

Psalm 71 • From Youth to Old Age — You are my God!

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Psalm 71. This Psalm bears a striking similarity to again, another Psalm that we covered previously, and that is Psalm chapter 31. But this is an interesting Psalm where the psalmist, and it is not mentioned who wrote this particular Psalm, but the psalmist is speaking from the standpoint of age. He says,

“In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame! ² In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me, and save me! ³ Be to me a rock of refuge, to which I may continually come; you have given the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.” (ESV)

So, you'll notice how the psalmist asks the Lord to be what He wants him or needs him to be to Him, and then affirms, you are that to me, You are my rock of refuge, You are the One to whom I continually come, You are my fortress.

By the way, that word, continually, you might have a different word if you have a different translation that you're reading here. Your Bible may say, always instead of, continually. Here, the ESV says, *“to which I may continually come.”*

But that word, interestingly enough, is emphatic in the Hebrew. When you find a word that is emphatic, what it means is it's forceful, it speaks with force. You are the One to whom I continually come! And there's that emphasis there, right? It goes along with it, not just once in a while. I am constantly coming before Your throne, before the throne of grace, that I may find help constantly!

Verse four, *“Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and (the) cruel man.”* You say, “Well, what's going on in the psalmist's life that he's crying out this sort-of-a-way, to be released from the hand of the unjust and cruel man?” Well, nothing really big, probably. This is the cry of every believer who's living in a fallen world. This is just the cry of what it is to be a child of God and to live in a fallen world. We're under it.

Jesus told us we would be under it. He told us that the world would not just dislike us, they would hate us just because we belong to Him. And people have

had that happening ever since people belong to God! So, it's just the cry of the heart of the children of God.

Verse 5, *“For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth.”* Now he's looking back on his life. He says in verse six, *“Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; (and) you are he who took me from my mother's womb. (The result is) My praise is continually of you.”* Wow! *“Upon you I have leaned (even) from before my birth...”*

There's that recognition in the life of a believer, at some point, that even though I like to think that I'm in control, and we long for control, and we try to establish our lives in such a way to give us the impression that we have control. I'm never in control! And there's a point where, as a believer, you come to terms with that, and you realize I'm not... I'm simply not in control. God is in control!

At that point, you realize that God has superintended the entire process of your life, even from conception onward. I mean, frankly, even before that, because your parents had to be guarded, and their parents had to be guarded by the Lord, so that...otherwise you wouldn't be here.

So, you can see that there has been a sovereign work of the Lord that's been going on since the very beginning to even bring you into the world! This is why the psalmist is saying, hey, I've had to lean on You from the very... I've been leaning on You all my life! I've been leaning on You before I was born! I never... I've always been, I just didn't know it most of the time.”

One of the most humbling things the Lord ever said to me, prophetically, was the Lord said, “knew you when you knew Me not. In other words, when you were going on your own path, doing your own thing, and you weren't giving a thought toward heaven, I knew you.

I remember when I received that word, that was extremely humbling because sometimes we like to think we're all that, and we're not. God just had His hand on our lives.

Verse 7 is an interesting one, he says, *“I have been as a portent to many...”* And a portent usually means a sign but, in the Hebrew, it refers literally to “a sign to be marveled at”. Okay? That's the more lengthy Hebrew definition of that word.

In other words, he...so, he's saying, I have been assigned to be marveled at *“but you are my strong refuge.”*⁸ *My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your*

glory all the day.” He says, now, “⁹ Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent. ¹⁰ For my enemies speak concerning me; those who watch for my life consult together ¹¹ and (they) say, ‘God has forsaken him; pursue and seize him for there is none to deliver him.’”

That's what they're saying. So, he says in verse 12, “*O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste (or hurry) to help me! ¹³ May my accusers be put to shame and consumed; with scorn and disgrace may they be covered who seek my hurt. ¹⁴ But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. ¹⁵ My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation (which means deliverance) all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.*

¹⁶ With the mighty deeds of the Lord God, I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone. ¹⁷ O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. ¹⁸ So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.”

I want to have you pause there for just a minute, if you would, because I think those are some great verses to think about for a moment. Particularly as it relates to the challenge of getting out of our comfort zone, getting out of our day to day focus of just sustaining my life. Which seems, at times, like a full-time job and getting into a mindset similar to the psalmist that says, as long as there's breath in me...yeah, I'm old. My hair is gray. It wasn't always that way, but it is now. Or, in some cases, our hair is gone, right? Either way. Here I am. I'm older than I used to be and, although the culture that I'm living in exalts youth and tells us that, essentially, when we reach a certain age, we're used up and it's time to go and enter your idle time...

I would never live in a place called idle time. Just because I really despise that whole mentality that, when you get older, you should become idle. I mean, shouldn't it be the opposite? I mean, I know that we're really busy when we're raising kids, super busy. But, when the kids leave, rather than going through our golden years and just kicking back in my lawn chair and watching the days go by, shouldn't we be busy as much as possible reaching the next generation?

However the Lord may lead us to do that. However, it may happen. Whether it's speaking into the life of your grandchildren or, in some cases, even your great-grandchildren. But passing along what you know. One thing I love about other cultures, quite unlike the United States of America, but other societies, is that age was always something that was honored.

And when an aged person walked into the room, the younger people would get up. And when the aged person would begin to speak, the young people would hold their tongue because experience was speaking. And they wanted to hear the voice of experience. That's gone in our country. When you're old, you be quiet.

You got to let the young people talk because they think they know. I love how the psalmist prays to God here and says, even to my old age, my gray hairs, don't forsake me until I get this job done. Don't leave me now because there's work to be done, Lord. There're people to be reached, there're young people to be reached with the message of Jesus Christ, the Gospel.

What are the things that we're going to say to this next generation? How about what, like what he says in verse 19, *"Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?"* Boy, I tell you, there's so much we need to share with this next generation, with this young generation.

Stop thinking that your golden years are a time to just let things go by. It's time to get busy. Okay you raised your kids? Wonderful. Now your parenting is now on your knees. So, you're praying for your kids, you're praying for your kids' kids. Wonderful. But there's still work to be done. There's Bibles that need to get into places of the world where they don't readily have the Word of God.

There's the message of hope that needs to get out. However the Lord may direct you to do that. However. It's important that we just say, hey, as long as there's breath in my lungs, right? When people say to me, particularly old people, when they say to me, well, I guess I'm kind of living on borrowed time and, I don't know, I guess...I guess God must have something for me here because I'm still kicking.

(Pastor Paul sighs) I want to kick them sometimes when they say that, to be honest with you, because it's like, yeah, He's got something for you! There's a message of hope that we have for the next generation. There's a Word of life that we need to pass on.

I love verse 20 because it's the voice of experience. He says, *"You (talking to the Lord) who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again."* Sounds like resurrection, doesn't it? But it's not what he's talking about.

Verse 21, he says, *"You will increase my greatness and comfort me again."* When I first looked at this verse, I thought, oh, he's talking...he's saying, yeah, I've been through a lot of hard times. But at least I know that, after I die, You'll raise me up in the resurrection of the dead. But, that's actually not what he's talking about. What the psalmist is doing when he refers to sinking down to the lowest point is he's using poetic language to describe just a real dark spot, a real dark place.

And so, when he refers to being raised up, he's expressing his faith that God's going to answer his cry, the cry of this very solemn and lift him up out of that very dark place. That place that he describes as being in *"the depths of the earth"*. That's not death, that's just hardness. That's just difficulty. And he says, "I believe, I believe that You're going to raise me up from this thing because there's work to be done. There's a message to be given to this generation."

Verse 22, *"I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. ²³ My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed. ²⁴ And my tongue..."* Here we go... *"²⁴ And my tongue will talk of your righteous help all the day long, for they have been put to shame and disappointed who sought to do me hurt."*

Why? Because I prayed to you. I prayed. And I know, Lord God, that You're going to be my Deliverer. And so, I'm going to keep talking. They're trying to shut me up. They're trying to get me to be quiet. I'm going to keep talking. I'm going to talk about Your righteousness all the day long.

How is it the Lord would have you to serve Him? Think about that. How would the Lord have you to do that? How can you help get the message out? What can you do? I really think that it's a distraction of the enemy in our lives that causes us to become so engulfed in our own affairs, in our own issues, that we literally can't see beyond our own borders to see what needs to happen all around us. In our home sometimes, in our community, in our region, and state, and nation, and world.

You'd be shocked how many Christians are oblivious or, if they're not oblivious, they feel just like their hands are tied. I'd love to help, but man, my own life is a train wreck. My family, and all the dysfunction, and all this stuff, and these people that are going after me, and there's this and there's that... And we're just consumed with our own issues to the point where our hands are tied. And we're like yeah, I'd love to help, but I got fires I got to put out right here at home.

Listen, I get it. And there's a place for putting out fires and dealing with issues. But, if we never ever lift our heads up out of the water or out of the mire, or the difficulty of the things that we're dealing with in our own lives, and begin to look and say, Lord, what do You have for me? What's going on in the kingdom?

You know, Jesus told us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then all these other things would just follow suit, they'd come along in their own good time. (Matthew 6:33) What have we done? We've done that backwards. We're spending all of our time trying to get those other things. And God said, they'll come if you seek first My kingdom. If you do first the work of the kingdom and seek it with your heart.