

Continual Hope

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[0 : 00] So Psalm 71, Matt preached on Psalm 70 last week, and it's very likely that Psalm 71 was originally a continuation of Psalm 70.

There's a lot of parallel words and themes, and that might explain also why Psalm 71 doesn't have a title like psalms usually do.

Probably because it's the title of Psalm 70, it's what was supposed to attach to it, so it's to the choir master of David for the memorial offering. So it's probably also a Davidic psalm, someone that David wrote, or possibly it's about David and part of his life.

Both psalms talk about, it's a prayer to God that God hastened to help him, to rescue him, deliver him, to save him. And then both prayers include a prayer that God would put the psalmist's enemies to shame, those enemies who delight and seek the hurt, the pain of the psalmist, and seek his life. So this kind of, the psalmist really is facing a mortal threat, and these psalms are about seeking God's salvation. So let me read it out loud. Psalm 71.

[1 : 20] In you, O Lord, do I take refuge. Let me never be put to shame. In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me. Incline your ear to me and save me.

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

For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. 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. I have been as important to many, but you are my strong refuge. My mouth is filled with your praise and with your glory all the day.

Do not cast me off in the time of old age. Forsake me not when my strength is spent. For my enemies speak concerning me. Those who watch for my life consult together and say, God has forsaken him.

[2 : 22] Pursue him. Seize him. For there is none to deliver him. O God, be not far from me. O my God, make haste to help me. May my accusers be put to shame and consumed.

With scorn and disgrace may they be covered who seek my hurt. But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day.

For their number is past my knowledge. With the mighty deeds of the Lord God I will come. I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone. O God, from my youth you have taught me.

And I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. 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.

Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you? You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again.

[3 : 21] From the depths of the earth you will bring me up again. You will increase my greatness and comfort me again. I will also praise you with the heart for your faithfulness, O my God.

I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O holy one of Israel. My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to you. My soul also, which you have redeemed.

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. Living for God in a godless world is trying and difficult.

As we have all experienced to varying degrees. Seeking righteousness in a world of unrighteousness is also trying and difficult. And sometimes we let doubt creep in.

And we begin to wonder, is this really worth it? Does God really care for me? So why are all these things happening to me? Is God really with me? And this is a familiar struggle that the psalmist

knows well.

[4 : 26] And in Psalm 71, he teaches us that we should continually hope in the righteous God who saves his people and shames his enemies. And he takes us through this psalm in the progression of first prayer in verses 1 to 4.

And then perseverance in verses 5 to 18. And then praise in verses 19 to 24. David begins with his prayer to God in verses 1 to 4. This is Psalm 71.

So he is here being pursued by the wicked, by unjust and cruel men.

And he cries out to God to deliver him and rescue him. And in his prayer, he repeatedly turns to this imagery of God as the rock, refuge and fortress. It's like in war zone, right?

In the initial world, the spears are being hurled in our direction. And arrows are being fired in our direction. And we have no respite. But then we finally arrive at a fortress. And there we find relief and rest and protection.

[5 : 45] And that's the kind of image that he is. And so he prays to God, be to me a rock, a refuge to which I may continually come. And so that's his prayer. And then after his prayer, David expresses his ongoing hope and trust in God by recounting his perseverance of faith.

And so in verses 5 to 6, he says, So the psalmist was privileged, like many of us, to have had a relationship with God from his youth.

And he says that since his youth, he has been trusting God and hoping in him. And in fact, he knows that even before his birth, really he was dependent on God.

It was contingent on God's plan. So he says, Upon you I have leaned from before my birth. You are he who took me from my mother's womb. Even before he was born, even in his mother's womb, he knows that God has been caring for him and protecting him.

And he has not lost his faith, the faith of his youth. And so his praise is continually of God. He continues in verse 7 to 8, I have been as a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.

[7 : 06] The word portent is a little bit ambiguous because it could mean something negative, like an ominous sign, like a warning sign toward people who see him about, so maybe his struggles and God's judgment seems to be upon him.

So he could be saying that. Or it could be a positive sign. It could be an example of God's power, a display of God's might and wondering. So the ESV translates it as a negative sign.

But NIV and NASB take it as a positive sign. I think it's intended to be a positive sign because the psalmist is here talking about his continued faith and hoping God sends his youth.

So this is a time of prosperity and blessing in his life. And the NASB puts it this way. It says, I have become a marvel to many, for you are my strong refuge. Because of God's blessing on him since his youth, he has become a sign of God's favor and wonder and blessing.

And for that reason, he says, My mouth is filled with your praise and with your glory all the day. But as David's getting older, and his fortunes have changed somewhat, and he pleads with God in verses 9 to 12.

[8 : 15] He says, As he gets older and his strength and vigor are waning, his enemies are growing in confidence.

And they are even saying that the psalmist has been forsaken by God. And so the psalmist prays again in 12 to 13, God, be not far from me. God, haste to help me.

May my accusers be put to shame and consumed with scorn and disgrace. May they be covered who seek my hurt. But even in his decline, David hasn't lost his faith. So he reasserts confidently in verses 14 to 18.

Read that with me. He says, So even though his enemies are boasting that David has been abandoned by God, David perseveres in his faith.

Even though circumstances seem otherwise, he perseveres in his faith and says, I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. And that word continually, I've been emphasizing as I read it, occurs three times.

[10 : 03] It's repeated in this psalm. And he talks about how he will continually come to God in verse 3. And his praise is continually of God in verse 6. And now he says, He will hope continually and praise God yet more and more.

And this is encouraging to you. But when you are beset with trials and disappointments in your life, when you can still continue to hope in God and praise Him, like the psalmist, when your circumstances seem hopeless and God appears unworthy of your praise, you can still hope in Him

and still praise Him.

And that's really the meaning of faith. That's the meaning of hope. Paul writes in Romans 8.24, In this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope.

For who hopes for what he sees? This came to mind as I was preparing. I don't know if you guys have seen The Last Jedi, the Star Wars movie, but I didn't actually enjoy the movie that much. But there's a quote by Princess Leah. And she says, Hope is like the sun. If you only believe it when you see it, you will never make it through the night. It's kind of modeled after the Bible verse probably.

[11 : 15] But to believe in spite of the odds, right? To hope without sight, really, that's true hope. And that's what the psalmist is calling us to.

We should continually hope in the righteousness of God, in the righteous God who saves His people and shames His enemies. And the psalmist's hope is not without substance. He says, My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.

And with the mighty deeds of the Lord God I will come. I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone, O God. From my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. And it's because the psalmist has known God since his youth, and because he has numberless accounts of God's righteous acts to remember and recount, he's seen many deeds of God's faithfulness.

And because he has had a relationship with God for a long time, like he was saying, and this is really insightful because that's really one of the benefits of aging, right? Of being in a relationship with God for a long time, is that I look forward to that, right?

I've been a believer for a while now, but I'm still young, and I have a lot of time left, hopefully, Lord willing, if he wants me to live for that long. And if I get to grow old, and the older I get, I will have more memories of God's deliverance in my life.

[12 : 38] And the longer I live, and the longer I have this relationship with the Lord, the more stories of his faithfulness I'll have to be able to share. And that shared history with God is going to ground my trust in him more deeply and firmly.

And that's the source of David's confidence. His perseverance up to this point strengthens his ongoing hope. And he wants to be around to pass on the accounts of God's righteous acts to the next generation.

So that 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. The psalmist is not like a lot of modern people nowadays who just wants to live a long life so they could enjoy things about life, right?

So they'd enjoy a long life, a wonderful life. He wants to live long, not for his own sake, but so that he can pass on this legacy of praise. So that he can proclaim God's power, not merely to his own generation, but to the generation to come.

Because God deserves to be worshipped and praised generation after generation after generation. Let's let that prospect sustain us into our old age, right? Let's be people who long for that deepening of knowledge and relationship with God so that we could have unwavering hope, no matter what circumstance.

[13 : 59] And so that's the second longest point, perseverance. And then in verses 19 to 24, the psalmist expects that God will hear an answer. And in anticipation of God's deliverance, he vows to praise God.

So he says in 19 to 24, read with me. Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you. 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. You will increase my greatness and comfort me again. I will also praise you with the heart for your faithfulness, O my God.

I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O holy one of Israel. My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to you. My soul also which you have redeemed. 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. And note that God actually hasn't answered David's prayer yet, right? He's still in that same situation from which he, out of desperation, prayed to God.

[15 : 05] But even though he hasn't been delivered yet, he anticipates his deliverance. And he says, as if it's already happened, my tongue will take of your righteous help all the day long.

For they, the enemies, they have been put to shame and disappointed who sought to do me hurt. That's assurance. That's faith, right? Assurance of deliverance and salvation. He trusts that God will come through for him and deliver him.

And there will come a day for us as well when our faith will turn to sight. But there will come a day for us when our prayers will turn to praise. And do you live for that day?

Because that day is definitely coming. And we can count on that day because of God's righteousness. Five times throughout this psalm, David appeals to God's righteousness.

That's the reason why David has confidence and hope. And because it's the righteousness of God refers to the commitment of God to justice, to do right, to fulfill his promises.

[16 : 05] And it's that righteousness of God that's the ground of Christian hope. The wicked will not prevail in the end. The righteous will be vindicated in the end because God is righteous.

And even though not all of us have had the length of life behind us like the psalmist, who has had countless experiences of God's righteous deeds to remember, but all of us have experienced God's righteousness.

And that should fill us with unwavering hope. And the ultimate righteousness that we experience is demonstrated in Christ. In Romans 3, 23, 26, it says, All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift.

Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Christ. Christ's death on the cross demonstrated God's righteousness and justice because it was unjust of God to spare the wicked as he has done in generations past, which included even God's people who did wrong and sinned against God.

[17 : 21] It was unjust of God to pass over their sins. So when finally God's justice was meted out in its fullness on God's Son, Jesus Christ, God showed that his mercy on the one hand and his justice on the other can coexist.

The cross shows us that God will on the one hand not turn a blind eye to sin, but then it also shows us that God will be merciful to sinners who turn to him, that God is both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ.

So that's why the cross of Jesus Christ reveals God's righteousness in the supreme way. And that's why as those who have put our faith in Christ, we can continually hope in the righteous God who saves people and shames his enemies.

And finally, in verse 20, it's kind of a climax of the psalm, where David expresses his faith in God's deliverance in terms of, in the language of death and resurrection.

He says, 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.

[18 : 22] Right. This figurative language of death and being raised from the depths of the earth is, was literally fulfilled in Christ. Right. Who died for our sins, was buried, and was raised to life because he was the sinless son of God that death had the power over.

And as those people, as Christians who have put our faith in Jesus for our salvation, we are united to Christ's death and resurrection by faith. And that's the substance of our faith.

And love how it says again and again in these verses, God will revive me again. God will bring me up again. When you feel, you face disappointment after disappointment, trouble after trouble.

When you feel like you're swamped in sin, you're drowning in your own unrighteousness. In all of those struggles, in all of those difficulties, you can remember that God will revive you again.

That God will bring you up again. Because he will ultimately raise us from the dead, like he raised Christ for ultimate salvation, union with him. And that's the substance of our hope.

[19 : 26] So with that, let's sing a song in response and pray together.