

‘A song we can trust.’

A woman who was a member of a church used to sing soprano, one day she died and went to heaven. Peter was up there and stopped her at the gate asking, ‘Well, how many false notes did you sing in your life?’ The soprano singer answers, ‘Three.’ ‘Three times, guys!’ says Peter, and along comes an angel and sticks the soprano singer three times with a needle. ‘Ow! What was that for?’ she asks.

Peter explains that, ‘here in heaven, we stick you once for each false note you’ve sung down on Earth.’ ‘Oh,’ says the soprano singer, and just as she’s about to step through the gates, she suddenly hears a horrible screaming from behind a door. ‘Oh my goodness, what is that?’ she asks. ‘Oh,’ says Peter, ‘that’s a tenor singer we got some time back. He’s just about to start his third week in the sewing machine.’

Aren’t you glad that’s not a true story? Otherwise we would all be in trouble. Now I don’t know about you but I love singing, especially singing songs to God. I’m not very good at it but I love singing anyway because I know God loves being sung to. And there are hymns which are hard to sing and what I mean by that is that there are songs like, ‘where He leads, I will follow’ and I think to myself, would I really do that? Am I willing to carry my old rugged cross? I heard of one brother who instead of singing, ‘take my life and let it be’ would sing, ‘take my wife and let me be.’

I want to talk to you today about the song written by King David which we call **Psalm 131**. It’s a short Psalm but it’s certainly not the shortest, that would be **Psalm 117** which incidentally if you were to split the whole Bible in half into chapters and verses, **Psalm 117** would be right in the middle. But it’s a song which the Israelites would sing with conviction because they had personally experienced what they were singing about.

Now **Psalm 131** is psalm of what we call ascent. And what I mean by that is that David wrote it in order for it to be sung along with fourteen other Psalms, as the Jews made their journey up to Jerusalem to observe any special days or to celebrate the many different feasts to the Lord.

But it’s one of those Psalms where everyone who sung it were claiming that God gives them peace of life because they have cast out pride from within themselves. And this is one of those songs that the people couldn’t just move their lips or replace the lyrics. They had to really believe it with all their hearts that their pride had gone and life is now peaceful because of God.

Psalm 131:1-3 “My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content. Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore.”

Now notice the humility involved in this song. David says, “My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty”. Now I don’t know about you but pride is something I struggle with from time to time. I take pride in the way I look, the way I dress, the way I present a sermon. I remember a few years ago I had a t-shirt made and on the front of it I had the words, ‘no one does humility’ printed on it but on the back of it, I had the words, ‘like I do.’ I got it made as a joke, as a talking point but I soon realised that a few people thought I was full of myself, so I never wore it again.

Now I believe there’s a touch of that in most of us, there are times when we think too highly of ourselves. And I’m sure some of you know of some preachers who think they are He God’s gift to the pulpit.

I remember the first time I preached in America. They have a tradition over there where the preacher goes to the main door at the end of the service and shakes the hand of the members as they are leaving. Well, I stood at the door and one person after another told me how wonderful my sermon was and one woman said to me, ‘that’s the finest sermon she’d ever heard’ to which I replied, ‘this week.’

I mean when you get told those things, how wonderful you are, how powerful the sermon was, week on week, I can understand why many preachers would quickly come to believe that they were God’s gift to the pulpit. David says, ‘I refuse to think too highly of myself, I refuse to think I’m more important than anyone else.’ Think about this, here’s the King of Israel, who had many servants and wives and he’s singing, ‘I don’t have to be right all the time, I don’t need to be served all the time’. ‘I don’t need people coming up to me to tell me how wonderful I am as a musician and as a song writer.’

If this song tells us anything about David it certainly tells us that he was a humble man.

Now if this song was written by a slave, it wouldn't mean that much to us. But it wasn't written by a slave, it was written by a king, the King of Israel, the same king whose throne would stand forever according to **2 Samuel 7:12-16**.

Now the question has to be asked, **how could David, the King of Israel who's surrounded by thousands of servants, thousands of fighting men still remain humble?** I believe the answer to that question is that he never forgot where he came from and what he was. He never forgot that moment in his life, when he was just a young shepherd boy, as we have recorded in **1 Samuel 16** when he was anointed by Samuel. Ok he messed up with Bathsheba but after that event, he never let his success as a king or the position God put him in, change who he was. He never forgot that ultimately he was still a servant of the Most High.

Now let me ask you, do you know anyone like that? I do and I'm sure you do too. Some of the greatest preachers we know, are also the most humble people you'll ever meet, even within the Lord's body. You see loved ones, we've still got a long way to go to learn the lesson of humility. And if there is one Bible passage, if applied to each of our lives that would stop **99%** of church fights and quarrels it would be the passage we find in **Philippians**. **Philippians 2:3+4** **"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."**

That one passage of Scripture would stop a lot of useless fighting and quarrelling among our churches. **"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit"**, Paul says. **"Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."**

Christians who look down on other Christians or criticise and judge other Christians and think they are more important than any other Christian have simply forgotten where they came from and who they are. Loved ones we don't always have to be right, we don't always have to be treated with tender care. You see if we are looking to be treated with tender care all the time and we try to push people to see that we're right all the time. All we're doing is setting ourselves up to get hurt and when we get hurt we become miserable and when we're miserable, nobody wants to be around us or care about anything we think.

David says, remember where you came from, get rid of that pride and remember that you too are a servant of the Most High. **James 4:6** **"God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble."** As someone once said to me, **'I've got two choices in my Christian life when it comes to pride, I can humble myself or God will humble me.'**

Remember what Paul wrote to the church in Philippi concerning Jesus? Paul wrote in **Philippians 2:5-8** **"In your relationships with one another, have the same mind-set as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!"**

Jesus, the only human who's ever lived, the only One who alone deserved all praise and honour humbled Himself. Jesus, God in the flesh, placed a towel on His lap and washed the disciple's feet. **Matthew 20:28** tells us that Jesus, **'came not to be served by to serve'**. David never forgot where he came from and what he was and I pray that we don't either.

I don't know about you but as I get older I'm fast discovering that I don't have to figure everything out in life. I don't need to understand how many planets there are in the solar system. I don't need to understand why so many people are obsessed with Eastenders or Coronation Street. I don't need to understand the science behind a mobile phone or a computer.

And David says in **Psalms 131:1**, **"I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me."** David is saying what I just said and that's basically, there are some things in this life that I haven't got a clue about. There are some things in this life I simply don't understand and the main reason I don't understand is because half the time it's beyond me and I'll never understand. And David says because he doesn't understand certain things in life, he's not going to try to understand them, he's not even going to bother about them.

And this is a lesson some people including Christians need to learn at times. We don't have all the answers to every question that comes up about life. Some people don't want answers, so they don't ask any questions and they simply go through life happily ignorant of what's going on around them. And then there are those who want to be able to understand everything, and sadly it's those people who are the most frustrated in life, **why?**

Simply because they cannot accept that some things in life cannot and will never be completely understood. Throughout the ages there have been great philosophers and scientists. There are people who spend their whole lives trying to discover how the world was created. There are people who spend their whole lives trying to discover the mysteries of the universe.

We sing that hymn called 'beyond the azure blue' and it's a great hymn. Now the man who wrote those words was a man named A. W. Dicus but what a lot of people don't know is that he invented the indicator for cars but he was also a professor in nuclear physics. But look at the conclusion he came to after many years of research, the third stanzas says this, 'Secure is life from mortal mind, God holds the germ within His hand, though men may search they cannot find, For God alone does understand.'

Do you know what he's saying there? He's saying there are some things in life we simply can't figure out and God is one of them. God has gone through a whole load of heartache with human history to make Himself known to us through creation, through His Word, His Son, and the presence of His Spirit in our lives. But let's be honest, there's a whole lot more we simply don't understand about God and the way He operates. There's a whole load of things that God has done and still does that we simply don't fully understand and never will.

Why does God allow so much pain and suffering to continue in the world today? Why does God still love mankind so much, despite the fact that most of mankind won't even acknowledge Him? Why will God allow me to enter into heaven when I let Him down so many times in my life?

You see loved ones the Bible answers most of lives questions, but not all of them and it's those questions we simply have to trust by faith. When we think about David and we think about his knowledge of God. He didn't understand how God knew, when he sat down and when he stood up.

He didn't understand how God knew, what he was going to say before he said it. He didn't understand how God saw him in his mother's womb when He formed him. He didn't understand how God knew all the days he had ordained for him before they came into being. He didn't understand how he could never escape or hide from God. In fact, he said in Psalm 139:6 "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain."

Loved ones there are a whole load of things about God and how He operates that we simply need to give up trying to understand and stop trying to figure Him out. After all, we can't fully figure Him out through the inspired Word He gave us. But not only should we stop trying to figure God out, we should stop trying to figure people out.

How many times have we heard someone say, 'I just don't understand that person? I don't understand their thinking'? You see we often say that God is a mystery, but the reality is, so are people. Jeremiah the prophet knew that people were mysterious, he said in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" The apostle Paul knew that people were mysterious that's why he said in 1 Corinthians 2:11, "For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them?"

The truth is, I try to figure people out, when the fact is, I can't even figure myself out first. Why do you think people spend thousands of pounds for counselling today? People are trying to get help, to help try and figure themselves out. Now as Christians we can sometimes make that same mistake and what I mean by that is, we think if we can try and understand someone first, then maybe we can change them. No wonder many people want to become Christians but never do because they have been taught or they think they've got to change first.

I'll stop drinking then I'll become a Christian, I'll stop sleeping around and then I'll become a Christian. I've talked and studied with many people over the years who truly believe they've got to sort out their lives first before they come to the Lord. Listen loved ones God accepted you just the way you were, didn't He? He didn't say to me, 'Mike you've got to stop drinking and taking drugs and sleeping around and then I'll accept you!'

If you're not a Christian today and your thinking I've got to sort this or that out in my life first before God will accept me, you're wrong. God will accept you just the way you are, warts and all. The truth is, I can't change you, you can't change you but God can. And the reason God can change you is because He's got you figured out, He understands.

And He, with the help of His Holy Spirit will help you be the very person you've always longed to be. Paul puts it so beautifully in 2 Corinthians 3:18 "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

Paul says slowly but surely when we become Christians, God begins to work in us and helps us to act, think, live and look more and more like the glorious people we were created to be.

David continues and says in **Psalm 131:2** “**But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.**” What a beautiful glimpse into David’s life this is. He says his soul is no longer crying and demanding that his passions in life be satisfied. And he’s not talking about when he was a two or a three-year boy, he’s talking about the time when he was being weaned peacefully in his mother’s arms. In other words, he’s no longer controlled by his selfish desires, he’s in control of his desires.

I remember when our kids were babies, they would cry and cry either to get fed or simply for attention. But as most parents know, there has to come a time when you need to sleep and when they cry through the night you simply have to ignore them until they gradually fall asleep themselves. Yes, it’s hard ignoring them, yes, the parent in you wants to go in and comfort them and reassure them. But as painful as that is for both you and your child, you know it’s for the best.

You see in a sense that’s what David went through to find peace in his soul. He had to deny his own desires, he had to let go of self, he had to stop having things his way and be served on, he had to let go of his anger to find peace in his soul. He had to understand that some things in life will simply have to go unanswered. And then that day came, probably the day when the child he had with Bathsheba died, when he came to master his desires, rather than having his desires master him.

Paul says in **Romans 8:13**, “**For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.**” Paul says we need allow God to help us through His Spirit to kill of those selfish, deadly desires we struggle with. Because it’s then and only then will we be content with not having all the answers to life’s questions and find peace for our souls.

We can imagine David thinking about these words as he walks up to Jerusalem. We can imagine the Israelites singing these words while they’re walking up towards Jerusalem to enjoy the many different feast. We can imagine them walking towards the Creator of the universe to worship Him and just praise Him for all the marvellous things He’s done for the Israelites as nation.

And as they get closer and closer to Jerusalem, I can imagine them being filled with excitement as they see thousands of people, some singing, some dancing, getting ready for the feast celebrations. I can imagine them pausing on the city borders, full of humility, remembering who they were and what they were. And thinking to themselves, ‘**wow, what an awesome God we serve**’.

And because they recognise the awesomeness of God and how lowly they are in comparison. They sing the final stanza of **Psalm 131:3** “**Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore**”. The realisation of where they’ve come from and who they were as a people are brought home in this simple truth. God is a God we can rely on and trust.

Jeremiah wrote in **Lamentations 3:22-24** “**Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.”**”

Do you believe that? Do you believe that His mercies are new every morning? Not every week or every month or year but every morning. God gives us every day, everything we need to help us through today. Which means I don’t need to worry about getting through tomorrow because He blesses me new, each day as it comes all over again. You see if my hope is in God then that means I need to stop hoping I can figure things out or others can figure things out. Putting my hope in God means, I trust and know that He has it all figured out.

Let me encourage each of us today, to trust God today, to put our hope in God today, tomorrow and all the days of our lives. Let me encourage you to remember where you came from and who you are every time you make that journey here, each Lord’s Day to worship and sing praises to God.