

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

As I read through this psalm, I felt I was connecting with the heart of an older saint who was concerned about waning personal worth in the eyes of his Lord. The psalmist is addressing the Lord, as YHWH, the self-existent eternal God. This is the name by which God identified Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 6) in connection with his call to serve as God's vessel in bringing about the deliverance of His people; God was clear in making the connection that He was the same God who had made covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the God of Israel (their descendants). This is an important truth to a psalmist of Israel.

When I looked up the Hebrew for *trust*, I found that it was a reference to protection and refuge. The psalmist is basically stating that he is looking to YHWH to supply all his needs. The psalmist is very transparent as he reveals a bit of doubt by asking God never to let him be ashamed or disappointed in that trust. I can't help but connect with his heart. I think this reflects the same heart of the man who prayed, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." (Mark 9:24) I have prayed that prayer more than once.

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

I love it when I feel like God is talking to me through these studies. When I first read through this Psalm a few times in preparing for the study, I immediately assumed these verses were in reference to deliverance from enemies. In light of the previous verse, I think that the deliverance the psalmist is asking for is from that measure of doubt. He knows that his deliverance rests in the righteousness of God to provide according to His word.

Deut. 4:29 But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find *him*, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. It seems to connect with the words of David as expressed in Psalm 34.

Psa. 34:4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

The psalmist wants to be free from any thing that would detract from his faith in YHWH. The second phrase of verse two is basically a poetic repetition of the first phrase. He is asking God to hear his prayer and strengthen his faith.

Psa. 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.

The psalmist is asking God to be a strong secure place of refuge in which he can confidently find protection and provision.

"thou has given commandment to save me" – The NRSV translation seems to have the least confusing translation:

Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

The psalmist confidently declares a personal connection to YHWH as "my" rock and "my" fortress, his personal source of strength and protection. That is

another amazing privilege accorded each person who places their faith in God; we can each one have personal, intimate connection with and attention from Him. He doesn't have human limitations. He is everywhere present and all-knowing.

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

At this point the psalmist changes direction to pray for deliverance from:

- the wicked or ungodly – This thought positions the psalmist with the godly. In other words, the psalmist's enemies would also be God's enemies.
- the unjust or those with distorted morals – I thought this was an interesting correlation. Those who are unjust do have distorted morals which are a perversion of what is true.
- the cruel or soured man – After looking up these words, my thoughts took an interesting direction. *Soured* was defined as "turning from sweet to sour." It's a description to me of someone whose life experience has produced in him/her a hard heart and a desire to torment and cause pain to others.

Psa. 71:5 For thou *art* my hope, O Lord GOD: *thou art* my trust from my youth.

The psalmist is stating that his confidence in the provision and protection of the "Lord" YHWH, is just as it has been since his childhood. Important to note is that the psalmist is emphasizing that YHWH is his Lord (master, sovereign). I think this is key in our expectations of God. The more we are yielded to Him as Lord in our lives, the more confident we are of His response to our prayers—even when we may not understand that response.

Psa. 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.

As I read through the Hebrew for "holden up," my choice would have been sustained. I think the psalmist is acknowledging the fact that he is a special creation of God (as is every individual) and that the miracle of birth is an act of God. The psalmist is thankful for the gift of life and recognizes that this gift is from God.

It could also be that the psalmist is emphasizing the fact that as far back as he can remember, he has recognized God as his Creator, provider and protector.

Psa. 71:7 I am as a wonder unto many; but thou *art* my strong refuge.

In my thinking this verse gives more support to the psalmist being David. The Hebrew for the word *wonder* references "conspicuousness...token...sign." God's provision and protection of David was very obvious to many. God had very publicly blessed him for his faith and punished him for his sin. Through it all David had remained faithful to God and willing to submit to His will for his life.

Psa. 71:8 Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise *and* *with* thy honour all the day.

The psalmist is declaring his desire to continually voice his praise for God's glory and honor. Again, I connect with his heart. It's so easy to get caught up in the cares and demands of life that we forget that God wants us to realize that He has a hand in or on everything that is allowed to touch those who are looking to Him in faith. It reminds me of Paul's words to the Thessalonians.

1Th. 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

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

It's a natural thing as we grow older and recognize that we are more and more limited in what we can do to think that we are less useful and therefore less valued by God and subject to be forsaken by Him. The psalmist is very transparent. His desire is to continue to serve God with His empowerment and direction. I remember hearing Chuck Smith speak one time about ministering to Corrie ten Boom in her later years and encouraging her to realize that you can be a powerful minister for Christ as a prayer warrior even though bedridden. No matter how spiritually mature we may become, we all need encouragement at times, especially as we find ourselves more limited in our abilities.

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

Psa. 71:11 Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for *there is none to deliver him.*

I couldn't help but think of the mentality today to accuse or make judgments against a person of faith when he/she is in a weak position or considered more vulnerable for whatever reason. Evidently, at the time the psalmist wrote this psalm he was in such a position. We humans have a terrible tendency to assess God's blessing or disfavor based on our own thinking and expectations. This truth is vividly portrayed in the book of Job, as well as by the lives of many of God's prophets. It continues to be true today. We think God's favor is manifested through financial success, health, fame, etc. The word of God in no way supports such thinking; in fact, it is very clear in stating that God's ways are very different from ours.

Is. 55:8 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, **neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.**

Is. 55:9 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

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

It is natural that at the times we are weakest and most vulnerable, we need a special sense of God's presence in our life. I personally believe that this is a prayer that always gets an immediate response. Sometimes it is in the form of physical provision; sometimes it is a touch of the Spirit through the Word; sometimes it may come through the ministry of another person of faith. God is not limited in the ways and means He may choose to use to strengthen the faith of His children.

Psa. 71:13 Let them be confounded *and* consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

Again, these are words that indicate David as the author of this Psalm. There are many times that David prayed for God to bring down judgment on his enemies. He was a warrior, and his mentality was that his enemies were God's enemies and deserving of that judgment. The judgment he was seeking against these particular enemies was that they be covered with shame and disgrace.

I couldn't help but make note that the Hebrew for *adversaries* was "satan."

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

Psa. 71:15 My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness *and* thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers *thereof*.

Psa. 71:16 I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine only.

The Hebrew for hope in verse 14 is a reference to patience while waiting for God's provision, and he goes on to say that he will praise God throughout that time. The psalmist is clear that he is going to continue to be bold and public about his trust in God; he is not going to buckle just because times are tough. It would seem that he is indicating in verse 15 that he realizes God has provided for him even when he was unaware of God's hand in the provision. Or maybe he is saying that God has helped him so many times he can't begin to number them. I think by verse 16 that he is declaring his commitment to live life in the power of the Lord. He knows that everything he has accomplished for good has been through God's provision and enablement, and only God deserves the praise.

These are very important truths for every person of faith. If we would but learn to submit to God's leading and provision, we would experience more spiritual success in life and would certainly be looking to give God the praise and glory.

Trust → Submission → Patient endurance → Spiritual blessing → Praise

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

The psalmist is declaring that he has been a student of God's word since childhood. I would assume that teaching to have come through his parents, religious leaders, and personal experience. In all that time he had boldly declared God's works on his behalf.

I can't help but again make application to David. David was a shepherd boy who experienced miraculous deliverance from wild animals as he tended his flocks, from the giant Goliath as he boldly confronted him in the name of the Lord, as a mighty warrior against Israel's enemies, from the murderous intent of Saul, etc.

Psa. 71:18 Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto *this* generation, *and* thy power to every one *that* is to come.

The psalmist, now an old man in the faith, wants the privilege to minister to yet one more generation of young people. His desire is for God to allow him once again to declare the power and might of his God. It should always be the heart of the “old” person of faith to share the faithfulness of God to those that will place their faith in Him. This made me think of the words of the Apostle Peter.

1Pet. 5:1 **The elders** which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

1Pet. 5:2 **Feed the flock** of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but **willingly**; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

1Pet. 5:3 Neither as being lords over *God’s* heritage, but **being ensamples** to the flock.

Personal note: There are some Christian writers that write some wonderful historical fiction that emphasize this very truth through many of their characters—Michael Phillips, Judith Pella, and George MacDonald. It’s wonderful to be able to read for fun and be challenged spiritually in the process.

Psa. 71:19 Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!

It’s like the psalmist is overcome with the desire to praise his God as he thinks about the opportunity to once again declare His truth to another generation. He knows that the younger generation needs to recognize how great and righteous and mighty God is. They need to know that there is no other being like Him.

Personally, I find that I long to share God’s truth so much more fervently than ever before. I’m sure that is due to God’s blessing in growing me up in Him through the teaching of His Spirit. I am so focused on continuing to encourage my children to make God the center of their lives. I’m trying to teach my grandchildren the awesomeness of God. I want them to know that they are surrounded by miracles that we take for granted, and that these miracles are acts of the mighty hand of God. I try to emphasize to them how much He loves them and specify the many ways He has shown and continues to show us that love. I want them to look forward to heaven. I want them to love Him and know that He loves them better than anybody else can—even Grandma. I want them to know that it is important to obey Him with every choice they make in life.

Psa. 71:20 Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

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

These verses are an acknowledgement that the psalmist has experienced “great and sore troubles” during his lifetime. He also recognized that they were part of his experience because of judgment at the hand of God or because God allowed it for His greater purpose. The second half of verse 20-21 seems to be a reference to the psalmist’s expectation for resurrection and the blessings that will accompany it.

We know that Job looked forward to seeing the Lord in his flesh after death.

Job 19:26 And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

David knew that he would one day see his baby son again.

2Sam. 12:23 But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

I know that both Isaiah and Daniel were given messages regarding future life in eternity, but I don't know how these more ancient men of faith knew that truth. It had to be have been revealed to them, even though we aren't told how, in the same way that Cain knew what was an acceptable sacrifice to God.

Psa. 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.

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

Psa. 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.

Yet another indication that David authored this psalm. The psalmist is declaring his praise for the Lord with the psaltery (the Hebrew also includes lyre) and harp, and David was known as a musician who sang and played the harp. He was first brought to Saul as one who could calm his spirit through the beautiful music he played (1Samuel 16). When a musician is inspired, it is only natural to want to express himself in song. The psalmist was clear that his songs would praise God, declare God's truth, and express the joy of his redemption. That is a wonderful guideline for the music directors of our churches today. The songs we sing should praise God, declare His truth and express the joy of our salvation.

The psalmist also states that he would be faithful to declare God's righteousness. It sounds as though the psalmist's prayer for judgment upon his adversaries (v13) had already been answered. If not, then this is certainly a statement of confidence that it would be.