

Psalm 71

Aging to the Glory of God! Living a Forward-Tilted Life!

诗篇 71 以岁月荣耀神！过一个不断前行的生活！

INTRO-

Introductory Illustration

- “We are flying, as on some mighty eagle's wing, swiftly on towards eternity. Let us, then, talk about preparing to die. It is the greatest thing we have to do, and we have soon to do it, so let us talk and think something about it.” (Spurgeon!)
 - When the Puritans spoke of dying well, they were looking beyond the physical realm to the spiritual one. For them, to die well was to die in a state of peace with God, anticipating the joy of being forever with Christ.
 - Dying was something they prepared for by living what J. I. Packer calls ***“the forward-tilted life”***—a life lived with the mind focused on “the ultimate destination.” Tilt your heart forward & tune your mind forward to glory!
 - This forward-tilted life is a life focused on the joy of being forever with the Lord. ***And that reality captures our hearts!***
 - to DIE well, we must LIVE well. And we wanna live well to DIE well!
 - **John Piper:** Getting old to the glory of God means getting old in a way that makes God look glorious. It means living and dying in a way that shows God to be the all-satisfying Treasure that he is.
- we’ve mentioned Raymond Lull -- the Spanish man in the 13th century — In his later years -- like, in his 70s, went to be a missionary to the Muslims in North Africa. Samuel Zwemer writes this about Raymond Lull:
 - “Men are wont to die, O Lord, from old age, the failure of natural warmth and excess of cold; but thus, if it be Thy will, I, your servant would not wish to die; I would prefer to die in the glow of love, even as You were willing to die for me.”
 - This is like the Aged **Simeon** and the elderly Anna who was a widow to the age of 84, she served God relentlessly!

Background to this Study

- **Consider these examples:**
 - The example of Caleb — Joshua 14 - an 85 years old requests a city/inheritance for himself & his people (= Hebron in Judah); GOD blessed him b/c he “followed GOD FULLY” (Josh 14:9 & same thing in v.14).
 - Enoch - 365 years (Gen 5:22-24). Job died an old man, full of days (Job 42.17) and David died a “good old age & full of days” (1 Chron 29.28). Abraham died 175, a ‘good old age, an old man & satisfied with life” (Gen 25.8).
- Psalm 71:9, 17-18
- Psalm 78:5-8

- Psalm 92:14-15
- Deut 34.7 - Moses was 120 when he died, his ‘eye was not dim nor his vigor abated’

The **Puritan Edmund Barker** said, “Every Christian has two great works to do in the world, to **live well**, and to **die well**.”

May these be your spiritual ambitions: to be ready to die when the time comes, and to die well. It is never too early to start preparing for something as important as dying well.

- ❖ So what are some practical ways to get better prepared for the last moments we have on earth before our first moments in eternity?
- ❖ In other words: how do you live well, age well, grow old to the glory of God? However old you may be: how do we age to God’s glory?

THESIS — From Psalm 71, 6 ways to ensure that you age well

I. KNOWING GOD! (1-2)

- A. Your depth of knowledge of God *affects Everything*. Really: *every single thing*.
 - 1. V.1- LORD, Refuge, Righteous, Rock, Fortress (v.3), Righteousness (19), the Holy One (v.22)
 - 2. Knowing God’s *Person* and His *Promises* will be like a house for you: *to keep you safe & secure inside and to keep the enemies & temptations OUTSIDE*. Know God!
- B. Spurgeon says that God kisses away the fear of aging with his promises.
 - 1. This is what kept Abraham going/firm/strong in **Romans 4**. Rom 4.19 talks of Abraham contemplating his own body, now as good as dead since he was 100 years old ... yet he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God (Rom 4:19-21)

II. MEMORIZING SCRIPTURE! (3)

- A. Feed in the Word. Eat the Word. Digest the Word. Nourish yourself in the Word.
 - 1. Like a child who takes a handful of candy to eat throughout the day, so may we take the Word so we can eat & nourish on it throughout the day.
- B. As we memorize roads & paths to get us from our homes to various places (so we don’t get lost), may we memorize the truths of Scripture to *prevent* us from getting lost.
 - 1. I have treasured/hidden your word in my heart that I may not sin against you (Ps 119.11). Like David who said: “Your Law is within my heart” (Ps 40.8). Ps 37:31 says of the believer: “The Law of his God is in his heart & His steps do not slip!”
 - 2. Start small: 3 John & John 1 or Romans 5 or Romans 8.
- C. No wonder the puritans said: “**young & old** should be ready/prepared in the Scriptures, like a ready warrior, that can draw out of his Quiver a fitting arrow for every situation!”

III. PURSUING CONTENTMENT! (4-6)

- A. Everything that comes in your life is not *by itself*; God brings it to you *with His loving hand & with His glorious promise to sanctify/grow you in/thru it*. Rest/Be content!
- B. HOW? *How to pursue contentment?* **5 keys**:
 - 1. **Continued Prayer** (rescue me...)

2. **Upward Focus** (go to God, don't grumble; Look up, don't look in/around; focus on God!)
 3. **Active Reliance** (*you* are my hope; ת.ק.ו.ת.י כ.י.א.ת.ה.)
 4. **Past Deliverances** (you are my confidence from my youth; you took me from mother's womb)
 5. **Daily Praise** (my praise is *continually* of you)
- C. Be content b/c you're loved by God, sanctified by His Spirit, Recipient of Grace, bought by Christ, an Inheritor of Heaven.
1. As Jeremiah Burroughs writes (in his *Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*): So every comfort that the saints have in this world is an down-payment to them of those eternal mercies that the Lord has provided for them.”
- IV. **LOVING CHURCH! (7-16)**
- As you age, continue to **engage**. Don't grow distant, be more devoted! Aging saints are not *useless*; No! You are **Useful!** You're not a *nuisance*; you're *necessary!* You're not a hindrance, your importance & helpfulness can't be overstated!
 - A. Your example (7)
 - B. Your words (8)
 - C. Your steadfastness/endurance (9-11)
 - D. Your prayers (12)
 - E. Your *testimonies* (15-16) -*love your church & testify of Christ!*
 - Piper: “So growing old to the glory of God means using whatever strength and eyesight and hearing and mobility and resources we have left to treasure Christ and in that joy to and **serve people**—that is seek to **bring them with us** into the everlasting enjoyment of Christ. Serving people, and not ourselves, as the overflow of treasuring Christ makes Christ look great.
- V. **MENTORING OTHERS! (17-18)**
- A. We need each other. Young people need to learn from you. To mentor is to *declare* the faithfulness of God by example, in testimony, in counsel & in prayer.
 - B. V.18- note the word **Until**
 1. Declare God's deeds (17b)
 2. Declare God's strength/power
- VI. **MAGNIFYING CHRIST! (19-24)**
- A. V.22 - I WILL praise you, your Truth, O Holy One
 - B. V.23a - My lips WILL shout for joy
 - C. V.23b - my soul (will shout for joy) which you redeemed
 - D. V.24 - my tongue will utter your righteousness *all day* (cf. Rev 4-5!)

It's True: the central theme of Psalm 71 is that of steadfast endurance in one's final years of life. One godly man put it like this:

As we grow older, life's problems don't go away. But often they actually increase. New **troubles** must be faced in our latter years. **Physical** ailments with pains and limitations must be faced. Loss of **power** and **income** can be sobering. **Retirement** can provide additional time and could allow the wandering mind to analyze potential problems & dwell on earthly anxieties. **Loneliness** and **discouragement** can quickly set in. The **loss** of a **spouse**

thru death can lead to despair. **Loss** of lifelong **friends** can compound those feelings of despondency. Watching a **changing** world that is disintegrating and becoming evil rapidly adds to frustration. Many tests can come to our faith as we age. But in the latter, aging years of our life, **WE NEED THE LORD MORE THAN EVER.** (Lawson, 355).

2 additional words I want to convey:

1. **A Passionate Call**

- a. The passion is [Psalm 71:18](#)—a passion to make the greatness of God known to the generations we are leaving behind: “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.” O that God would give us a passion in our final years to spend ourselves to make him look as great as he really is—to get old to the glory of God.
- b. Like John Wesley on his 86th birthday said: My sight is decayed so I can’t read small print any more, my strength is decayed so I walk slower than I did before, my memory of names is decayed till I stop & really think. But what I’m really afraid of is that my physical body would weigh down my mind & create stubbornness of spirit or irritable or discontent by my physical maladies. O let us **age well & tell fully of God’s greatness!**

2. **A Promised Comfort**

- a. The promise: [Isaiah 46:3-4](#), “[You] have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.” Don’t be afraid, Christian. You will persevere. You will make it home.
- b. Spurgeon reminds us: “Old age may rob us of personal beauty and deprive us of strength for active service, but it does not lower us in the love & favor of God!”

CONCL-

Concluding Illustration

- **A brief story to close.** CHARLES SIMEON, pastored Trinity Church in Cambridge 200+ years ago. After serving as pastor of this church for 25 years, he suffered sudden & poor health at the age of 47. This lasted for 13 years. Interestingly: he had been telling himself all along, when he reached 60, he would finally retire & have a “*Sabbath Evening*” -- resting, quitting, relaxing.
- **Well, amazingly when he was 60, God *marvelously & quickly* TOOK AWAY** the physical ailment -- *completely*. He said he felt healed like the woman suffering hemorrhage for 12 years who touched the Lord’s garment & was totally healed! So was Simeon!
- So Simeon reflected & thought: So now my health has returned to me at the age of 60 -- when I thought I would have my *Sabbath Rest* and be done with pastoral ministry. He said: it was as if **God** had doubled, tripled, quadrupled his strength, that you may spend his strength, his energies and his time on a more extended plan of serving God with great *vigor* in the final years.
 - He aged to the glory of God. He aged with a *Forward-Tilted Life*.
- **Age well & have** a forward tilted life as you **declare** God’s strength to this generation (v.18b)!

PSALM 71 (NSAB 95)

Prayer of an Old Man for Deliverance.

- 1 ^aIn You, O Lord, I have taken refuge;
Let me never be ashamed.
- 2 ^aIn Your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
^bIncline Your ear to me and save me.
- 3 ^aBe to me a rock of ^bhabitation to which I may continually come;
You have given ^ccommandment to save me,
For You are ^amy ^drock and my fortress.
- 4 ^aRescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,
Out of the ^dgrasp of the wrongdoer and ruthless man,
- 5 For You are my ^ahope;
O Lord ^dGod, *You are* my ^bconfidence from my youth.
- 6 ^dBy You I have been ^asustained from *my* birth;
You are He who ^btook me from my mother’s womb;
My ^cpraise is continually ²of You.
- 7 I have become a ^amarvel to many,
For You are ^bmy strong refuge.
- 8 My ^amouth is filled with Your praise
And with ^bYour glory all day long.
- 9 Do not cast me off in the ^atime of old age;
Do not forsake me when my strength fails.
- 10 For my enemies have spoken ^aagainst me;
And those who ^awatch for my ²life ^bhave consulted together,
- 11 Saying, “^aGod has forsaken him;
Pursue and seize him, for there is ^bno one to deliver.”
- 12 O God, ^ado not be far from me;
O my God, ^bhasten to my help!
- 13 Let those who are adversaries of my soul be ^aashamed *and* consumed;
Let them be ^bcovered with reproach and dishonor, who ^cseek ¹to injure me.
- 14 But as for me, I will ^ahope continually,
And will ^{1b}praise You yet more and more.
- 15 My ^amouth shall tell of Your righteousness
And of ^bYour salvation all day long;
For I ^cdo not know the ^dsum *of them.*
- 16 I will come ^awith the mighty deeds of the Lord ^dGod;
I will ^bmake mention of Your righteousness, Yours alone.
- 17 O God, You ^ahave taught me from my youth,
And I still ^bdeclare Your wondrous deeds.
- 18 And even when *I am* ^aold and gray, O God, do not forsake me,
Until I ^bdeclare Your ^dstrength to *this* generation,
Your power to all who are to come.
- 19 ^dFor Your ^arighteousness, O God, *reaches* to the ²heavens,

- You who have ^bdone great things;
O God, ^ewho is like You?
- 20 You who have ^ashown ^lme many troubles and distresses
Will ^brevive ^lme again,
And will bring ^lme up again ^ffrom the depths of the earth.
- 21 May You increase my ^agreatness
And turn *to* ^bcomfort me.
- 22 I will also praise You with ^la harp,
Even Your ^ttruth, O my God;
To You I will sing praises with the ^blyre,
O ^sHoly One of Israel.
- 23 My lips will ^ashout for joy when I sing praises to You;
And my ^ssoul, which You have redeemed.
- 24 My ^atongue also will utter Your righteousness all day long;
For they are ^bashamed, for they are humiliated who seek ^lmy hurt.