

PSALMS

Chapter 71

In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame! ²In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me, and save me! ³Be 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. ⁴Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man. ⁵For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth. ⁶Upon you I have leaned from before my birth; you are he who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you. ⁷I have been as a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge. ⁸My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day. ⁹Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent. ¹⁰For my enemies speak concerning me; those who watch for my life consult together ¹¹and say, "God has forsaken him; pursue and seize him, for there is none to deliver him."
¹²O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me! ¹³May my accusers be put to shame and consumed; with scorn and disgrace may they be covered who seek my hurt. ¹⁴But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. ¹⁵My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge. ¹⁶With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone. ¹⁷O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. ¹⁸So 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. ¹⁹Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you? ²⁰You 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. ²¹You will increase my greatness and comfort me again. ²²I 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. ²³My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed. ²⁴And 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.

Ps 71 A prayer for God's help in old age when enemies threaten because they see that the king's strength is waning. The psalm bears no superscription, but it may well be that Ps 70 was viewed by the editors of the Psalms as the introduction to Ps 71, in which case the psalm is ascribed to David (in his old age; see vv. 9, 18). This suggestion gains support from the fact that Ps 72 is identified as a prayer by and/or for King Solomon (see introduction to that psalm). This is the third in a series of three prayers; its dominant theme is hope (see v. 14). Formally symmetrical, the psalm is composed of six stanzas, having a five-four-five, five-four-five (in Hebrew) line pattern: vv. 1–4 (five lines), vv. 5–8 (four lines), vv. 9–13 (five lines), vv. 15–18 (five lines), vv. 19–21 (four lines), vv. 22–24 (five lines). At the center (v. 14; see note on 6:6) stands a confident confession of hope. The whole is framed by an appeal for help (vv. 1–4) and a vow to praise in anticipation of deliverance (vv. 22–24). The second and fifth stanzas are linked by references to the troubles the king has experienced; stanzas three and four are linked by references to old age. (CSB)

A psalm for an older believer struggling with assaults on his faith, including temptations to think that his faith was in vain. Since Ps 70 is "of David" and Ps 72 is "of Solomon," perhaps this is a Davidic psalm composed near the end of his life. By proclaiming the saving deeds of the Lord, he

meets the challenges of old age with faith, hope, faithfulness, witness, and praise. In Hbr, this psalm lacks poetic artistry, yet richly proclaims the faith. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–3, take refuge in the Lord; vv 4–6, trust since youth; vv 7–11, do not forsake God, even in old age; vv 12–16, tell of God’s acts; vv 17–21, God’s righteousness knows no bounds; vv 22–24, praise to God. (TLSB)

71:1–4 The initial appeal for God’s help. (CSB)

71:1 *in you, O Lord, do I take refuge* – This line could well serve as the motto of David’s life. In his boyhood he had trusted God when he fought the bear and the lion and when he stood alone against Goliath. When he fled from Saul and Absalom, God had been his refuge. (PBC)

Statement of supreme trust in the Lord, a theme that emerges at many points in this psalm. (TLSB)

71:2 *your righteousness*. Hebrew *tsedaqah*, “blamelessness, honesty, justice.” An attribute of God praised in the Psalms. The expression “in Your righteousness deliver me” (71:2; cf 5:8; 31:1; 89:16; 119:40; 143:11) describes the psalmist asking God to keep His promise of salvation (see “righteous acts” and “deeds of salvation” in 71:15). He is the source of righteousness (4:1), which is the basis for the biblical teaching of righteousness or justification through faith (cf Gn 15:6; Rm 3:21–5:11). (TLSB)

A just God would not let the wicked destroy his saints and taunt their faith. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

71:3 *rock* – The Lord’s righteousness makes our trust firm. (TLSB)

71:4 *grasp of the unjust and cruel man* – Believers are often subjected to unjust suffering by others. (TLSB)

Wicked and cruel people threatened the life and faith of the psalmist, all he could do was to pray to be rescued. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

71:5–8 A confession that the Lord has always been his hope (see vv. 14, 19–21). (CSB)

71:6 *before my birth* – God wills our salvation from eternity (Jer 1:5; Gal 1:15). (TLSB)

71:7 *like a portent*. The troubles of his life (see v. 20) have been viewed by others as holding some special significance—especially since the Lord has been his “strong refuge” through them all. (CSB)

Sign (cf Ex 7:3; Dt 6:22). Psalmist has been an example of faith, but now his troubles seem to be proof of the uselessness of his faith, as seen also in the enemies’ comments, v 11. He calls on God to rescue him. (TLSB)

71:9–13 A prayer for God’s continuing help in the waning years of his life. (CSB)

71:9 Author holds to his faith despite the temptations of old age to forsake the Lord. Cf v 18; Ec 12:1–8. (TLSB)

As a mature believer he was not exempt from trouble, just better able to deal with it. His review of the past causes him to look with confidence to the future. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

71:10 *enemies speak concerning me.* This describes his enemies as watchers of his life, meaning they are waiting for the right chance to harm him; it says they have taken counsel together, meaning this is a planned and coordinated attack on the psalmist. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

71:12 Psalmist's difficult circumstances seem to prove that God is far away. Therefore, he prays for the Lord to help him and to vindicate his faith. (TLSB)

71:13 A plea for redress. (CSB)

Human accusers echo the accusations of the accuser, Satan (Rv 12:10–11). The condemnation of Satan means condemnation for all who serve his purposes, whether intentionally or unintentionally. See note, Jb 42:7. (TLSB)

71:14-15 Psalmist's life of faith and hope will show itself in witness and praise. (TLSB)

71:14 The centered confession of unfaltering hope. (CSB)

71:15–18 A vow to praise, accompanying the renewal of his prayer (v. 18). (CSB)

This is a beautiful prayer for every Christian, but especially for aged Christians. Although David speaks movingly of his personal experience, the focus of this prayer is not David, but God. (PBC)

71:16–17 *mighty deeds ... righteousness ... wondrous deeds.* God's "mighty (marvelous) acts" in behalf of his people are expressions of his righteousness; thus they can also be called his "righteous acts" (v. 24). (CSB)

71:16 *come.* To the temple, where God's people assemble for worship. (CSB)

Psalmist will carry on his way of life with witness and praise. St. Bernard of Clairvaux: "When he entered into the spiritual powers of God he would be freed from all the infirmities of the flesh, and would have no longer to think of them, but would be occupied only with the perfections of God" (SLSB, p 203). (TLSB)

71:17-18 Melancton: "The royal psalmist King David, in that golden jewel of his psalms ... prays this earnest and ardent prayer for the church in its old age" (LTh 2:560). (TLSB)

71:17 *have taught me* – God's Word sustains us in faith and hope, from youth to old age (vv 9, 18). (TLSB)

71:18 *might* – Literally , "arm." (TLSB)

In Israelite thought, an image of strength. (TLSB p. 842)

71:19–21 A confession that the Lord is still his hope, in the face of all his troubles (see vv. 5–8, 14). (CSB)

The last years of life are often difficult for Christians today, just as they were for David. The pains and weaknesses of old age often make Christians eager or even impatient to leave this life. But if God leaves us here only to declare his goodness, which we have experienced through a lifetime, that is reason enough for us to be here. (PBC)

71:19 *reaches the high heavens.* Is as expansive as all space above the earth. (CSB)

God's acts of righteousness and salvation make Him worthy of the highest praise. (TLSB)

Who, O God, is like you? See Mic 7:18. (CSB)

This last clause is rhetorical,, affirming that there is no one like God. He is incomparable in all the things he does. (A Commentary on the Psalms - Ross)

71:20 *revive me again.* He who gave him life (see v. 6) will renew his life. (CSB)

depths of the earth. The realm of the dead, of which the grave is the portal. (CSB)

In his old age, the psalmist confidently anticipates his resurrection from the grave; cf Jb 19:23–27; Is 25:8; 26:19; Dn 12:2–3. (TLSB)

When our last days draw near, may we direct our thoughts heavenward and to the resurrection as David did and as Paul did when his death drew near, so that we may be confident of deliverance, either by longer earthly life or through death, which ushers us into the Lord's presence. (PBC)

71:21 *increase your greatness* – Our future in heaven surpasses anything in this life. (TLSB)

71:22–24 A vow to praise in confident anticipation of God's saving help. (CSB)

71:22 *harp ... lyre.* Stringed musical instruments, perhaps an indication that David is the author (1Sm 16:14–23). (TLSB)

71:23 *redeemed.* Here, as often, a synonym for "deliver." (CSB)

71:24 *righteous help.* God's saving acts in behalf of his people according to his covenant promises. (CSB)

they – Psalmist's accusers; cf v 13. (TLSB)

Ps 71 Truths of the faith learned in childhood are of no advantage if they are forsaken later in life. The Lord is faithful in His righteous, saving deeds. They are always the source of our eternal life. Let us cling to these in faith and faithfully give witness and praise. • "My mouth will tell of Your righteous acts" (v 15). "I will remind them of Your righteousness, Yours alone" (v 16). Amen. (TLSB)