

The 71st Psalm deals with some of the troubles common to living on planet Earth. For troubles are always with us—as Job said almost 5,000 years ago. Either we are just getting through some, in the middle of some, or headed into some.

Life is hard, as Job 5:7 says: (NKJV) “Yet man is born to trouble, As the sparks fly upward”. Those words come from what may be the oldest book of the Bible, written by Job, who lived just after the Flood at the end of the Ice Ages.

Consequently, every day is an opportunity to either focus on ourselves—our troubles, problems, misfortunes, woes (and there will always be some)—or to focus on God and His plans, promises, purposes, and faithfulness to guide our lives to the very end.

Someone has well said that for us as believers, life is not really mountains and valleys where we have all good times (mountains) and all bad times (valleys); rather, life is more like a parallel line of railroad tracks.

One side is all of our unending struggles;
The other side is all of God’s unending goodness being worked out in our lives.

The bottom line is that the way we understand life is when we allow the Lord to let us see all our trials through the lens of His Word—and that is exactly what David did in Psalm 71. David explains to us how to:

VIEW THE PRESENT THROUGH THE LENS OF GOD’S WORD

In Psalm 71, a psalm of intentional living, David first surveyed the challenges everyone faces as they get older.

Remember when David was in life by looking at v. 18: “old and gray headed”.

In the first thirteen verses, David blends God’s faithfulness and promises, as he reflected upon the four common problems of aging. If you aren’t there yet into old age, he reminds us what will be coming:

- 1. Confusion Increases as We Age v. 1-2**
- 2. Insecurity Increases as We Age v. 3-8**
- 3. Weakness And Troubles Increase as We Age v. 9**
- 4. Aloneness Increases as We Age v. 10-13**

With those challenges that David knew he faced in mind, listen to his confidence in these powerful

words of hope and secure promises of God as we read v. 1-13.

Psalm 71:1-13 (NKJV) In You, O LORD, I put my trust; Let me never be put **to shame**. 2 Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; Incline Your ear to me, and save me. 3 Be my strong refuge, To which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, For You are my rock and my fortress. 4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. 5 For You are my hope, O Lord GOD; You are my trust from my youth. 6 By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You. 7 I have become as a wonder to many, But You are my strong refuge. 8 Let my mouth be filled with Your praise And with Your glory all the day. 9 Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me **when my strength fails**. 10 For my enemies speak against me; And those who lie in wait for my life take counsel together, 11 Saying, "God has forsaken him; Pursue and take him, for there is none to deliver him." 12 O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me! 13 Let them be confounded and consumed Who are adversaries of my life; Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor Who seek my hurt.

Now turn onward with me from Psalm 71 to look for a moment at the inspired portrait of all we each have to look forward to as we age. God gave that portrait to us in Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:14. We can call this passage:

GOD'S PORTRAIT OF THE CHALLENGES OF OLD AGE

Solomon gives two pieces of advice from God in these verses:

First, seek God as EARLY in Life as Possible. 11:9-10 Rejoice, O young man, **in your youth**, And let your heart cheer you **in the days of your youth**; Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. 10 Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, And put away evil from your flesh, For **childhood and youth** are vanity.

Second, seek God IN as much of Life as Possible. 12:1-14 Remember now your Creator **in the days of your youth**, Before **the difficult days come**, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them": 2 While the sun and the light, The moon and the stars, Are not darkened, And the clouds do not return after the rain; 3 In the day when the keepers of the house tremble, [LEGS GO BAD] And the strong men bow down [BACK GIVES OUT]; When the grinders cease because they are few, [TEETH DECAY] And those that look through the windows grow dim [EYES FAIL]; 4 When the doors are shut in the streets, And the sound of grinding is low [EARS FAIL]; When one rises up at the sound of a bird, [SLEEP LOSS] And all the daughters of music are brought low. 5 Also they are afraid of height, And of terrors in the way; When the almond tree blossoms [WHITE HAIR], The grasshopper is a burden [STRENGTH FAIL], And desire fails [NO ENERGY]. For man goes to his eternal home, And the mourners go about the streets. 6 Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed [SPINE], Or the golden bowl is broken [STOMACH], Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain [HEART], Or the wheel broken at the well [CIRCULATION]. 7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.

8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "All is vanity." 9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs. 10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written

was upright—words of truth. 11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. 12 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh.

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

These verses remind us why the promises of God's Faithfulness are so important.

Now, back to Psalm 71 and how to face all that slowly lies ahead, like a wreck in the road or washed out bridge we can't avoid, for everyone as we age. First David reminds us that:

Confusion Increases As We Age v. 1-2

David reminded us in verses 1-2 that as we get older, our minds get slower, and it is easier to get confused. Life moves so fast these days that when our minds and bodies slow down, it is hard to keep pace. This can prompt confusion.

Psalm 71:1-2 (NKJV) In You, O LORD, I put my trust; Let me never be put to shame. 2 Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape;

Incline Your ear to me, and save me.

Too many choices, too fast a pace, and too short a period to process needed information to make a decision can prompt confusion and indecisiveness as to what to do.

When confusion increases what should we do? We should declare our unwavering choice to form these godly habits:

- **Like David, flee to the Lord for hope instead of living in confusion:** *In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion (Psalm 71:1 KJV).*
- **Like David, cry out to the Lord before giving in to temptation:** *Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline Your ear to me, and save me (Psalm 71:2).*

Secondly David reminds us:

Insecurity Increases as We Age v. 3-8

In Psalm 71:3-8, David pointed out that an increase of insecurity is another challenge of growing older. Like confusion, insecurity shows up periodically from childhood; it just gets bigger and bigger the older and weaker we get. Elderly people commonly feel like they are no longer needed, and often are in the way. Combined with all the other weaknesses of life, a sense of feeling unwanted breeds an increased insecurity.

David warned, however, that God will not allow us to persist in those enticing sins of old age. Do you remember them from when we started this Psalm? They are: a lust for comfort and convenience, a greed for recognition, and covetousness for security.

God used David to remind us that the sins of old age can erase Christ's "Well done!" Remember Solomon: he started out well but failed in the end because he refused to obey God in his waning years.

The increased insecurities of aging are usually prompted by fears like the fear of pain, abandonment, rejection, death, losing control, failure, uncertain future, shame and embarrassment, strangers, losses, worrying about what people think of you, and aging itself.

How does God deliver us from fear? He does so by instilling in us a greater fear—the fear of God. What is the fear of the Lord? From references to “the fear of the Lord” that appear throughout the Psalms, below is a distilled description of what this “greater fear” means:

- Having reverence and respect for God as the all-powerful Leader of all else.
- Having certainty of inescapable accountability for behavior to God.
- Practicing the personal awareness of the presence of a Holy God.
- Humbly following His leadership by obeying His Word.¹

So David gives us six rapidly stated truths that are God’s:

The Prescription for the Insecurities in Life

When insecurity increases what should we do? We should declare our unwavering choice to form these godly habits:

- **Like David, resist fear by running into God’s Refuge:** *Be my strong refuge, to which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress* (Psalm 71:3). Rather than let fears paralyze us, we should trust God’s Word over the fears.
- **Like David, ask for God’s help before becoming bitter:** *Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man* (Psalm 71:4). We should turn our hurts over to the Lord to handle!
- **Like David, keep remembering the faithfulness of God:** *For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth* (Psalm 71:5). We should choose to believe God’s faithfulness!
- **Like David, remember to praise God that He has a plan for our lives:** *By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother’s womb. My praise shall be continually of You* (Psalm 71:6). We should seek God’s plan every day!
- **Like David, let our lives be a testimony for the Lord:** *I have become as a wonder to many, but You are my strong refuge* (Psalm 71:7). In all circumstances, we should do what’s right because it’s right in God’s eyes!
- **Like David, praise God so much that no time is left for complaints:** *Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your glory all the day* (Psalm 71:8). We should

¹ Jan David Hettinga, Follow Me: Experience The Loving Leadership of Jesus, (Colorado Springs, Co: NavPress, 1996, Pages 193-194 and 218-219.

praise often!

Next week, as we look at our lives through the lens of Scripture we will learn that:

**WEAKNESS AND TROUBLES
INCREASE AS WE AGE v. 9-12**

David also noted in Psalm 71:9 that *weakness increases* as we grow older. How true!