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Psalm 71

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Psalm 71

(NRSV)

- 1 In you, O LORD, 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,
a strong fortress,^(a) 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.**
- 5 For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.**
- 6 Upon you I have leaned from my birth;
it was you who took me from my mother's womb.
My praise is continually of you.**
- 7 I have been like a portent to many,
but you are my strong refuge.**
- 8 My mouth is filled with your praise,
and with your glory all day long.**
- 9 Do not cast me off in the time of old age;
do not forsake me when my strength is spent.**
- 10 For my enemies speak concerning me,
and those who watch for my life consult together.**
- 11 They say, "Pursue and seize that person
whom God has forsaken,
for there is no one to deliver."**
- 12 O God, do not be far from me;
O my God, make haste to help me!**
- 13 Let my accusers be put to shame and consumed;
let those who seek to hurt me
be covered with scorn and disgrace.**
- 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 day long,
though their number is past my knowledge.**
- 16 I will come praising the mighty deeds of the Lord GOD,
I will praise 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 all the generations to come.^(b)
 Your power ¹⁹ and your righteousness, O God,
 reach 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 honor,
 and comfort me once 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 rescued.**
- 24 All day long my tongue will talk of your righteous help,
 for those who tried to do me harm
 have been put to shame, and disgraced.**

Footnotes:

- a. (v.3) Gk Compare 31.3: Heb *to come continually you have commanded*
 b. (v.18) Gk Compare Syr: Heb *to a generation, to all that come*

Psalm 71 is a Psalm of a life-long devout believer, perhaps David himself, who can look back over a long life and see the hand of God protecting him over the years from his enemies and foes. And that is a great consolation, because now in his old age he has become even more vulnerable with growing weakness. Yet despite his infirmities, he is resolved to sing the righteousness of God upon the harp.

The first three verses of Psalm 71 are nearly identical in thought and wording to the first three verses of Psalm 31. Both of these two Psalms are quite similar in the pattern of the plea for rescue from the wicked who would interpret the Psalmist's weakened condition as a sign that God has forsaken him, the resulting appeal for divine vengeance against his enemies, the affirmation of trust in God, the expression of expectation of restoration, and praise for God's faithfulness.

Here in Psalm 71, we should note a lower degree of despair than expressed in Psalm 31, and a greater emphasis of life long devotion to God, from birth (verse 6) to old age (verses 9, 18). The Psalmist recognizes that God has been his constant help throughout his long life, and reflects on the mighty deeds of the Lord God. His response to this contemplation is praise, and the pledge to proclaim God's might to the generations to come, thus demonstrating to us that we are never too old to serve the LORD. Even as our strength and physical abilities wane, we can continue to be faithful witnesses to our children and to others.

Prayer to Accompany Psalm 71:

Lord of the living, do not desert us in our old age, but help us to follow your will in both good and bad times, so forever we may praise your faithfulness; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Linger longer over verses 18, 19:

So even to old age and gray hairs,
O God, do not forsake me,
until I proclaim your might
to all the generations to come.
Your power and your righteousness, O God,
reach the high heavens.