

Psalm 71

Title: Prayer of An Old Man for Deliverance

Author and Date: Unknown

Key Verses: Psalm 71:9, 18

Type: Individual Lament (Complaint)

Outline

- A. Prayers and praises (verses 1-6).
- B. Problems and praises (verses 7-14).
- C. Proclamations and praises (verses 15-24).

Notes

Title: Psalm 71 is one of the few psalms in Book I and Book II that does not have a title.

Summary: Psalm 71 is an individual lament (complaint) like many of the other laments, except in this psalm, the author is old. The psalmist is old and he is suffering at the hand of his enemies (verses 4, 10, 13, and 24). God has watched over him from his birth (verse 6), he has trusted God in his youth (verse 5), and he now believes God will deliver him in his old age (verses 9 and 18). This psalm has been described as “the Psalm at Sunset” because it was written by one who still trusted in God at the end of his life.

The psalmist opens with a number of petitions. He takes refuge in the Lord and wants the Lord to deliver him, be his rock, and rescue him (verses 1-4). The psalmist has trusted in the Lord from his youth and the Lord has upheld him from his birth (verses 5-6). The psalmist promises to praise the Lord (verse 6).

The psalmist’s troubled condition is an astonishment to those around him (verse 7), but he will still praise the Lord (verse 8). He does not want the Lord to cast him off (verse 9) when his enemies speak evil of him and his God (verses 10-11). The psalmist cries for God’s help (verse 12) and he desires that his enemies be punished (verse 13). The psalmist promises to praise the Lord (verse 14).

The psalmist also promises to tell others of the great righteousness and works of God. He will tell to those around him and he will tell future generations (verses 15-18). He believes that God’s righteousness is great (verse 19) and that God will save him (verse 20) and comfort him (verse 21). The psalmist promises to praise the Lord (verses 22-24).

Verses 1-3: The wording in these verses is similar to Psalm 31:1-3. The Lord is a rock (a protection) to those who trust in him (Psa. 18:2). See Moses' description of the Lord in Deuteronomy 32.

Verse 2: Note the different requests throughout this psalm: deliver me (verse 2), rescue me (verse 4), help me (verse 12), and comfort me (verse 21). Compare these with the requests found in Psalm 69. God's "righteousness" is one theme that runs throughout this psalm (verses 2, 15, 16, 19, and 24).

Verse 3: The psalmist turns to God "continually" in trust, praise, and hope (verses 3, 6, and 14).

Verses 5-6: Compare these verses with Psalm 22:9-10. A strong hope and trust in God begins at a young age.

Verse 11: One tactic of the enemy and adversary is to try and get the believer to lose his faith in God. The enemy says, "God has forsaken him" (see also Psa. 3:2). This was the tactic Rabshakeh used with Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Isa. 37:10).

Verse 13: This is the only imprecatory (curse) verse in the psalm: "Let them be..." (see also Psa. 70:2-3; 69:22-28; 59:12-14; etc.).

Verse 18: Consider the attitude and demeanor of this older, mature person (see also verse 9). There is no grumbling or complaining here. There is no bitterness or jealousy here. There is only continued trust, praise, and hope (verses 3, 6, and 14). There is the promise to tell others of God's truths (verses 17-18).

Verse 20: Note that it is God who allows his people to experience "great and sore troubles" (KJV).

Verse 22: God described as the "Holy One of Israel" is found often in Isaiah (1:4; 5:19,24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; etc.), but not found often in the Psalms (78:41; 89:18).

Verse 21: "My greatness" (KJV) is a reference to the psalmist's honor that was taken from him by his enemies (verses 1, 4, 7, 10, 11, and 13).

Questions

1. What requests or petitions does the psalmist have for the Lord (verses 1-4)?

2. What has the psalmist done with the Lord from his youth (verse 5)?

3. What has the Lord done for the psalmist from his birth (verse 6)?

4. What do others think about the psalmist (verse 7)?
5. What promise does the psalmist make (verse 8)?
6. What request does the psalmist have for the Lord concerning his old age (verse 9)?
7. What do the enemies say concerning the psalmist and his God (verses 10-11)?
8. What request does the psalmist have for God (verse 12)?
9. What desire (curse) does the psalmist have for his enemies (verse 13)?
10. What promise does the psalmist make concerning God (verses 14-16)?
11. What has God done for the psalmist from his youth (verse 17)?
12. What does the psalmist want to do concerning his generation (verse 18)?
13. What are high and great (verse 19)?
14. What does the psalmist believe God will do for him (verse 20)?
15. What request does the psalmist have for God (verse 21)?

16. What promises does the psalmist make (verses 22-23)?

17. Why does the psalmist speak of God's righteousness all day long (verse 24)?

Applications for Today

1. It is important to trust God from our youth up (verse 5). How soon can one become evil (Gen. 8:21)? When did David trust in the Lord and fight Goliath (1 Sam. 17:33, 42, 55)? Who is to be remembered in one's youth (Eccl. 12:1)? What kind of man was Ezekiel (Ezek. 4:14)? What are young Christians to be (1 Tim. 4:12) and to flee (2 Tim. 2:22)?
2. There is no time in life, from birth to old age, that God will not help us and care for us (verse 6). What did God do for Israel and for how long did he do it (Isa. 46:3-4)?
3. It is important to "continually" serve God and not leave him when we get older (verse 9). What happened to Solomon when he got old (1 K. 11:4)? What do the righteous do in their old age (Psa. 92:14)? How did Elizabeth live in her old age (Lk. 1:6, 36)? What did Paul do in his old age (2 Tim. 4:6-8; Philemon 9)?
4. It is important to be taught God's word from our youth up (verse 17). What are parents to do (Prov. 22:6)? What are fathers to do (Eph. 6:4)? When did Timothy learn the scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15)?
5. It is important for older righteous ones to pass on God's truths to the generation around them and to future generations. We should become stronger in prayer, praise, and proclamation as we get older (verse 18). What usually comes with age (Job 12:12)? How are aged men and women to act and what are they to do (Tit. 2:2-3)?