

Psalm 71

Psalm 71:

This psalm is clearly the prayer of an elderly man threatened by his enemies (verses 9, 18).

Before expressing his petition proper, the psalmist first states a brief introduction to his petition (verses 1-4).

He reinforces all of these words with a marvelous statement of his lifelong trust in the LORD (verses 5-8).

This section is rich with expression of trust and communion with God: “Thou art my hope” (verse 5), “thou art my trust (verse 5), “thou art he” (verse 6), “thou art my strong refuge” (verse 7), “thy praise and ... thy honor (verse 8).

The impression is left that the psalmist is a mature man of faith who reacts to his troubles with implicit trust in God.

His actual petition and lament are now given (verses 9-13).

It is a prayer for help for himself and judgment for his enemies.

Further, he expresses his confidence in being answered (verses 14-21), and his consequent praise (verses 22-24).

Verses 1-24:

One of the features of the psalms is that they meet the circumstances of life.

This psalm to God expresses the concerns of old age.

At a time in his life when he thinks he should be exempt from certain kinds of troubles, he once again is personally attacked.

Though his enemies conclude that God has abandoned him, the psalmist is confident that God will remain faithful.

- I. Confidence in God Stated (71:1-8).
- II. Confidence in God Practiced in Prayer (71:9-13).
- III. Confidence in God Vindicated (71:14-24).

Verses 1-13:

David prays that he might never be made ashamed of dependence upon God.

With this petition, every true believer may come boldly to the throne of grace.

The gracious care of Divine providence in our birth and infancy, should engage us to early piety.

He that was our Help from our birth, ought to be our Hope from our youth.

Let none expect ease or comfort from the world.

Those who love the LORD, often are hated and persecuted; men wondered at for their principles and conduct; but the LORD has been their strong refuge.

The faithful servants of God may be assured that he will not cast them off in old age, nor forsake them when their strength fails.

Psalm 71:1 "In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion."

See the notes at (Psalm 25:2; compare 22:4-5; 31:1).

"Let me never be put to confusion":

Let me never be ashamed.

That is, let me not be so disappointed in the trust that I rest in thee as to have occasion to feel ashamed that I have done it.

We see a firm statement in the beginning of this prayer, that His trust is in the LORD.

We have talked about trust before, but to refresh our memory, we will again speak of what it is.

I believe that trust is a furtherance of faith.

It is a point when you are resting in the faith that you have in God, knowing that whatever is the outcome of the prayer, it is best for you.

You might even call it the rest of the believer.

Resting in the confidence that all is well with my soul. Let me never be put to confusion, I believe this is saying, just as I trust the LORD, let it be.

To be put to confusion would be for the answer to the prayer to be one that would cause you not to trust.

Psalm 71:2 "Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me."

By it, or "for the sake of it" (see note on Psalm 31:1).

"And cause me to escape":

Present danger, and out of the hands of enemies, as well as wrath to come, and eternal death. Which nothing but the righteousness of God can deliver from, or cause to escape.

"Incline thine ear unto me":

Or "bow it" (see note on Psalm 31:2), and save me out of all troubles and afflictions, and from wicked and unreasonable men.

When I look at this Scripture, I begin to think of God having Michael keep the body of Moses from the devil.

Jude 1:9 "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

Just as God, through Moses, delivered the children of Israel out of physical Egypt, I believe God will deliver us out of symbolic Egypt (the world).

The deliverance is a deliverance in the spirit.

This is just saying, hear my prayer of repentance and save me by covering me with your righteousness.

Psalm 71:3 "Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou [art] my rock and my fortress."

"Continually" (Psalm 71:1-3 is almost the same as Psalm 31:1-3a).

One difference, however, is the word "continually," which the elderly person writing this psalm wants to emphasize.

God has "continually" been faithful (compare verses 6, 14).

Habitation here, would be dwelling place.

We can always hide in Jesus, if we are a believer.

He builds a hedge around us and protects us from the evil one.

You are my rock that I build upon, and you are my strong fortress as well.

Verses 4-20: The psalmist lists some of the reasons for life's trials: ungodly foes (71:4), an uncertain future (71:9), unfaithful friends (71:10-13), and God's sovereignty (71:19-20).

To fully rely on the character (71:1, 8, 18, 22), and compassion (71:4-6, 17), of God, is the only wise response.

James reminds God's people that God uses trials to refine their faith (1:2, 12).

Psalm 71:4 "Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man."

The Hebrew word for "cruel" suggests leaven or yeast.

This person's wickedness was fermenting.

These wicked are our enemies, because they are God's enemies.

Unrighteous men are cruel, because they do not have a conscience.

We see the reason for the wicked being cruel to the righteous in the next verse.

John 15:18 "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before [it hated] you."

God's enemies are the enemies of the believer.

We are not to take vengeance on them.

God takes vengeance on them for us.

Psalm 71:5 "For thou [art] my hope, O Lord GOD: [thou art] my trust from my youth."

The object, ground, and foundation of it, even of present deliverance, and both of future and eternal salvation.

"Thou art my trust from my youth":

In whom he trusted in his youthful days, of which there is an eminent instance in (1 Sam. 17:33).

He strengthens his faith by the experience of God's benefits, who not only preserved him in his mother's womb, but took him from there, and ever since has preserved him.

David is saying here, that he decided when he was just a youth to follow God.

We know it is true, because David was just a lad when he fought Goliath.

He is saying, I placed my life in your hands a long time ago.

Everything that has happened to me since has been for my good.

I trust you Lord.

Psalm 71:6 "By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise [shall be] continually of thee."

Supported in being, upheld in life, and sustained with food and raiment, and followed with the mercies and blessings of life from thence to this present moment.

Which the psalmist takes notice of, as he does of what goes before and follows after, to encourage his faith and hope in God as to present deliverance.

"Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels" (see notes on Psalm 22:9).

The Syriac version is, "thou art my hope from my mother's bowels"; the Arabic version, "thou art my helper"; and the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions, "thou art my protector".

The word is only used here (and in Psalm 90:10); and is there rendered "cut off".

The Lord was, as it were, his "cutter off"; that cut the navel string, and loosed him from his mother, and safely brought him into the world, and preserved him ever since.

Wherefore he adds,

"My praise shall be continually of thee":

As the God of nature and providence; and also as the God of grace, who had blessed him both with temporal and spiritual blessings.

And these being continued with him, he determines that God should be the subject of his praise always.

The Targum is, "in thy Word my praise is continually."

There is a strange thing about those whom God has called to do a special job for Him in this life.

God, through His foreknowledge, knows what decisions you will make in this life.

He does not overrule your will in the matter, but sees into the future and knows the decision you will make.

It seems that people who have been called into God's service, are protected from the moment they are born.

It is an argument for predestination, but we will not get into that.

We do know that Samuel, when David was very young, anointed David.

1 Samuel 16:13 " Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah."

He is a chosen vessel of God.

David will never cease to praise God.

Psalm 71:7 "I am as a wonder unto many; but thou [art] my strong refuge."

"A wonder":

A reference to his trials.

People are amazed at this person's life, some interpreting his trials as God's care, and others as God's punishment.

People who are a chosen vessel of God are not like the rest of the world.

They are a peculiarity to those around them.

Other people think, and some even say, why did God choose him and not me?

I do not know.

I do know that God is my refuge and strength, as He was David's.

Psalm 71:8 "Let my mouth be filled [with] thy praise [and with] thy honor all the day."

Or "thy praise shall fill my mouth"; which shows that his heart was affected with the goodness of God to him, and that he had a deep impression and sense of it upon him.

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

And for the mouth to be filled with the praise of God, is to speak largely, publicly, and with great delight, in the praise of God, his divine perfections and benefits.

"And with thy honor all the day":

The excellency of his nature, the glory of his majesty, the honor due unto him, on account of his being, attributes, and blessings of providence and grace.

A work to be employed in "all the day", evening, morning, and at noon; as often as prayer is made to God, praise, honor, and glory, should be given him.

Since his mercies are new every morning, and they continue all the day long; his goodness endures for ever.

The gratitude of all who are of the family of God, should be like David, and that's continually praising God.

Psalm 71:9 "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth."

The LORD never casts off nor casts away his people, whom he foreknew.

They are near unto him; they are on his heart, and are engraved on the palms of his hands.

And they shall never be removed from his heart's love, nor out of his arms, nor out of his covenant, and shall always be the objects of his care.

You who helped me in my youth when I had more strength, help me now even more in my old age and weakness.

He bears and carries them to old age, and even to hoary (gray), hairs.

The LORD had been the guide of David's youth, and his trust then (Psalm 71:5).

And now he desires he would be the staff of his old age; at which age he was when Absalom rebelled against him.

"Forsake me not when my strength faileth":

As it does when old age comes on.

Then the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves, and especially at death, when flesh and heart fail.

But God will never forsake his people, neither in youth nor in old age, neither in life nor at death.

This is a strange statement, since Moses was 80 years old when God called him to serve.

Perhaps David said this because he was so young when God first called him.

To those who love the LORD, He gets sweeter and sweeter as the days go by.

Psalm 71:10 "For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,"

That is, they said substantially, as it is stated in (Psalm 71:11), that God had forsaken him, and that therefore, they would arise and punish him, or treat him as an outcast from God.

"And they that lay wait for my soul":

For my life; or, to take my life.

The margin here, as the Hebrew is, "watch," or "observe."

The "watchers for my life;" that is, they who watch for an opportunity to take my life, or to destroy me.

"Take counsel together":

About the best means of accomplishing their object.

David's enemies feared David in his youth, but they think when he gets older, he will be weaker and not able to fight back.

They would like to destroy David, but God will not let them.

Psalm 71:11 "Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for [there is] none to deliver [him]."

That is, God has given him over; he no longer protects him.

He regards him as a wicked man, and we shall therefore, not only be "safe" in our attempts upon his life, but we shall be "justified" in those attempts.

"Persecute and take him":

It can be done safely now; it can be done with propriety.

"For there is none to deliver him":

He has no one now to whom to look; no one on whom he can rely.

Abandoned by God and by man, he will be an easy prey (compare notes at Psalm 41:7-8).

Just as Job's friends and Job's wife tried to convince Job that God was done with him and would not help him, these enemies think God will not help David.

How wrong they are.

Psalm 71:12 "O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.

God is everywhere, at hand and afar off, with regard to his being, power, and providence.

His glorious presence is in heaven; his gracious presence is with his people.

But, when he hides his face, he seems to be at a distance.

And this they cannot bear, and therefore deprecate it (see Psalm 10:1).

"O my God, make haste for my help":

He knew that his help was in God, and that there was none for him elsewhere.

And that he could help him when none else could, and was a present help in time of trouble.

And it being such a time with him, and his case desperate, he desires the LORD that he would make haste.

And he addresses him as his own God, the consideration of which encouraged his faith and hope in him, and carried in it an argument to help him (see Psalm 119:94).

Sometimes we need the comfort of feeling the Father's hand.

He is saying here, let me know that you are here to help me.

Psalm 71:13 "Let them be confounded [and] consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered [with] reproach and dishonor that seek my hurt."

(See Psalm 70:2).

"And consumed":

Like smoke (see Psalm 37:20).

As antichrist will be with the breath of Christ's mouth, and the brightness of his coming (see 2 Thessalonians 2:8).

"That are adversaries to my soul":

That hated him with a diabolical hatred, as the devil hates the souls of men, and who has his name "Satan" from the word here used.

All wicked men are Satan's, full of enmity against God, and all good men.

And such were David's enemies as well, spiteful and malicious, and nothing would satisfy them but his life.

"Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor":

As with a garment.

"That seek my hurt":

Compare Psalm 35:4, 36; Psalm 40:14; Psalm 70:2.

These enemies of God are the enemies of David also.

David says, LORD, get them so confused that they will not know what they are doing.

He is saying, they are trying to destroy my soul.

Show them up LORD, for what they really are.

Verses 14-24:

The psalmist declares that the righteousness of Christ, and the great salvation obtained thereby, shall be the chosen subject of his discourse.

Not on a Sabbath only, but on every day of the week, of the year, of his life.

Not merely at stated returns of solemn devotion, but on every occasion, all the day long.

Why will he always dwell on this?

Because he knew not the numbers thereof.

It is impossible to measure the value or the fullness of these blessings.

The righteousness is unspeakable, the salvation everlasting.

God will not cast off his grey-headed servants when no longer capable of laboring as they have done previously.

The LORD often strengthens his people in their souls, when nature is sinking into decay.

And it is a debt which the old disciples of Christ owe to succeeding generations, to leave behind them a solemn testimony to the advantage of religion, and the truth of God's promises; and especially to the everlasting righteousness of the Redeemer.

Assured of deliverance and victory, let us spend our days, while awaiting the approach of death, in praising the Holy One of Israel with all our powers.

And while speaking of his righteousness, and singing his praises, we shall rise above fears and infirmities, and have earnest of the joys of heaven.

The work of redemption ought, above all God's works, to be spoken of by us in our praises.

The Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God, is worthy of all blessing and praise.

Psalm 71:14 "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more."

For the deliverance and salvation from our present outward troubles, for; more grace here and glory hereafter.

It is the excellency of the grace of hope to be exercised in times of affliction and distress, and with Abraham to believe in hope against hope.

And then it is that this grace is eminently and remarkably useful.

It is an anchor to the soul when in distress, which keeps it firm and steadfast; and a helmet, which covers the head in the day of battle.

In the exercise of which the believer glories in tribulation.

It is an abiding grace, and should be continually exercised by those that have it, which is to abound in it; but this must be through the power of the Holy Ghost (Rom. 15:13).

"And will yet praise thee more and more":

Or "will add to all thy praise".

To former praises and thanksgivings, fresh ones, as his mercies were renewed to him, and he was daily loaded with benefits.

Even when it looks bad and looks like no help is coming, the believer will still praise the LORD.

We do not praise just in the good times, but all the time, whatever is happening.

David has hope.

Psalm 71:15 "My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness [and] thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers [thereof]."

"Know not the numbers":

The blessings of God's salvation and righteousness are innumerable.

David says here, I do not know how long I will live, but while I am alive, I will continually have praise in my mouth for God.

David will not stop witnessing and telling others of the salvation God offers to all.

Psalm 71:16 "I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, [even] of thine only."

I will not sit down in despair, but I will go on or proceed in my business courageously and cheerfully, in making necessary provisions for my own defense.

Relying only upon thy strength, and not upon my own military preparations.

I will remain steadfast, being upheld by the power of God.

"Make mention":

Partly to praise and celebrate it, and partly to support and comfort myself with the remembrance of it.

"Of thy righteousness":

Of thy mercy and goodness.

Or rather, of thy faithfulness in making good all thy promises to me, as this word is commonly used in this book.

Of thine only; not of my subjects and friends, who are false and deceitful to thee and to me.

Nor of my own; for I have been most unfaithful to thee, and have broken my covenant with thee.

David is aware that his physical strength is gone, because he is older, but that will not stop him from speaking about God to all he comes into contact with.

Psalm 71:17 "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."

See (Psalm 71:5-6).

That is, God had guided and instructed him from his earliest years.

He had made known to him his own being and perfections.

He had made his duty plain and he had led him along the dangerous path of life.

"And hitherto have I declared":

I have made known.

That is, he had done this by public praise; he had done it by his writings; he had done it by maintaining and defending the truth.

In all situations of life, up to that time, he had been willing to stand up for God and his cause.

"Thy wondrous works":

See (Psalms 9:1 and 26:7 notes).

Doings or acts which were suited to attract attention.

To awe the mind by their greatness; and to inspire confidence by their wisdom.

David is not forgetting that in his youth he came against Goliath in the name of the LORD and killed him.

David did not let his youth, or his inexperience stop him from doing battle for God.

Psalm 71:18 "Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto [this] generation, [and] thy power to every one [that] is to come."

He desires that as he has begun, he would so continue his benefits, that his liberality may have perfect praise.

A repetition of his request (Psalm 71:9).

With a reason annexed to it, suggested in the following words:

"Until I have showed thy strength unto this generation":

Or, "thine arm"; which sometimes refers to the Messiah (Isa. 53:1).

By whose power the worlds were made, and in whom all things consist.

And who has wrought out the salvation of people; and is the arm on which they lean and are upheld.

And the psalmist may be thought to desire that he might be continued a little longer, and be favored with the presence of God, and the influences of his Spirit and grace.

That he might show forth in prophecy, both by word and writing, to the men of the then present age, more things concerning the person, office, and grace of Christ.

His sufferings, death, resurrection from the dead, and sitting at the right hand of God; things which are spoken of in the book of Psalms.

Sometimes the arm of the LORD denotes his power and strength (Psalm 44:3); and so it may be taken here; and the next clause seems to be an explanation of it:

"And thy power": Or "even thy power".

"To everyone that is to come":

That is, to come into the world, that is to be born into it.

Namely, the power of God, not only in creating all things out of nothing, and in supporting what is made.

But in the redemption of men, in the conversion of sinners, and in the preservation of the saints, and in enabling them to hold on and out unto the end.

And which is shown forth by the psalmist in what he has committed to writing.

And which continue, and will continue, to the end of the world, for the instruction of those that come into it (see Psalm 22:31).

David is saying that he is older and wiser in his old age, but his strength of youth is gone.

He is saying I was young and now I am old, but I know you will be with me and I shall win.

David is saying, I am not fighting them in my strength, but in Your strength.

Let's show this young generation just how powerful God is.

Verses 19-20: Just as a father will allow his children to experience difficulties so they can grow in knowledge and strength, God sends difficulties into the lives of His children to strengthen and refine them (Heb. 12:4-11).

Psalm 71:19 "Thy righteousness also, O God, [is] very high, who hast done great things: O God, who [is] like unto thee!"

Or, "unto the place on high"; it reaches unto heaven, as the mercy, truth, and faithfulness of God, are said to do (Psalm 36:5).

The righteousness of Christ is accepted by God the Father in heaven.

It is in Christ, who is there at the right hand of God; and it is higher and infinitely above any righteousness of a creature, angel's or man's.

"Who hast done great things":

In nature, in forming the world out of nothing, and in upholding all creatures in their beings.

In providence, in governing the world, and ordering all things in it for the best, and to answer the wisest purposes.

In grace, and in the salvation of lost sinners by Jesus Christ; and in the justification of them by his righteousness.

And in the atonement and pardon of their sins, through his blood and sacrifice.

In the regeneration of them by his grace; in making and performing exceeding great and precious promises, and in giving them eternal life.

"O God, who is like unto thee?"

Either for greatness or goodness; for power or for mercy; for justice, truth, and faithfulness.

For the perfections of his nature, or the works of his hands; and to be praised, revered and adored, as he is (see Psalm 89:6).

The power and character of God is so far above anything that we know, that it is impossible for us to imagine.

The goodness of God is above all.

There is no one on the earth or in heaven, or anywhere else, that is a match for God.

Pharaoh found that out in Egypt.

Psalm 71:20 "[Thou], which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth."

"From the depths of the earth":

Not the actual resurrection, but rescue from near-death conditions and renewal of life's strength and meaning.

Just for this one battle, David wants God to quicken his spirit and body as he did Abraham, so that he can win this battle.

Psalm 71:21 "Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."

His temporal greatness, as he did, by crushing the rebellion of his son.

Returning him to his palace and family; and giving him rest from his enemies all around.

And his spiritual greatness, by favoring him with his presence and by shedding abroad his love in his heart.

By enlarging his experience; increasing his faith and causing his love to abound.

And him to grow in every grace, and in the knowledge of Christ.

"And comfort me on every side":

By his Spirit, word, and ordinances and by his truths and promises.

With his rod and staff; and with mercy, grace, and lovingkindness.

The phrase denotes the abundance of comfort, which should come as it were from every quarter, and encompass him about.

This is not asking God to do it, but is spoken in holy confidence knowing that God will do this.

Psalm 71:22 "I will also praise thee with the psaltery, [even] thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel."

An instrument of music (see notes on Psalm 33:2).

"Even thy truth, O my God":

That is, his faithfulness in fulfilling his promises, which is never suffered to fail.

He confesses that his long delay was well recompensed, when God performed his promise.

"Unto thee will I sing with the harp":

Another instrument of music.

And both typical of the spiritual melody in the heart, which believers make in praising the Lord, when they sing the Lamb's new song (see Rev. 14:2).

"O thou Holy One of Israel":

The God of Israel, that dwells among them, and sanctifies them.

And who is essentially and perfectly holy in himself, and in all his ways and works.

The remembrance of which occasions praise and thankfulness (Psalm 97:12).

Psalm 71:23 "My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed."

Both with vocal and instrumental music.

This is praising the LORD with joyful lips (Psalm 63:5).

"And my soul, which thou hast redeemed":

For there is no true praising of God, unless it comes from the heart.

And therefore he promises to delight in nothing, except that in which God is glorified.

Signifying that it would not be lip labor, or bodily service, only that he should perform.

But that his heart would go along with his lips in praise.

And that under a sense of redeeming love, which nothing can more strongly engage in such work (Psalm 103:1).

For the redemption of the soul is exceeding precious; being the contrivance of infinite wisdom, the fruit of divine grace, and owing to the blood and sacrifice of Christ.

Psalm 71:24 "My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt."

(See notes on Psalm 71:16).

"For they are confounded":

His adversaries, for whose confusion he prayed (Psalm 71:13).

"For they are brought unto shame that seek my hurt":

As Absalom and Ahithophel, being both brought to a shameful end.

David had sung and played the harp just for God while he was herding sheep.

He is saying here, that he will do this again when this is over.

He will sing aloud with his lips and tongue the beautiful thoughts originating in his heart.

Those who sought to kill him are defeated through the power of David's God.

We must learn this well.

Psalm 71 Questions

1. David's trust is where?
2. What is trust?
3. What would “put to confusion” mean?
4. When the author looks at 71:2 of the lesson, what does it remind them of?
5. God, through _____, brought the children of Israel out of physical Egypt.
6. What is symbolic Egypt?
7. What two things does he call God in verse 3?
8. What does habitation mean here?
9. Why are unrighteous men cruel?
10. When David was just a youth, he fought whom?
11. How long had God been taking care of David?
12. Who anointed David?
13. What happened to David when he was anointed?
14. What did it mean that he was a wonder to many?
15. Cast me not off in the time of ____ _.
16. How old was Moses when God called him to serve?
17. If they feared David before, why do they think they can defeat him now?
18. Even when it looks _____, David will praise God.
19. God has taught David from his _____.
20. What description did David give of himself to prove he was old?
21. David wants God to quicken ____ _.
22. How will David praise God?
23. Who did David play and sing for?