

July 14, 2024

“Continual Proclamation”
Lesson 2

Psalm 71:12-21

Intro

Psalm 71 is part of a long string of prayers (going back to at least Psalm 50) that express the hope that God will help those who trust in Him. These psalms remind the people of Israel of their constant need for self-examination, repentance, and hopeful action. Psalm 71 is the last of a series of laments. This is an individual lament, with a single person addressing God while seeking help in time of danger and catastrophe. While it is a lament, it is also a prayer. The psalm interweaves requests for help with statements about the problems faced and also expressions of trust in God. Because the psalmist's experiences are stated in general terms, it invites us to consider our own experiences as we consider the troubles faced and how he responded in faith.

Read Psalm 71:12-21

1. vs. 12: The writer makes two requests of God here

To not be far from him, and to come quickly to help him

He wants God to be close by so that He can come help the writer

He wants God to come quickly, which would indicate God's willingness to help

Both of these requests are based on two elements

First, God has shown Himself to be a helper to His people in past situations

He provided aid which could not be gotten anywhere else

(See Deut. 33 and Psalm 115 and 121)

Second, we call on God to help us in times of urgent need in the present

God's response shouldn't be seen as a time issue

“Did He respond as quickly as we wanted Him to?”

Instead, it's an attentiveness and care issue

God wants to help in ways that bring hope because He cares for us

2. vs. 13: In vs. 10-11, the writer notes that people have accused him unjustly of wrongdoing

He feels he has been mistreated and can do nothing about this

He calls on God to be the deliverer of justice for him

Where these others shamed him personally and socially, he wants them to feel the same

He wants them to experience shame and scorn and disgrace for their false accusations

Instead of seeking revenge himself, he calls on God to deliver righteous judgment

The psalmist isn't asking for God to strike them dead or harm them physically in any way

He wants them exposed as doers of evil, which will cause public humiliation

3. vs. 14: Here, the writer begins a 3-verse vow to praise God

Verse 14 says that he always has hope, and will praise God more and more

To always have hope shows that he is looking for reasons to hope in God

This means He is reminding himself of God's promises, and how He fulfills them

He is maintaining his faith by constantly remembering God's faithfulness

God doesn't need us to praise Him; we praise Him as an act of truth-telling

Recognizing God's goodness and praising Him for it orients us to reality

God does what He says He will, and we thank Him / praise Him for who He is
This praise happens both individually and in a community of like-minded believers
Our praise encourages others, and reminds them and ourselves of God's goodness
This is a life-long commitment to praise, whether we are in trouble or in peace

4. vs. 15: In vs. 14, the writer says he will praise God "more and more"

This verse tells some of what that praise will look like
He says he will praise "your righteous deeds...your saving acts"
There are so many of them that he says he will praise God "all day long"
He concludes by noting there are so many deeds that he can't tell all of them
There must be a lot of deeds if one whole day is not enough time to tell them all

5. vs. 16: The writer says he will "come and proclaim your mighty acts, Sovereign Lord"

This indicates he will go to the temple to do this praising
This is the place where all Israel came to pray to God
It is here, among fellow worshipers, that he will praise God for His many deeds
If each person there is doing the same, the temple will be filled with praise to God
He concludes by saying he will praise God's righteous deed, "Yours alone"
Prayer and praise are for God alone, not for people

6. vs. 17: Beginning with this verse, the writer addresses God

The ideas of the psalm shift as well, from prayer to learning
The psalmist notes that he has been learning from God "since my youth"
The major theme of his learning has been "your marvelous deeds"
These might include being liberated from Egypt or many acts of deliverance
Each wonder that God performed is cause for deep respect and honor towards Him
God has been teaching life lessons; for an attentive pupil, the lessons never end

7. vs. 18: Here the writer asks that God continue as teacher for his whole life

He started in his youth, and he asks for God to continue "when I am old and gray"
He wants to keep learning
Part of his reason for this is so that he can teach "the next generation" what he learned
He sees his learning as something to pass on, not just to keep to himself
He is in some way doing this by the things he is saying in this psalm

8. vs. 19: People might do "great things" by questionable means, but not God

God's righteousness is present in everything that He does
His righteousness has become evident in ways that humans can identify and understand
No one else in heaven or earth can do the "great things" that God has done
So the last sentence is evidence of this: "Who is like you, God?"

9. vs. 20: This verse acknowledges two important things:

- 1) Even faithful people experience troubles, perhaps many troubles
- 2) God is the one who allows those troubles and brings people out of them

God can use these troubles as teaching moments; much learning can occur here
Suffering and problems do not have the last word, however
God has the power to "restore my life again" and to "bring me up"

10.vs. 21: The writer says that God “will increase my honor”

This is not coming from someone already successful who expects to gain more

This is a person who has been oppressed and downtrodden

He hopes to receive the honor due people who trust in God

He wants the painful situation he notes in 71:9-11 to be reversed

When this happens, he says he will have “comfort” (peace)

When people follow God’s path, the end result is peace and contentment

This isn’t the outcome when people follow their own ways/methods

Application: Hardships can teach us hope because we trust God the teacher to provide the insight and learning which will transform us. God cares deeply about the welfare of his followers, and leads us at a pace from which we can grow. One way that we can impact our world for the better is by our attitudes and choices of words. Instead of fearful or hateful expressions, we fill the air with praises to God for all the great things He has done for us. Our better words should lead to better actions from us and hopefully from others, as well as hopefully better relationships with others. We will be spreading hope and offering social harmony that comes from mutual love and respect and a life of praiseworthy actions.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for being our lifelong teacher. Help us to be able to see the signs of Your grace and mercy all around us. Help us to praise You for these things all day long, so that we can influence our world for You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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