

Psalm 131:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.

Analysis

David confesses humble contentment: 'LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.' The address 'LORD' establishes this as prayer/testimony before God. The triple negative emphasizes what David is NOT: 'not haughty...nor lofty...neither do I exercise.' 'Heart is not haughty' addresses internal pride - haughty (Hebrew 'gabah') means elevated, proud, arrogant. 'Eyes lofty' describes outward expression of pride - looking down on others, presumptuous gaze. The phrase 'neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high' means David doesn't overreach his calling or capacity. 'Exercise' (Hebrew 'halak') means to walk or conduct oneself. 'Great matters' and 'things too high' refer to ambitions beyond proper scope - perhaps royal intrigue, theological mysteries, or presumptuous plans. This verse models humility as knowing one's place, limitations, and calling without self-exalting ambition. It's contentment with God's assignment.

Historical Context

David's life involved resisting temptation to seize power prematurely (sparing Saul repeatedly, 1 Samuel 24; 26) and accepting God's timing. His humility contrasts with Absalom's proud ambition (2 Samuel 15). The psalm may reflect David's mature perspective after experiencing both humble beginnings and royal authority, learning contentment in God's providence.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do haughty heart, lofty eyes, and overreaching ambition relate to each other?
2. What 'great matters' or 'things too high' might tempt believers to exercise themselves inappropriately?
3. How does humility involve knowing and accepting one's limitations and calling?
4. What is the difference between godly ambition and proud overreaching?
5. How does this confession before the LORD indicate that humility is ultimately lived before God's face?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	הִנֵּה	עִינֵּן	וְמִמְּלֵא	לֹא	בַּיִת	גָּבֵה	לֹא	הִנֵּה	לֹא	הִנֵּה	לֹא
LORD	H3808	is not haughty	my heart	H3808	lofty	nor mine eyes	H3808				
H3068		H1361	H3820		H7311	H5869					

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:16 (Parallel theme): Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Psalms 139:6 (Parallel theme): Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

Job 42:3 (Parallel theme): Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

Psalms 101:5 (Parallel theme): Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

Jeremiah 45:5 (References Lord): And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

Psalms 124:1 (References Lord): If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say;

Psalms 122:1 (References Lord): I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

Numbers 12:3 (Parallel theme): (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

Psalms 133:1 (Parallel theme): Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Matthew 11:29 (Parallel theme): Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.