

Old Man

Psalm 70:1 *To the choirmaster. Of David, for the memorial offering.*

Make haste, O God, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!

² Let them be put to shame and confusion who seek my life! Let them be turned back and brought to dishonor who delight in my hurt!

³ Let them turn back because of their shame who say, "Aha, Aha!"

⁴ May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you! May those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!"

⁵ But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God! You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!

Psalm 71:1

In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame!

² In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me, and save me!

³ Be 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.

⁴ Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.

⁵ For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth.

⁶ Upon 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.

⁷ I have been as a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.

⁸ My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day.

⁹ Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent.

¹⁰ For my enemies speak concerning me; those who watch for my life consult together

¹¹ and say, "God has forsaken him; pursue and seize him, for there is none to deliver him."

¹² O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me!

¹³ May my accusers be put to shame and consumed; with scorn and disgrace may they be covered who seek my hurt.

¹⁴ But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more.

¹⁵ My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.

¹⁶ With the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD I will come; I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.

¹⁷ O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.

¹⁸ So 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.

¹⁹ Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?

²⁰ You 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.

²¹ You will increase my greatness and comfort me again.

²² I 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.

²³ My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed.

²⁴ And 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.

Psalm 70-71

Fire Insurance at the Altar Call

Normally, people take out fire insurance on their houses. But for some time now, a peculiar fire insurance form has been filled out time and again for religious purposes. The policy is for the soul of a person who nervously becomes aware of their immanent doom: burning in hell. Thus, they are written upon what came to be known as the “anxious bench.” Immediately after the conclusion of the sermon, the mourner approaches the altar—himself or herself being the offering, I guess. Here, you confess your sin openly, publicly, and with a lot of other people. Say a prayer to God. Then, you are saved.

The altar call is practically a sacrament in some denominations. If you don’t have it, you can’t possibly be a true Church. I’ve had people say this very thing to me about our church. But its origins go back only 200 years—less than 10% of NT church history—to the 1830s and the so-called “revivals” of the poorly named Second Awakening in America. It did not originate in church, but in the tents of the Pelagian circuit-rider Charles Finney. Prior to him, no one had ever done such a thing.

Amazingly, it was not originally meant for what many people think of them today. People think of this as the way you get saved. But curiously, it originated as a way to sign up converts for the abolition movement.¹ Nothing like mixing the church with the state.

A great problem with these altar calls is that even statistics taken by those who do them demonstrate that they do not produce lasting effects. The vast majority of people who go up do it time and time again. They gain no sense of eternal security, but just the opposite. Because the policy is written during times of great emotional stress produced by hell-fire and brimstone preaching which often confuses the law and the gospel, people are often responding to the wrong message. Rather than confessing Christ as King and bowing to him in fealty, thanking him for his free grace, the message is often twisted to becoming a better person who won't drink and dance and smoke. Add this to the huge emotional manipulations of lighting, music, and a call that will continue until a certain number of people have finally come up, and it can't possibly produce fruit in keeping with the Spirit.

¹ Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion* (New York: HarperCollins, 1981), 78.

I don't deny that God might save someone when an altar call is present, if the gospel has really been preached (and no doubt, sometimes it has been). God can do anything he wants, and he is constantly using our stupidity to bring himself glory anyway. But that isn't the issue. The issue for me is that so many people trust in the altar call itself. I've known countless friends who have believed they were saved because they went forward at an altar call. I mean, that's exactly what the preacher told them, after all. This confuses trust in God with trust in something that man invented. This in turn has created legions of false converts who, again as statistics show, rarely go on to become involved in churches and most of whom never have a changed life. And many who go forward as young people don't even call themselves Christians when they get old.

Contrary to this, the Bible calls those who repent and confess Christ to "make your calling and election sure" (2Pe 1:10), to "fight the good fight of faith" (1Ti 6:12), to "finish the race" (2Ti 4:7). One of the tragic things I have seen happen time and again in my adult life is friends of mine who have given up the faith. Many were raised under this altar-call mentality. But some weren't. As I've reflected on this, it

isn't that I think those who stay in unbelief somehow lost salvation. Rather, it is that as a Church we are not doing a good job teaching people that those who are elect must persevere to the end. Yes, you can have assurance of salvation before you die. But it is making it to the finish line as a Christian that demonstrates you were ever saved.

The Psalms today speak to this issue. They do so by way of instructing us in the proper object of faith (righteous God who rescues, delivers, and saves), the proper reason and attitude for repentance (you are poor and needy), and making it to the very end of the race (trusting in Christ in old age).

Psalms 71-72 in Wider Context

We are looking today at two of the last four psalms in Book II of the Psalter (42-72). These four psalms (69-72) are a kind of concluding unit that have many themes in common. Today we are looking at the middle of these four:
Psalms 70-71.

Psalm 70 is very short, just **five verses**. We've actually seen Psalm 70 almost word-for-word already. For with very

few changes, it is identical to Psalm 40:14-18, a Psalm that curiously begins to wrap up Book I of the Psalter. Therefore, after Psalms 14/53, Psalm 70 forms the second of three “Psalm-Doubles” (the third being parts of 57 and 60 which are combined into Ps 108). When a song is doubled, it is important.

It “continues the lament” from Psalm 69. Psalm 69 spoke of powerful enemies (69:14), the threat to the psalmist’s soul (69:1, 10), Yahweh’s intervention to save (69:1, 13, 29, 35), shame and reproach (69:6, 7, 19), it had an explicit theology of the poor (69:29, 32, 33), it contrasted those who seek God with those who seek to take the psalmist’s life (69:6, 32), and it had a cry for speedy intervention (69:17). Psalm 70’s five short verses have all these too.² We’ll see next time how the Psalm 72 also has many themes from these songs.³

The relationship between Psalm 70 and 71 is more relevant for our purposes this morning, since we are looking at both. Ps 70 makes up a small A-B-B-A chiasm:

² On all this see Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, ed. Klaus Baltzer, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 190.

³ See Lothar, 199-200.

- A** Deliver me (1)
- B** Those who seek my life: Let them be put to shame (2-3)
- B¹** Those who seek you God: Let them rejoice and be glad (4)
- A¹** My deliverer (5)

Or:

- A.** Hurry (1)
- B.** World as it is (2-3)
- C.** World as it should be (4)
- B¹.** World as it is (5a)
- A¹.** Hurry (5b)⁴

Importantly, the main themes (second chiasm) are all repeated in Psalm 71: **haste, shame, rejoicing, poor, and deliver.**

Finally, you will notice that Psalm 70 has a **superscription**, but Psalm 71 does not. In the first two books of the Psalter, when a psalm didn't have a superscription, it is often because it is closely related to the song that came before it. In some cases, the LXX has actually combined into one what we have divided into two (we saw this with Psalm

⁴ Tanner, in deClasse-Walford, 563.

9-10 for example). In a similar way, “Psalms 70 and 71 are combined in many ancient manuscripts, indicating they were (in some traditions at least) read as a single psalm.”⁵ In their current form and placement by Ezra’s scribes, it is clear that these are two psalms, because both are stand alone literary units (Psalm 71 has a much longer chiasm).

Psalms 70: Proper Prayer at the Altar

The altar call is not biblical. But going before God at his altar in the OT temple most certainly was. Psalm 70 is a psalm “of David.” It is “to the Choirmaster” (“For The End”). And it is “for the memorial offering.” This term “memorial offering” (*zakar*) is only found here and in **Psalm 38:1**. It literally means “a remembrance.” The Targum puts the context squarely in the temple, “For remembrance; concerning the handful of incense.” According to Leviticus, the grain offering—an offering to God to implore his goodwill—shall take “a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a

⁵ Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 965.

pleasing aroma to the LORD” (Lev 2:2). This is what the Targum translator is thinking, and it shows us the true altar call of the Bible. You must go and make your offering at God’s temple, not man’s.

The LXX gives it a theological context, “**For a remembrance, that the Lord may save me.**” As a song for the end, its eschatological (forward-pointing) meaning is therefore **looking forward to Christ’s sacrifice at the altar in heaven**, whereby he presented himself as the lamb of God, offered his sacrifice as the High Priest of the people, and did so in his very person as the Temple. Therefore, the true altar-call of the NT era is to look in remembrance at his death as the sacrifice that takes away our sins, and to call upon him that he may save you. Since Jesus himself becomes the place of the temple, and worship is now done in Spirit and Truth, one can call upon him and remember him *anywhere*. But Christ is temple. So you must come to Him.

But the song itself becomes the offering prayer. If you want salvation, you must know what the song says and make it the cry of your heart. Trusting in walking an aisle is the very opposite of what Psalm 70 is all about.

We can divide it into four or five parts (depending on the chiasm). I'll use four. The first is verse 1. It is a petition for deliverance. “Make haste, O God, to deliver me! O LORD, make haste to help me!” (Ps 70:1). As I said, this verse (indeed Psalm) is a repeat from an earlier Psalm. The verse itself also repeats. Make haste. Make haste. Deliver me. Help me. Oh God. O LORD.

John Cassian (360 - 432 A.D.), a contemporary of Augustine, provides a helpful summary of this, which he calls a “devotional formula … absolutely necessary for possessing the perpetual awareness of God.” Something we are contemplating. Too often, giving up the fight happens because we lose this very thing. God seems distant, even absent. So, if he isn’t there, we might as well not believe. Thus, you can thus get a sense of the urgency of Cassian’s lengthy, but very helpful, comments:

Not without reason has this verse been selected [for duplication?] from out of the whole body of Scripture. For it takes up all the emotions that can be applied to human nature and with great correctness and accuracy it adjusts itself to every condition and every attack.

It contains an invocation of God in the face of any crisis, the humility of a devout confession, the watchfulness of concern and of constant fear, a consciousness of one's own frailty, the assurance of being heard and confidence in a protection that is always present and at hand, for whoever calls unceasingly on his protector is sure that he is always present.

It contains a burning love and charity, an awareness of traps and a fear of enemies. Seeing oneself surrounded by these day and night, one confesses that one cannot be set free without the help of one's defender.

This verse is an unassailable wall, an impenetrable breastplate and a very strong shield for all those who labor under the attack of demons.

It does not permit those troubled by boredom and anxiety of mind or those depressed by sadness or different kinds of thoughts to despair of a saving remedy, showing that he whom it invokes is always looking on our struggles and is not detached from his suppliants.

It warns those of us who are enjoying spiritual successes and are glad of heart that we must never be exalted or puffed up because of our good fortune, which it testifies cannot be maintained without the protection of God, for it begs him to come to our aid not only at all times but also quickly.

This verse, I say, is necessary and useful for each one of us in whatever condition we may live. For whoever desires to be helped always and in all things shows that he needs God as a helper not only in hard and sad affairs but also and equally as much in

favorable and joyful ones, so that just as he may be snatched from the former he may abide in the latter, know that in neither instance can human frailty endure without his assistance.

(*Conferences* 10.9.2–5)

The **second** part of the song is a petition against those who seek to take his life. “**Let them be put to shame**” is how it begins, with the second part being parallel, “**Let them be turned back and brought to dishonor who delight in my hurt**” (**Ps 70:2**). It continues in **vs. 3**, “**Let them turn back because of their shame who say, ‘Aha, Aha!’**” You can see how the Psalmist needs to be delivered quickly, because someone is seeking to harm or kill him. If there is someone in your life who seeks one or both things, the prayer is **a call for justice**, that what they do may be done to them. But even if you have no such person in your life, you must be warned, even as the above quote does, that there are **spiritual powers** that seek your destruction, and they never rest. Therefore, such a petition is never without application in this world.

Part **three** of the song plays off the word “**seek.**” They seek my life. So now the prayer asks, “**May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you!**” (**Ps 70:4**). There are two kinds

of seekers in this world. There are those who seek to fight against God and/or his people, and there are those who by grace, as seeking God. The psalm prays that the first group would be brought to shame and confusion and dishonor. The psalm asks God that the second group may rejoice and be glad and love his salvation ... “**evermore**.”

“**Evermore**” is the first hint in our Psalms today that you must persevere in the faith to the end. It is not enough to rejoice and be glad as a revival meeting, a campfire youth retreat, an exciting time of music or preaching during a church service. Life is not actually like these temporary spiritual highs. Most of the time, it is the opposite. We are weary, we are being perused, we feel that God is not there. And so the petition to grant happiness and joy and persevering love of salvation is critical. For if God does not do that, how can anyone hope to stand firm to the end? Obviously, this song is for believers then.

Who grants this persevering faith? Not you. You couldn’t keep yourself in this state of mind for your entire life if you tried. No, it is God who does this. The perseverance of the saints is God’s work, and he is pleased to do it.

What kind of a God does this? A great God. And thus, the third part of the song concludes, “God is great!” You must focus your mind upon this attribute of his greatness, which here means his power to be able to cause you to rejoice and to cause your enemies to become confused and disperse. God can do that. God does that.

The song ends with the only proper state that a petitioner can be in when offering up such a prayer and with a sure confidence of the one who is being petitioned. This is the fourth and final part. What is the state? “I am poor and needy” (Ps 70:5). Who needs salvation? The rich man who has everything? No, the one who has nothing. The one who can afford anything? No, the one who can’t buy a single thing. Being poor and needy is the opposite of pride and wealth and intelligence and health and anything else that you might trust in during this life. It is a state of helplessness, and only this kind of a person can hope that God will hear them. This is why it is the poor who are blessed in the Beatitudes and Psalms, because they alone know what it means to have need.

What is the confidence? It is that his petition from vs. 1 will be answered. Notice how vs. 5 takes the “haste” theme

and repeats it at the end. “**Do not delay.**” Do not delay what? Now it takes the petition, “**God, please deliver me**” from **vs. 1** and says with confidence, “**O God! You are my help and my deliverer.**” This is what faith is and what faith does. It does not approach God timidly with the thought that he might do what he has promised. It approaches him boldly, in the face of overwhelming odds, when everything seems impossible, and it believes that he will do what he has promised, before he does it. You said you will help me. You said you will deliver me. O God! You are the only one who can do this. I am in great need. I am helpless and needy, with nothing in this world but you. I’m about to fall over, to capsize, to depart. So do not delay.

Psalms 71: The Righteous God and My Old Age

Psalm 71 begins with an idea found in the second section of Psalm 70: **Shame**. Where as the prayer was for God to put his enemies to shame, this song begins, “**... let me never be put to shame!**” Why? Because, “**In you, O LORD, do I take refuge**” (**Ps 71:1**). But it is the next verse that really gives us

the main theme of this song. It teaches us about what kind of God the LORD is.

What kind of God is he? He is **the righteous God**. “**In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me**” (Ps 71:2; you can see the “deliver” and “rescue” theme from Ps 70 here). **What is “righteousness?”** The word is *tsedaqah*. In the lexicons, English synonyms include “**justice**,” “**honesty**,” “**community loyalty**,” “**just deeds**,” “**things done justly**,” “**righteousness**,” “**virtue**,” and “**true**.” This Psalm talks about righteousness in much the same way. It is righteous for God **to deliver his child** (2). It is “**righteous acts**” which are **deeds of salvation** (15). The song ends with his “**righteous help all the day long**” (24), thus returning to the main theme. In between, God’s righteousness **reaches the high heavens**, for he has done great things (19), and therefore earth will hear of his righteousness **from the mouth** of the Psalmist (16), righteousness which belongs to God alone.

Dangerously, this is a word that has basically left the modern English vocabulary. Why? This word and its accompanying virtues—which even pagan Greeks once held in high esteem—are no longer tolerated, let alone prized and treasured, in our post-Christian culture. Ideas that Western

Civilization was founded upon are today openly mocked (morality) or thought to be impossible (truth).

The idea of a righteous God makes little sense to a people steeped and strongly engaged in corruption, dishonesty, falsehood, lawlessness, wickedness, and lies. These vices sadly describe our politics, our government, our media, our celebrities, our education system, our businesses, our families, our churches. Ours is a morally rotten culture in the throes of sinking into the abyss faster than the Titanic. Everyone knows it, but the only response we seem to have towards those who practice these things is more of the same from us. We are a people incapable of doing otherwise.

I dare say that much of our hatred for these things stems from the fact that we are a people so completely wealthy, in a state of technological advancement, in comfort, luxury, and ease, who think of ourselves as the greatest people in the history of earth. As Israel in the book of Amos teaches, such things make us forget God and neighbor. Forgetting God is truth. Forgetting neighbor is morality. Both are essential. But for those like this, they can no longer even understand the idea of righteousness.

It is like we are standing upon the unsinkable ship. Yet, even as it has been hit by the iceberg and the lower levels are now filling quickly with water, we fiddle our lives away on deck in a perfectly calm, beautiful evening. What could go wrong?

We need salvation.

You need salvation.

Yet, righteousness is exactly what the down-trodden, the poor, the needy, the destitute of a society yearn for. Why? Not everyone is living first class on this great ship. Some in the lower decks already feel the cold dark water rising. And they want off. The Righteous God is the only way off the ship.

Many don't know this, because they have never heard the good news. But they need it desperately. Why? Because they aren't saved because they are poor. It is their poor state that God uses to save them. There comes a time when those on the receiving end of the punishing vices themselves rise to power. We are seeing it in our day with a vengeance. Entire political and social systems are doing this. To what end? Righteousness? Hardly. It just becomes payback time. An eye for an eye. People trading vice for vice, lie for lie,

racism for racism, an old kind of oppression for a new kind of oppression. And the righteous God is not longed for. No, only when we stay in a state of need and poverty can we hope to understand.

Notice how **vs. 2** finishes with the ending words of Psalm 71. “**You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay**” becomes, “**... deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me, and save me!**” This makes a nice transition. As we saw in **Ps 71:5**, the person of that song was “poor and needy.” If these Psalms were once part of the same song, the same would be true in Psalm 71. Given that virtually everything in Psalm 70 is repeated in Psalm 71, this is most like the same in 71 even though the word “poor” is not used.

Indeed, as commentators have noticed, “**Both psalms present a theology of the poor**⁶” (just as Psalm 72 will in much greater detail). A different word replaces “poor.” This is the word “old.” “**Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent**” (**Ps 71:9**). “**O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray**

⁶ Lothar, 199.

hairs, O God, do not forsake me...” (17-18). Thus, what was implicit in Psalm 70 with “evermore” becomes explicit in Psalm 71 with old age.

The possible five sections of Psalm 70 is a certain five sections in Psalm 71. Following this outline helps us understand the song. The first is **vv. 1-3**. We’ve already seen its main theme of a righteous God delivering and rescuing (**Ps 71:2**) and never letting the singer be put to shame (**1**) because he trusts in the Rock of Refuge (**3**).

The second section is **vv. 4-8**. It repeats the theme of rescuing from the hand of the wicked, because they are “unjust and cruel” (**4**). But why should God do this? Not because the singer is just and nice, but because he has leaned upon and trusted in the LORD from his youth (**5-6**). Why has he trusted? Because God took him from his mother’s womb and saved him (**6**). Therefore, though he is viewed as a portent to many (**7**), meaning that his very existence is like a sign of doom to them, a huge storm building on the horizon that seeks their harm, God has been his shelter in the storms that they have brought against him, and he has continually praised God in their midst (**8**).

The third section is **vv. 9-16**. In them we see the enemies of the Psalmist pursuing (present tense in **vs. 10**) **an old man** (**9**) because God has forsaken him and he has no one to deliver him (**11**). Therefore, he pleads with the LORD not to be far from him, but to hurry and help (**12**), the same idea that began and ended Ps 70. Yet, whether God will deliver or not, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego he will continually hop and praise no matter what (**14**). He will tell of God's righteous acts and his deeds of salvation all day long, even though the number of things God has done are beyond his ability to remember or recite (**15-16**).

Part four is **vv. 17-21**. These really get at the heart of how we began the sermon and the utter need you have to **make it to the end** in faith. God has taught him from youth and yet even though he is old he **continues to proclaim his wondrous deeds** (**17-18**). Remember, this is in the context of God appearing to not even be there now and so many enemies are coming at him. He isn't doing this while life is good, but while life is terrible. This is critical.

The righteous God is righteous everywhere, even to the heavens. He is omnipresent, but though he feels far away, he is not (**19**). Therefore, "**Who is like you**" (**19**)? I want to note

that this expression combined with “wonderful” (see paragraph above) is peculiar to the Angel of the LORD and Christ. Of the man of war who fought for Israel in the exodus ([Ex 15:3](#)) Moses sings, “Who is like you among the gods … working wonders” ([15:11](#)). To Samson’s father the Angel revealed himself as having a name that is “wonderful” ([Jdg 13:18](#)). Of Messiah it is said by Isaiah that his name shall be called “wonderful” ([Isa 9:6](#)). Curiously, the words “who” (*mi*), “like” (*ka*), and “God” (*El*) form the name Michael, who is the heavenly prince of Israel ([Dan 12:1](#)). The Psalmist is singing in and trusting in Christ!

Gen 32:24, 29-30	Ex 15:3, 11	Jdg 13:17-18	Ps 71:17, 19	Isaiah 9:6
A man wrestled with [Jacob] until daybreak ... Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” ... Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face.”	The LORD is a man of war ... Who is like you, O LORD, among the Gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?	“What is your name?” The Angel of the LORD said ... “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?”	I still proclaim your wondrous deeds ... You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?	For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor (in the LXX—“Angel of the Great Council”).

And he does it even though God “**has made me see many troubles and calamities**” (20). So please, revive me again, bring me up again (20), increase my honor, comfort me once again (21). The old man needs as it were a very resurrection from the grave by the power of the Holy Spirit the Great Comforter.

Here it is interesting to see how some Church Fathers viewed the singer of the song. Perhaps given that it has no human author, combined with the previous song’s close content and inscription “For the End,” Tertullian said to the unbelieving Praxeas, “**Hear now also the Son’s statements about the Father:** ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor’ (Is 61:1; Lk 4:18). He speaks of himself likewise to the Father in the psalm: ‘**Forsake me not, until I have declared the might of your arm to all the generations that are to come**’” (Ps 71:18). This is a Psalm, he says, that prophesies of the person of Christ as he converses with the Father by the Holy Spirit. (Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 11).¹⁸

Finally, the song ends in the fifth section, **vv. 22-24**. It ends with the idea that this is not just a prayer, but a song, something to be played with instruments and sung aloud. “**I**

will also praise you with the harp ... I will sing praises to you with the lyre” (22). “My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you” (23). “My tongue will talk of your righteous help all the day long” (24). Why? Because of your faithfulness (22). Because you are **the Holy One of Israel** (22). Because you have redeemed me (23). Because God has put to shame and disappointed those who have sought his hurt (24).

Old Man Take a Look as My Life

These songs do not tell you that you are saved from the fires of hell by walking and aisle and saying a prayer. Instead, they take you to the true Altar, the one in heaven, where Christ himself sits enthroned as the Right Hand of the Father. They tell you about God’s righteousness, particularly in his deeds for his people and deliverance from their enemies. They tell you of how you can be saved, by trusting in Christ your whole life long. They teach you that God is the one who does this great work and who perseveres you to the end.

Christianity is not about getting an easy fire-insurance policy. It is about a life-long struggle against sin, and persevering in faith to the end, into old age. It is about praising God when you don't want to, when it seems like he has abandoned you, when enemies seek to kill you because of what you stand for, because of who your God is, even as they mock his very presence in your life.

Some of you here today are feeling much nearer the end of your life than you are the beginning. You have reached old age. Your hairs are gray. Your skin is no longer supple as it was in youth. But friends, you have not reached the end ... yet. Though you are more like the Psalmist here than the younger are, you must fight to the very end. Seeing the finish line is not crossing over it. So fight the good fight and finish the race. God has not yet taken you. You have not retired from growing in grace, learning more about God, behaving like Christians or helping the church in Christian service.

And yet, you have shown the younger people what it means to walk much of the way through in faithfulness. Younger people, you have much to learn from those who are nearer the end than the beginning. It is a tragic thing that

so much of today's church has segmented the older and younger generations so that they no longer even worship together. This is one of the reasons why. Younger people, you need the older as living examples of a life lead singing and acting out Psalms 70-71. Look to your elders. Learn from them. Get to know them. Ask them questions. They are wise and full of stories of the many things we have spoken of here.

How can you do this? How can you interact with one another better? In the few times that we gather together as a church during a regular week, come to those gatherings, all of them. In those more informal settings, you get to learn about each other. Stay for the fellowship meals where you can interact one-on-one. Hang out after church. Bring a lunch if we are not having a meal. Be intentional about these things, so that you might come to know the joys of true fellowship as we all help each other to get to the end of this journey having lived a life of faith in Christ, to whom belongs all the glory and honor and praise forever.

- 1a)** Psa 71:1, In You I put my trust, let me never be put to shame;
- 1b)** Psa 71:2a, Deliver me in Your righteousness;
- 1c)** Psa 71:2b, Incline Your ear to me and save me;
- 1d)** Psa 71:3, You are my strong refuge, You are my rock and my fortress;
- 1e)** Psa 71:4, Deliver me out of the hand of the wicked
- 1f)** Psa 71:5-6, In You I have trusted from my youth + You took me from my mother's womb;
- 1g)** Psa 71:7-8, I have become a wonder to many + Let my mouth be filled with Your praise;
- 1h)** Psa 71:9, Do not cast me off in time of old age;
- 1i)** Psa 71:10-11, My enemies speak against me + that God has forsaken me;
 - central axis) Psa 71:12-13,** “**My God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me! Let them be confounded and consumed who are adversaries of my life; Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor who seek my hurt;**”
- 2i)** Psa 71:14-16, I will praise You more and more + speak of Your righteousness and salvation;
- 2h)** Psa 71:17-18, Now also when I am old and grayheaded do not forsake me;
- 2g)** Psa 71:19, You who have done great things + who is like You?;
- 2f)** Psa 71:20, You shall revive me again and bring me up from the depths of the earth;
- 2e)** Psa 71:21, You shall increase my greatness and comfort me on every side;
- 2d)** Psa 71:22-23a, Praise of God's faithfulness;
- 2c)** Psa 71:23b, You have redeemed my soul;
- 2b)** Psa 71:24a, My tongue shall also talk of Your righteousness all day long;
- 2a)** Psa 71:24b, They are brought to shame who seek my hurt.

A little perspective blog.