



World Christian Fellowship

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Psalms 71 Finding God's way

Psalms 71:1-24, *In You, O Lord, I put my trust; Let me never be put to shame. ² Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; Incline Your ear to me, and save me. ³ Be my strong refuge, To which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, For You are my rock and my fortress. ⁴ Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. ⁵ For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth. ⁶ By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You. ⁷ I have become as a wonder to many, But You are my strong refuge. ⁸ Let my mouth be filled with Your praise And with Your glory all the day. ⁹ Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me when my strength fails. ¹⁰ For my enemies speak against me; And those who lie in wait for my life take counsel together, ¹¹ Saying, "God has forsaken him; Pursue and take him, for there is none to deliver him." ¹² O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me! ¹³ Let them be confounded and consumed Who are adversaries of my life; Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor Who seek my hurt.*

¹⁴ But I will hope continually, And will praise You yet more and more. ¹⁵ My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness And Your salvation all the day, For I do not know their limits. ¹⁶ I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only. ¹⁷ O God, You have taught me from my youth; And to this day I declare Your wondrous works. ¹⁸ Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come. ¹⁹ Also Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You? ²⁰ You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, Shall revive me again, And bring me up again from the depths of the earth. ²¹ You shall increase my greatness, And comfort me on every side. ²² Also with the lute I will praise You— And Your faithfulness, O my God! To You I will sing with the harp, O Holy One of Israel. ²³ My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, And my soul, which You have redeemed. ²⁴ My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long; For they are confounded, For they are brought to shame Who seek my hurt.

Sadly, our culture and society are a self-centred, utilitarian society.

The younger generation often views the elderly as a financial burden and, if they require our care, as an interference in the pursuit of pleasure and success.

Psalm 71 is the psalm of an old man. He is an old man with many trials and problems, but he is obviously a joyful man who is able to put his focus on the Lord in the midst of these trials.

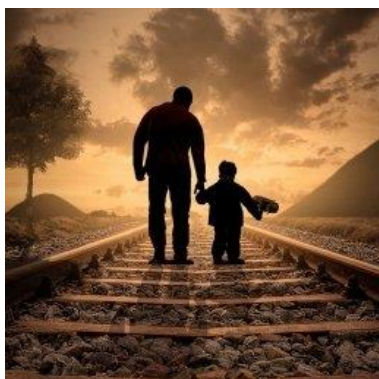
We are listening to the prayer and praise of a man who nurtured in the faith from his earliest days, now in old age reaffirms that faith as he faces a crisis in his life.

Here is a man faithful through the years having seen God's proven loyal love over time and time and time again, and what is the outcome?

He is not on easy street.

It is not easy for him even after that lifetime of walking with God.

To the contrary, he is facing another difficult crisis. He has another set of enemies that are after his neck and so he is turning to God once again!



The reason that the psalmist could handle his problems so well as an old man was that he had developed a walk with God in the years leading up to this time.

He had a proven resource in the Lord which enabled him to be strong inside, even though his body was growing weaker and his enemies were powerful.

We do not know for sure who wrote **Psalm 71**.

Some scholars think it was the prophet Jeremiah. But I agree with those who think that David wrote this psalm at the time of Absalom's rebellion, perhaps as he was quartered across the Jordan, awaiting the outcome of the battle.

The psalm pieces together several elements from other David psalms (**Psalms 22, 31, 35, 40, 109**).

The reference to praising God on the harp and lyre sounds like David.

The reference to having his greatness increased could refer to David's being restored to the throne.

The circumstances in which the psalmist finds himself fit David at the time of Absalom's rebellion.

Psalms 71:1, shame

Psalms 71:4, oppressed by evil men

Psalms 71:10,11,13, &24, enemies speaking against him and seeking to kill him.

Psalms 71:7 &20, a life of many troubles.

Psalms 71:5, &7, trusted God from his youth.

Psalms 71:9 &18, now he was old and grey

David was in his early 60's and he died at the of 70.

At any rate, there were few aspects of his walk with God which the author had developed over the years. That made him to stand with God in great stability to face the trial in his old age.

We will learn today so that we can also develop such characteristics to be stable in God in the midst of trials and Find His way!

1. Develop a Deep knowledge of God.

The Psalm is flooded with a deep personal understanding and practical knowledge of the Lord God.

He had been taught of God even from his youth.

Psalms 71:17, *O God, You have taught me from my youth; And to this day I declare Your wondrous works*

The man knew God as his refuge.

Psalms 71:1, *In You, O Lord, I put my trust; Let me never be put to shame.*

God is the strong refuge for him.

Psalms 71:7, *I have become as a wonder to many, But You are my strong refuge.*

He knew God as his righteous Saviour.

Palms 71:2, *Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; Incline Your ear to me, and save me.*

God's righteousness frequently mentioned here.

V 2, *Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; Incline Your ear to me, and save me.*

V 15, *My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness And Your salvation all the day, For I do not know their limits.*

V 16, *I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.*

V 19, *Also Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You?*

V 24, *My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long; For they are confounded, For they are brought to shame Who seek my hurt.*

The Psalmist also refers to His faithfulness to His own people in keeping His promises.

He calls God his rock of habitation, his rock and fortress, his hope and confidence.

V 3, *Be my strong refuge, To which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, For You are my rock and my fortress.*

V 5, *For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth.*

He talks of God's mighty deeds.

V 16, *I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.*

God's strength and power.

V 18, *Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.*

Great things He has done.

V 19, *Also Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You?*

He realized that it was God who brought him into trouble and God who delivered and restored him.

V 20, *You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, Shall revive me again, And bring me up again from the depths of the earth.*

God was his source of comfort in this trial.

V 21, *You shall increase my greatness, And comfort me on every side.*

God had redeemed his soul.

V 23, *My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, And my soul, which You have redeemed.*

He could testify that his mouth was filled with God's praise and glory and righteousness all day long.

V 8, *Let my mouth be filled with Your praise And with Your glory all the day*

V 22, *Also with the lute I will praise You— And Your faithfulness, O my God! To You I will sing with the harp, O Holy One of Israel.*

V 23, *My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, And my soul, which You have redeemed.*

V 24, *My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long; For they are confounded, For they are brought to shame Who seek my hurt.*

Finally, he exclaims, "O God, who is like You?"

V 19, *Also Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You?*

This man knew his God!

It is obvious that he had known Him for years and had proved God's faithfulness in several previous difficult situations.

So, in this instance when he needs to trust in God, it is not a matter of, "God, if You exist, whoever You are, if You're out there I need your help!"

He did not need to take a blind leap of faith because he knew his God in a personal, practical, and proven way.



May I ask:

Do you know God like that?

Are you growing in the process of developing such knowledge through His Word and through applying His Word to your experience?



One of the most important things that each one of us can do to prepare for whatever crises we may have to face in the future is to be spending time now in God's Word, getting to know God.

As you read His Word ask yourself:

What does this passage teach me about my God?

Seek to apply it to your daily problems.

Two young girls came running out of their house in a panic. Smoke came billowing out the door behind them. The neighbour discovered that there was a grease fire in their oven and their parents were not home. He ran into the kitchen and assumed that they must not have a fire extinguisher, or they would have used it, so he tried to smother the fire with flour. That did not work.

Finally, in desperation, he asked, *“Do you have a fire extinguisher by any chance?”*

It turned out that they had three of them! One of the girls gave him one and he had the fire out in seconds.

The fire extinguisher was an adequate resource for that crisis, but the girls did not know how to use it or had no experience in using it, so it did not do them any good.

To benefit from the extinguisher, he needed to know what it could do and how to use it in that emergency.

In the same way, we need to know our God and what He can do so that we can lay hold of the tremendous resources that belong to us as His children.

If we are learning that now, then we will know Him as our confidence when the crises of old age come upon us.

2. Learn to trust God

A habit is developed by frequent repetition over a period. Once it is in place, a habit becomes almost involuntary.

Our attitudes, how we respond mentally and emotionally to life's problems, tend to become habitual responses.

- Some people become habitual worriers.
- Some become habitual complainers.
- Some become habitually negative, pessimistic, and angry.

Others become habitually cheerful and positive. The habits we develop in our younger years tend to take us further in that direction as we grow older.

Hebrew word '*tamiyd*' repeated in verses 3, 6, and 14, translated "continually"

This shows us that the habits the psalmist had developed.

They are not habits, we pick up naturally.

They must be deliberately cultivated.

V 14, *But I will hope continually, And will praise You yet more and more.*

points to firm resolve.

In fact, they stem from his knowledge of God. They are the habits of trust.

Psalms 71:3, *Be my strong refuge, To which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, For You are my rock and my fortress.*

The whole psalm is an affirmation of the psalmist's trust in the Lord.

He was struggling because he was in difficult circumstances, with many seeking his life. But he was unwavering in his faith because he knew whom he believed.

Such faith stems from a knowledge of God.

True knowledge dispels doubt and fear.

We fear and mistrust that which we do not know, whereas we are more inclined to trust that which we know well, assuming it is trustworthy.

Have you travelled in fishing boat to fish while there is a storm or high waves?

We did take a journey when I was young in Rameswaram. It was very frightening. I was afraid that we would capsize and drown. But the fisherman, while not relaxed, at least wasn't afraid. He had taken this fishing boat through other such storms and he knew what it could handle. His knowledge dispelled his fear.

Because the psalmist knew God, he had learned to trust God through some other tough times.

V 20, You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, Shall revive me again, And bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

Psalmist knew therefore that God would see him through this time.

Are you developing a habit of trusting God in the difficult times of your life?

Or are you frequently filled with worry and doubt and fear?

If you have trouble trusting, concentrate on getting to know God. Also, review what God has already done for you. There is a tremendous emphasis in the psalm on what God has done. **(71:5, 6, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24).**

That strengthens faith!

Has God ever preserved your life?

Has He saved you from your sins?

Has He sustained you this far?

Then you can trust Him for your present problems and for any which arise in the future.

3. Learn to Praise God

Praise is not a natural habit!

Not many people have this habit since many of you be a grumbler and complainer by nature.

But God wants us to be people of praise!

Even when difficult times come, God wants us to learn to praise Him.

The psalmist had deliberately developed that habit.

V 8, *Let my mouth be filled with Your praise And with Your glory all the day.*

V 14, *But I will hope continually, And will praise You yet more and more.*

VV 22-24, *Also with the lute I will praise You— And Your faithfulness, O my God! To You I will sing with the harp, O Holy One of Israel. ²³ My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, And my soul, which You have redeemed. ²⁴ My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long; For they are confounded, For they are brought to shame Who seek my hurt.*

How can we learn to praise God when trials come?

The answer is, “Learn to trust Him.”

Because just as trust stems from knowing God, so praise stems from trusting God.

This is true on the human plane as well as on the divine. You cannot praise a person you do not trust.

If you feel that there is something about a person that you cannot trust, you will not sing his praises to others.

It is the same way with God. If deep-down inside you doubt God’s goodness or faithfulness for allowing some trial to come your way, then you do not trust Him.

If you do not trust Him, then you cannot honestly praise Him either!

If you are a complainer and have trouble developing a habit of praise, I would suggest the same two steps:

Concentrate on getting to know God and His ways.

This psalm emphasizes God's righteousness (**71:2, 15, 16, 19, 24**) because the psalmist was fearing unjust treatment at the hands of unrighteous men, and he wanted to affirm the righteousness of the God he trusted.

He is good and faithful, even when He brings troubles and distresses (**71:20**) into our lives.

Review what God has already done for you. "Count your many blessings, name them one by one."

We tend to forget His many benefits on our behalf (all undeserved), and thus we fail in praise.

4. Patiently Hope

The psalmist had not only developed habits of trust and praise, but also of hope.

We need to understand that there is a big difference between secular hope and biblical hope.

Both forms of hope contain the idea of future expectations. But secular hope is uncertain because its object is uncertain. Biblical hope is sure because God is its object.

Psalms 71:5, *For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth.*

When I say, “I hope that my investment will earn 10 percent,” there is uncertainty because the object of my hope (the stock market) is unstable.

But when I say, “I hope that Jesus Christ will return bodily,” I am expressing something certain, but not yet realized. Thus, biblical hope is built upon trust in God and His faithfulness.

Believers should be people who have a habit of hope built on the promises of God.

The great missionary pioneer, **Adoniram Judson**, was suffering from fever in a wretched prison in Burma. A friend sent him a letter, asking, “Judson, how’s the outlook?”

Judson replied, “The outlook is as bright as the promises of God.”

Unfortunately, many Christians have picked up the negative, hopeless spirit of the world because they focus on the problems instead of God and His promises.

If you are developing that habit, it will make you bitter, not better, as you grow older. God’s people should be people who hope in God.

Thus, the psalmist was in good stead in his old age because he had developed a deep knowledge of God and he had developed the godly habits of trust, praise, and hope.

5. Developed a lifestyle of ministry for God.

The psalmist was old.

V 9, Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me when my strength fails.

V 18, Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.

Could have kicked back and said, “I deserve some rest,” he did not.

He still had a concern for ministry, for testifying to others of God’s faithfulness and power (**71:8, 15-18, 24**).

As long as he had breath, he wanted to keep telling people about God’s greatness and glory.

A worldly attitude has infiltrated the church. It goes like this: “I work all week, so my weekends are my free time to spend as I please.”

If we give God a couple of hours by going to church on Sunday, we feel like we have paid our dues. We do not want to be tied

down with any kind of Christian service that would hinder us from taking off for the weekend when we feel like it.

If you are not involved in some kind of Christian service, you are too self-centred.

In life when we are busy with family and job than at other times. But if all you are doing is coming to church to take in, if your focus is, “What can I get out of the church?” rather than “How can I serve the Lord through His church?”

You are out of balance. There should be no such thing as a non-serving member of the body.

We never have the right to live selfishly. All of life must be lived under the lordship of Christ.

The psalmist did not want to be delivered from his problems so that he could play golf and go fishing every day.

He wanted to be delivered so that he could proclaim God’s power to the next generation (**71:18**).

He had a vision to hand off the baton to the younger generation.

He saw a longer life as an opportunity for extended ministry. His ministry was built on his knowledge of God and his habits of trust, praise, and hope, so he had something worth handing off!

Are you developing a lifestyle of ministry now, built on your personal walk with God?

Application:

1. Take refuge in God

We have lot of troubles in this life but let us take refuge in God alone!

V 1, "In you, O LORD, do I take refuge."

Psalm 46 makes it very plain for us. We have a refuge from every storm and every enemy.

Only when you forget that you are safe in God then you will start to focus on your troubles and get discouraged.

Dot be complainer to God about your circumstances rather than live I His presence.

2. Remember the past walk with God

You make a resolution to remember with wonder and thanks the thousands of times you have leaned on God since our youth.

V 5–6, *“For you, O LORD, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth. Upon you I have leaned from before my birth.”*

V 17, *“O God from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.”*

God’s grace is like a river that flows out of the future of God’s promises every day of our lives. Spills over the waterfall of the present moment of fulfilment and gathers in an ever-growing reservoir of past grace.

When we look back, we should be filled with thankfulness. When we look forward, that thankfulness should turn in mighty hope.

3. Proclaim God’s goodness

Resolve to proclaim to God more about all His greatness, until there is no room left in our mouths for complaining or murmuring.

V 6, *“My praise is continually of you.”*

V 14, *“I will praise you yet more and more.”*

The longer we live, the more we should praise.

We are so prone to think of our waning powers and be discouraged. But for God's children, the day is getting brighter and brighter.

Romans 8:18, *"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us"*

V 14, *"I will hope continually . . ."*

You may feel useless and too weak to do any good. You may be tempted to despair.

But this Psalmist said, "I will hope continually."

1 Peter 1:13, *"Having girded up the loins of your mind, set your hope fully in the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ"*

Jesus said, always pray and do not lose heart (Luke 18:1).

2 Corinthians 4:16-18, *So, we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

4. Be a Witness for Christ

Let us all go out of our way to find people to tell about God's wonderful acts of salvation.

V 15, *"My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge."*

V 18, *"I [will] proclaim your might to another generation."*

Nothing is more energizing than speaking of God's wonders to someone else.

5. Hope makes you shameless

Remember that there are great things about God above our imagination.

Soon we will see.

V 18–19, *Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come. ¹⁹Also Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You?*

There will always be over our heads. We are not God. So, let us let God be God and wait patiently for the day when we will know even as we are known.

Sing and shout with joy about the hope in God whether we look dignified or not.

V 22–23, *“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. My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you.”*

There will not be any phoniness in heaven.

There will only be complete authenticity.

We will discover what childlikeness was really meant to be.

We will be free.

For freedom Christ has set you free.

Let us do this. Do not lose heart.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, *For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.*