heart, sinful pride, does it not at some time or another trouble every one of us?

David uses a very vivid illustration of the effect of unquenched sinful pride—we’ll explore it in more detail in a moment—we’re like a screaming baby who is not getting enough food to nourish it. One of our sons had pyloric stenosis as an infant, which is a restriction below the stomach I believe: everything he drank came up again and he would have starved to death without an operation. All I remember is his endless crying and distress. A proud heart is like that, always filled with turmoil and distress.

## (2) God’s cure for a proud heart

So David how did you get to the place of Psalm 131:1, “*My heart is not proud*”, this is an honest assessment, not a proud one! What is God’s cure, proud heart?

### **Step 1: We must realise that sinful pride starts in the heart.**

Look at the second part of verse 1, “*my eyes are not haughty.*” You know what haughty eyes are? That look where the head of the proud is slightly tilts backwards and the eyes gaze downward on the person being despised! Haughty eyes are an outward manifestation of pride that is in the heart. David doesn’t mention it here, but so is a quarrelsome spirit. A cantankerous, contentious, fractious, combative person is according to Scripture a proud person: “Pride only breeds quarrels” (Proverbs 13:10) But if we are going to deal with pride, it begins by realising that the real problem is not outward haughty eyes or a quarrelsome spirit, but an issue of the heart.... “*I have stilled and quietened my soul*” (or we could read **heart**) (verse 2)

### **Step 2: We need to do some heart-work**

So, step 2, we need to work on pride in the heart, “*I have stilled and quietened my soul*” (verse 2) What did you do king David? “*I do not concern myself with great matters or things I too wonderful for me.*” King David—the greatest king of Israel!—has dealt with his sinful pride by restricting himself to all the things little ol’ Dave can understand and leaving to God all the big stuff he can’t comprehend.

“Lord there are lots of things I do not understand in my life and the world. And rather than arrogantly presuming I can understand “great matters” or “things too wonderful for me” and getting all red-faced and wound up about them, I've resigned myself to accepting your high, ineffable, wise, divine righteous and loving ways.”

David's whole life is a wonderful example of humble acceptance of God's mysterious providence. Tons of bad stuff happened in David's life, which he learnt not to fight but humble himself under: *“David did not push himself forward, but allowed himself to be drawn out of seclusion (remember as a shepherd boy when anointed as king?). He did not take possession of the throne violently (as so many kings did) but after Samuel had anointed him he willingly and patiently travels the long thorny path of deep humility.... The persecution of Saul lasted about ten years.. He left it entirely to God to remove enemies Saul and Ish-Bosheth ...”* (Keil and Delitzsch 780)

How do I cure my sinful pride? I realise that outward things such as haughty eyes and my quarrelsome spirit are not the problem, it runs deeper, right into my heart. And so I work on my heart. I still and quieten my soul. I tell my heart *not to boast*. I *accept the gifts* God has given me, rather than pine and grasp for the gifts he has not given me. I *remind myself* that I am the worst of sinners, not one whit better than others. And *I learn to accept God's difficult dealings* with me rather than fight them or presume to know better than he.

**Step 3: This heartwork is all done in prayer.** Psalm 131 is a prayer. David has worked on his heart before God in the secret place of *prayer*. That's where so many of our problems are dealt with, aren't they?

The details will be different from believer to believer, what we will say to the Lord will vary, but the medicine for a proud heart will be the same:

1. Acknowledge that it's a heart problem
2. Work on the problem in your heart
3. And do all of this before the Lord, in prayer

### (3) God's blessings to a humble heart

Two mighty blessings flow from a humble heart.

**(1) the first is a calm heart.** That vivid illustration David uses! *“like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.”* That starving red-faced screaming child becomes a calm placid happy contented infant. *“I have stilled and quietened my soul, like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.”* What a blessed transformation! What blessed gift is a peaceful heart!

*Oh, for a heart to praise my God,  
A heart from sin set free,  
With conscience sprinkled by the blood  
So freely shed for me.*

*A heart resigned, submissive, meek,  
My dear Redeemer's throne;  
Where only Christ is heard to speak,  
Where Jesus reigns alone.*

### (2) A useful life

Look at verse 3, what's going on here? *“O Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and for evermore.”* While we are navel-gazing in self-consumed me-centred pride—we are absolutely useless to anyone else or to the world! But now that David has calmed his heart, there's time and energy for others! A humble heart is a useful-to-others heart!

Humility opens up the door to all of God's blessings; not just peace and usefulness. Humility is where the Christian journey begins. *“Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like the other men—swindlers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and pay tithes of all that I acquire.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance, unwilling even to lift up his eyes to heaven. Instead, he beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a*

*sinner!’ I tell you, this man, rather than the Pharisee, went home justified. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:10-14)*

The way to become a true believer is to humble yourself, acknowledge that you are a sinner, and turn to God for mercy and forgiveness through his Son. And you can do that even today.

*When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died  
My richest gain I count but loss  
And pour contempt on all my pride*