

Exposition on Psalm 131

by St. Augustine

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and the danger of pride, and encourages the listener to trust in the Lord and seek His guidance.

Scripture: Psalm 130:1-3, 1 Corinthians 3:2, Philippians 3:15

Topics: "Humility And Faith", "Prayer And Unity"

Description

St. Augustine preaches on the importance of humility and faithfulness in the Body of Christ, emphasizing the need to pray in the peace of the Church and unity of Christ's Body to be heard by God. He highlights the significance of offering a sacrifice of a troubled spirit and a contrite heart, rather than material offerings. St. Augustine warns against pride and self-exaltation, urging believers to seek humility and avoid seeking things beyond their understanding. He encourages believers to trust in God, remain humble, and seek wisdom through faith and obedience.

Transcript

1. In this Psalm, the humility of one that is a servant of God and faithful is commended unto us, by whose voice it is sung; which is the whole body of Christ. For we have often warned you, beloved, that it ought not to be received as the voice of one man singing, but of all who are in Christ's Body. And since all are in His Body, as it were one man speaks: and he is one who also is many....Now he prays in the temple of God, who prays in the peace of the Church, in the unity of Christ's Body; which Body of Christ consists of many who believe in the whole world: and therefore he who prays in the temple, is heard. For he prays in the spirit and in truth, John 4:21-24 who prays in the peace of the Church; not in that temple, wherein was the figure....

2. Lord, my heart is not lifted up Psalm 130:1. He has offered a sacrifice. Whence do we prove that he has offered a sacrifice? Because humility of heart is a sacrifice....If there is no sacrifice, there is no Priest. But if we have a High Priest in Heaven, who intercedes with the Father for us (for He has entered into the Holy of Holies, within the veil),...we are safe, for we have a Priest; let us offer our sacrifice there. Let us consider what sacrifice we ought to offer; for God is not pleased with burnt-offerings, as you have heard in the Psalm. But in that place he next shows what he offers: The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, shall Thou not despise.

3. Lord, my heart was not lifted up, neither were my eyes raised on high Psalm 130:1; I have not exercised myself in great matters, nor in wonderful things which are too high for me Psalm 130:2. Let this be more

plainly spoken and heard. I have not been proud: I have not wished to be known among men as for wondrous powers; nor have I sought anything beyond my strength, whereby I might boast myself among the ignorant. As that Simon the sorcerer wished to advance into wonders above himself, on that account the power of the Apostles more pleased him, than the righteousness of Christians....What is above my strength, he says, I have not sought; I have not stretched myself out there, I have not chosen to be magnified there. How deeply this self-exaltation in the abundance of graces is to be feared, that no man may pride himself in the gift of God, but may rather preserve humility, and may do what is written: The greater you are, the more humble yourself, and you shall find favour before the Lord: Sirach 3:18 how deeply pride in God's gift should be feared, we must again and again impress upon you....

4. If I had not lowly thoughts, but have lifted up my soul, as one taken from his mother's breast, such the reward for my soul Psalm 130:2. He seems as it were to have bound himself by a curse:...as though he had been going to say, Let it so happen to me. As one taken away from his mother's breast, may be my soul's reward. You know that the Apostle says to some weak brethren, I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able. 1 Corinthians 3:2 There are weak persons who are not fit for strong meat; they wish to grasp at that which they cannot receive: and if they ever do receive, or seem to themselves to receive what they have not received, they are puffed up thereby, and become proud thereupon; they seem to themselves wise men. Now this happens to all heretics; who since they were animal and carnal, by defending their depraved opinions, which they could not see to be false, were shut out of the Catholic Church....

5. Another opinion indeed has been entertained, and another sense in these words....It has been evidently explained, my brethren, where God would have us to be humble, where lofty. Humble, in order to provide against pride; lofty, to take in wisdom. Feed upon milk, that you may be nourished; be nourished, so that you may grow; grow, so that you may eat bread. But when you have begun to eat bread, you will be weaned, that is, you will no longer have need of milk, but of solid food. This he seems to have meant: If I had not lowly thoughts, but have lifted up my soul: that is, if I was not an infant in mind, I was in wickedness. In this sense, he said before, Lord, my heart was not lifted up, nor my eyes raised on high: I do not exercise myself in great matters, nor in wonderful things above me. Behold, in wickedness I am an infant. But since I am not an infant in understanding, If I had not lowly thoughts, but have lifted up my soul, may that reward be mine which is given unto the infant that is weaned from his mother, that I may at length be able to eat bread.

6. This interpretation, also, brethren, displeases me not, since it does not militate against the faith. Yet I cannot but remark that it is not only said, As one taken away from milk, such may be my soul's reward; but with this addition, As one taken away from milk when upon his mother's breast, such may be my soul's reward. Here there is somewhat that induces me to consider it a curse. For it is not an infant, but a grown child that is taken away from milk; he who is weak in his earliest infancy, which is his true infancy, is upon his mother's breast: if perchance he has been taken away from the milk, he perishes. It is not without a reason then that it is added, Upon his mother's breast. For all may be weaned by growing. He who grows, and is thus taken away from milk, it is good for him; but hurtful for him who is still upon his mother's breast. We must therefore beware, my brethren, and be fearful, lest any one be taken away from milk before his time....Let him not therefore wish to lift up his soul, when perchance he is not fit to take meat, but let him fulfil the commandments of humility. He has wherein he may exercise himself: let him believe in Christ, that he may understand Christ. He cannot see the Word, he cannot understand the equality of the Word with the Father, he cannot as yet see the equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Word; let him

believe this, and suck it. He is safe, because, when he has grown, he will eat, which he could not do before he grew by sucking: and he has a point to stretch towards. Seek not out the things that are too hard for you, and search not the things that are above your strength; that is, things which you are not as yet fit to understand. And what am I to do? You reply. Shall I remain thus? But what things the Lord has commanded you, think thereupon always. Sirach 3:22 What has the Lord commanded you? Do works of mercy, part not with the peace of the Church, place not your trust in man, tempt not God by longing for miracles....

7. For if you be not exalted, if you raise not your heart on high, if you tread not in great matters that are too high for you, but preserve humility, God will reveal unto you what you are otherwise minded in. Philippians 3:15 But if you choose to defend this very thing, which you are otherwise minded about, and with pertinacity assert it, and against the peace of the Church; this curse which he has described is entailed upon you; when you are upon your mother's breast, and are removed away from the milk, you shall die of hunger apart from your mother's breast. But if you continue in Catholic peace, if perchance you are in anything otherwise minded than ye ought to be, God will reveal it to you, if you be humble. Wherefore? Because God resists the proud, and gives grace unto the humble.

8. This Psalm therefore concludes to this purpose: O Israel, trust in the Lord, from this time forth and even unto eternity Psalm 130:3. But the word *seculum* does not always mean this world, but sometimes eternity; since eternity is understood in two ways; until eternity, that is, either evermore without end, or until we arrive at eternity. How then is it to be understood here? Until we arrive at eternity, let us trust in the Lord God; because when we have reached eternity, there will be no longer hope, but the thing itself will be ours.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-augustine/exposition-on-psalm-131/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net