

# Psalm 131: Childlike Humility



Psalm 131 (130) (Mode 5. 5...6 ...1 / 1...6 / 6...5)

The psalmist is humbly aware of his limitations and dependence on God. His confidence is not based on himself but on God's presence and care for him.

Lord, I am not proud,  
holding my head too high,  
reaching beyond my grasp.

'Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit among the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.'

(Proverbs 16:18-19)

‘A haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not tolerate’(Psalm 101:5).

### Isaiah 2:9-17

‘People are humbled, and everyone is brought low – do not forgive them! Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust from the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty. The haughty eyes of people shall be brought low, and the pride of everyone shall be humbled; and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up and high;

## Isaiah 2:9-17

against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up;  
and against all the oaks of Bashan; against all the high  
mountains, and against all the lofty hills; against every  
high tower, and against every fortified wall; against all  
the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft.

The haughtiness of people shall be humbled, and the  
pride of everyone shall be brought low; and the Lord  
alone will be exalted on that day.'

I have calmed myself and stilled my longing.

‘Myself’ and ‘my longing’ translate the Hebrew *nepesh*.

In place of ‘calmed’ the Greek Septuagint has ‘**humbled**’ – one of only two texts in the Septuagint that use the verb ‘*tapeinophroneô*’, meaning ‘to think of oneself in a lowly way’.

The other text is Proverbs 29:23: ‘One who is **lowly in spirit** will obtain honour.’

I am at peace like a weaned child  
resting in its mother's arms.

My whole being is at rest.

Just as a mother calms her two year old, so the psalmist calms his desires, his irrational fears and the turmoil of his feelings. By extension one can see God as a mother and the psalmist as the child being calmed by God.

‘It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms ... I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them’(Hosea 11:3-4).

‘It was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother’s breast. On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God’(Psalm 22:9-10).

‘You, Lord, are my hope, my trust, Lord, from my youth’(Psalm 71:5).

‘You shall be suckled and be carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem’(Isaiah 66:12-13).

‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven’(Matthew 18:3-4).

‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will’(Luke 10:21).

‘All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted’(Matthew 23:12).



O Israel, hope in the Lord,  
now and for ever.

‘It is good that one should wait quietly for the  
salvation of the Lord’(Lamentations 3:26).