

The Faithful Focus

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[0 : 00] Psalm 71. And over the next few weeks I hope to make our way through Psalm 71. Tonight we'll give our attention to the first section up to verse mark 11.

Psalm 71 is a special psalm to many of us. I appreciate it as we read through it there. The words are solemn. The words are thoughtful.

And it is thought provoking for us to come and read and consider what the psalmist is saying in it. As we read through it we can pick up that the psalmist experiences this vicious attack from the devil.

The psalmist is in this most difficult of places. And he feels like he is also vulnerable. And yet as we go through it and we follow with his experience we find glimpses where he has joy.

And he praises the God and his Lord. And as we look through this psalm together there is faith that undergirds it.

[1 : 10] There is his own faith and trust in his Lord. And there is the Lord's faithfulness to his people and to the psalmist. Now this psalm it is debated whether David wrote it.

David wrote the majority of the psalms. But I don't think they are not too sure whether this is entirely his work. There are parts from it. From other psalms in its construction.

But regardless of who wrote it. While we read through it we can understand that it is an elderly person that is writing it. Or someone who is in old age.

If you go to verse 9. It says there do not cast me off in the time of old age. If you go to verse 18. It is more of that. So even to old age and grey hair.

O God do not forsake me. This believer. Psalmist. Writer. He has walked the narrow path.

[2 : 11] He has followed the Christian way for many years. But if you look at the title of the psalm. If you have the ESV version. It will have a title to it. It says forsake me not when my strength is spent.

The psalmist. All his strength has gone. There is nothing left to give. He is running on empty.

As it were. The faithful believer is facing the greatest trials. And afflictions of his life. And personal battles. And through this psalm.

We are led into his experience. Of what he is going through. When he is just holding on. When he says. I am beat. But I am still.

Holding on. To my Lord. He still has faith. In his Lord. And this is a. Great lament. Of the psalmist.

[3 : 11] He cries out to God. With the sorrows of his soul. And we can imagine. Like a crying child. They cry out. It is as simple as this.

Mommy or daddy. They make that cry. And. No one else will do. Until they are comforted. By. Their mother. Or their father.

Until they feel that hand. Until they hear. That voice. Comforting it. And as we go through our lives. We are faced with. So many different challenges.

And afflictions. Tribulations. That's a reality. Of our lives. And we. Often cry. To God.

Because we don't know what to do. Cry in the anguish. Of our souls. And we turn. Like the psalmist here. Oh Lord. And. I would be a fool.

[4 : 06] If I was. To say that. If you became a Christian. Or if you are a Christian. Your. Your life will be. Without tests. And trials. That would be a lie. For often the Christian.

Is afflicted. In. Many. And. Greater ways. As. Those who do not believe. In the Lord. But they have. Someone to go with them. Through it. And to lead them through it. They have the good shepherd.

To guide them through it. Even if it is the valley. Of the shadow of death. There are times.

In our lives. When we. We make that great call. Heavenward. To our Lord. And our God. But there are times also. Where we confess. That we. We don't make that call.

And we. We search for other. Comforters. Which fail us. And as we. Look at the psalm. And generally. As you study the psalms.

[5 : 01] And look through them. They say that the main point. Is within the middle of the psalm. The central idea. Is found. In the middle. And you look at psalm 71.

You have a. Distinct section there. From verse mark 12. To verse mark 16. On either side. Are small. Two. Smaller. Paragraphs.

So. From verse 12. To 16. It's the center. Of the psalm. And if you go to the center. Of the center. Of that section. At verse 14.

It says. But I will hope. Continually. And will praise you. Yet. More and more. The psalmist. Faith. Continuing. With. His Lord. And his God. Regardless. Of what the situation is. Of the experience. Of his life. Regardless. Of how he feels.

[5 : 56] He is. Holding on. To his. Only hope. And his. Only trust. To go. With God. So. As we consider this.

Short section. Here. Down to verse mark 11. There's. Three. Distinct. Focuses. That the psalmist. Has. He. He. Firstly. Has a focus.

On God. He looks. Towards God. And rightly so. Second look. That he has. Is he. He looks. He looks. At himself. He looks. Inwardly. At himself.

And he also. Has a look. Outwardly. At those. Who are around him. And the situation. That he is in. And. Elements of that. Overlap.

Throughout the psalm. But hopefully. You can. You can. Grasp. These ideas. The three. The three looks. That he has. Looks to God. He looks. Within himself. And he looks.

[6 : 51] Around. At the. Situation. That he is in. And. We'll give. Most of our attention. To the most important. Of those looks. And that is. The look that he has. To his God.

And. To his Lord. As we look. At the beginning. Of the psalm. Straight away. His focus. Is. In that direction. In you.

Oh Lord. I do. Take refuge. And you can. Feel. The pleading. Of the psalmist. Beginning. There. His cry.

Oh Lord. That. His Lord. Is his refuge. In the time. That he is experiencing. There is no other. Safety for him.

There is no other. Refuge for him. There is no other. Shelter for him. To go to. Where he will find. Protection. But in his. Lord. I look. To you Lord. You are the one.

[7 : 47] That will keep me. The keeper. Of my soul. I too. The Lord. Will look. For aid. As we sung. In Psalm. One.

Two. One. He's got that. Look. Heavenward. To the Lord. That will hold him. And it says. In verse. One. Let me never.

Be put. To shame. So that he will have. No shame. In that cry. As he looks. Heavenly. Heavenward. To God.

There's no shame. In his hope. In his weight. In his trust. In this Lord. In this God. Other translations. Will have this.

That he. That he. Would never. Be put. To confusion. Rather than shame. That he would never be. Completely. Bewildered. As it were. He pleads.

[8 : 42] That his Lord. Would ever. Be faithful. To him. And his refuge. In him. And his trust. In him. Would not be shattered. Or brought. Into question. You can imagine.

If you were to. Set up a business. You'd have all your hopes. In this business. And you would make your plans. For this business. And you would have your ideas. And you would put it into motion.

You'd have shared this with people. And people would have seen you. Trying. To form this business. Set it up. Get it running. Employ people. And on paper.

It all looks like it'll work. And you've put everything into it. All your hopes. Are in this business. But then it falls flat. In its face. The business fails.

And fails you. You have an element of shame. For having trusted. In your plans. Having trusted. In this business. You have an element of confusion. Because you can't figure out.

[9 : 38] What went wrong on paper. It should have worked. But it didn't. The shame and confusion. In these things. But business.

Is so uncertain. The psalmist. The psalmist. Is crying. To his lord. Who is certain. So that he would not. Be put to shame. He's trusting.

In his lord. That when he. Expresses his hope. And trust. It will not fail. Because the lord. Will never fail.

His people. And he knows. He will never be put to shame. By trusting. By trusting. By trusting. In his lord. Now as I said.

Confusion may. Leave us with questions. And. We can't say that. If we come to. The lord. And we cry to the lord. That we'll never have. Questions.

[10:33] We'll never. Be left. Bewildered at times. At what. At what. The lord is doing. There's. Situations. That leave us. Confused. And.

Although the situation. Leaves us confused. Our hope. And our faith. Should never have.

Confusion. We look to god. Our faith. Is in the god. Who has.

Decreed all things. That he works. All things. For good. Mysteriously. That's beyond. Our understanding. Beyond what we can.

Grasp. But our faith. Is to. Trust. In that god. Who works. All things. For good. To have faith. In that god.

Who will not. Put us to shame. And not leave us. Confused. Because he has. Foreordained. All things. Our lord.

[11:29] Will not. Fail us. And though. There are days. Where it may feel like shame. And the honesty of our hearts. For trusting in the lord. When we go out.

And live. And live. A Christian life. In this world. There may be an element. Of shame. Because we don't have the answers. We like. To give people. We don't.

Feel. Like god. Like god. So close to us. As we would desire. But. The lord. Will not.

Fail us. The lord. Who works. All things for good. All things for good. In his time. Will not bring shame. To the people. Who trust in him.

The lord. Will honor. His people in time. Who are faithful. To him. And trust in him. And with this. Focus.

[12:25] On god. That the psalmist has. He looks towards. This. His lord. And he.

It's almost as if he can't help. But feel. His own failures. As we come before the holiness of god. And we see god. Clear. And we look upon him.

I say I confessed. When he saw god. I am a man of unclean lips. He sees his own failures. And we acknowledge them. As we come. We confess our sins.

To our lord. The psalmist knows. That. There's no goodness. Of him. Worth rescue. In your righteousness. Deliver me. And rescue me.

In your righteousness. The lord. Who is righteous. In all things. And he looks at himself. And he says. I am so unrighteous.

[13:25] I do not deserve. To be rescued. But. I hold fast. To you. My lord. And you. Know.

That I have not. Chased after other gods. You know. I have held fast. To your word. And I've been faithful. To you. And in. Your righteousness.

Deliver. Me. Hear. Hear. My cry. Incline. Your ear. To me.

And save. Me. Me. He knew. As he. He looks himself. His. Sins leave him.

Staying. Before his god. And he wants god. To hear. The. Sorrows.

[14:20] Of his soul. The anxieties. Of his soul. Incline. Your ear. To hear. Me. And save. Me. Remember.

The psalmist. It is. All his strength. Is gone. He's got nothing. Left to give. He knows. He's got nothing. Worth. Rescue.

Being. Of himself. And he's calling. Out to god. Lord. In your. Righteousness. Rescue. Me. Hear. Me. And climb.

Your ear. To hear. The agonies. Of my heart. And save. Me. And it's often. Like that. When we are. So perplexed.

At times. We don't have. The answers. It is often. Just that. Short. And effective. Prayer. That says. Save. And it's a prayer.

[15:14] That I'm sure. Many of us. Have prayed. In years. Gone by. And often. A prayer. That comes back. To us. At difficult times. In our lives. We don't know what to say.

There's no words. To express it. But just. Oh Lord. Save me. We run. To our Lord. We call on him. And there's a beautiful.

Version. Isaiah. 58. Verse 9. Thou shalt cry. And he shalt say. Here I am. Thou shalt cry.

And he shall say. Here. I am. The Lord. The Lord. Who hears. The cries. Of his people. And saves them.

He hears that cry. Of salvation. And the psalmist. Has his salvation. Founded. In his Lord. In verse 3. Be a rock.

[16:08] Of refuge. To which I may. Continually come. You have given. The command. To save me. You are.

My rock. And my refuge. This place is. Immovable. It is like this. Huge. Rock. That he can come. And.

Clamber. Under. And every time. He comes. To that place. He will find. Safety. Security. It is a. Impenetrable. Wall.

Of defense. A fortress. To him. That he can come. To this place. And know. That it is a place. Where it's. Does not change.

It is sure. It is strong. And it will always. Be there. But the assurance. He has. In coming. To this place. Is found. In God's word.

[17:02] He continues. To come. You have given. The command. To save me. See. He finds. His assurance. In God's word.

He's reasoned. He's calling on his God. And he comes back. To God's word. And what the Lord. Has commanded. You have given. The command. To save me.

And when God. Speaks. A command. It is. Equates. To a promise. What the Lord. Says. What he speaks. And it shall come. To be. And whoever.

Shall call. Upon the name. Of the Lord. Shall be saved. A. W. Pink. Says. It is. Because. God. Has promised.

A certain. Thing. That we can. Ask. Of them. With full assurance. Of faith. It is. Because. God. Has promised. A certain. Thing. In his word. The promises.

[18:00] Are there. That we can. Ask. Of them. With full assurance. Of faith. We can. Ask. Of these. Things. That are. In his word. That if he. Shall save you. And you call upon him.

From the depths. Of your heart. He will hear you. And answer you. And we have. Find the assurance. In his given. Commandments.

Given. To us. That he will save us. And hear us. When we. Cry out. To him. But our.

Rock. And our. Refuge. Is the Lord. Jesus Christ. He is the one. That we. Come to. And cry to. He is the one. That takes out.

Prayers. And hears. He is the one. That died on the cross. For us. He is the one. That bore. Our. Shame. He took.

[18:56] All. Of our. Shame. So that we would be. Honored. By God. He is the one. Who bore. All. Our. Unrighteousness. So that we.

Would be. Righteous. He is the one. Who bore. The wrath. Of God. So that we. May be. Saved. The Lord.

Jesus Christ. Is a refuge. On a rock. In a day. Of trouble. He is a fortress. Of protection. Against us. That we.

Must continually. Come to. And be guarded. By. The schemes. Of the devil. And his attacks. The Lord. Jesus Christ. Is the one.

When we call out. To him. To save us. He will answer that. And he. Will save. The one. Who calls. To him. It is promised.

[19:50] Of the word. That those. Who call upon him. Shall be saved. And he. Who has promised. Is faithful. Our Lord.

Our Lord. Is faithful. To us. And we. Come. To him. Year. After year. As the. Psalmist.

Here. As an elderly person. Is looking. Back. The years. Come. And the years. Go. but we constantly come to the word as well we come back to the word of god for our encouragement for our assurance for every step that we take into the days that are unknown we don't know what lies ahead of us and there are many days where we will cry out oh lord hear me answer me are you there to listen to my cry and we come back to this word we find his assurances and his promises as a comfort to us as a reminder that he is there as a rock and refuge and that he is protecting us the faith that has matured over years does not easily let go in the time of trouble it holds on and holds on fast whether we are whether we are young or old here it's good to remind ourselves to hold on to god and to keep looking to him whatever situation we are in to keep coming back to his word and be

reminded of what it says to us and how it guides us and shows us who the god is that we are looking at the psalmist here he looks to god but he also looks to himself verse 4 almost introduces this transition rescue me oh my god we have that call of heavenward again from the hand of the wicked and then he comes down from this vertical look almost to this horizontal look to those that are around him those that are surrounding him the situation that he is in the hand of the wicked from the grasp of the cruel and the unjust man it's almost as if he is in this hand that has overpowered him he feels so vulnerable and helpless all his strength has gone he's in this hand of the evil one it almost feels like he's been controlled by this hand and maybe he's asking himself is this where the believer belongs is this where i'm meant to be no he knows that is not where he will be he seeks to be rescued and he cries out to be rescued from that place he knows that's not this natural place and he cries out to be rescued the god that hears him will not abandon him for whatever reason he's in that hand he cries out to god and the hand that holds him as the evil hand is weak before god for the lord's hand is a mighty hand it's a strong hand and if you look at this the one that has fallen into this hand of the evil one for whatever reason it speaks of job six job's experience it's it's kind of written over this experience of the psalmist as well but his faith just wouldn't let go all his strength is spent all his resources has been taken from him he's got nothing absolutely nothing he's on empty he's holding on to god others are coming and telling him curse god and die abandon god but what was job's cry i know that my redeemer lives he knew that his rescuer was there to hear his prayer and in time would save him

he looks to god he looks within himself and he has this personal declaration in verse 5 for you oh lord are my hope my trust oh lord from my youth upon you i have leaned from before my birth casting his mind back over the years of his experience his hope and trust has always been in this lord even from his youth but he extends that look even to his birth keeps going back and it says there upon you i leaned from before my birth now that kind of implies that he made some sort of conscious decision to rely upon god or to trust on god but if you took the king james version maybe the translation here isn't so clear the king james version says by thee i have been hold holding up in the womb by thee i have been upheld in the womb so he looks back to all the way back to his birth and he says well even there oh lord you kept me you upheld me you chose to keep me even in that moment god in his grace chose him first god in his grace loved him first god in his grace protected him even when he knew nothing of god as he did for even when we didn't have any word of god god in his grace was looking out over us and when the psalmist here is recalling these things he's thinking of himself that baby in the most vulnerable of situations where there's no word of god can't do anything for himself so weak and fragile completely reliant on another he thinks well you kept me then and when all his strength is spent in the day where he has no strength where he cannot do anything for himself and he feels like he is so vulnerable as a child that can do nothing he looks to the lord who will keep him who trusts in him and has faith in him when he looks to himself he sees that great hand of god the greater hand of power than all the powers of the evil and of this world at work the one who has decreed all things he who is there in that day and he who is with me even to this day and this is true of the christian today that the lord is there with him and at the end of verse 6 when he considers all these things even in the turmoil that he is in he says my praise is continually of you he looks to himself and he's immediately directed back heavenward to the lord who is faithful to him he has kept him he has not left him he has been with him through his youth through his life even to this day to other people he is a wonder it says in verse 7

I have been a portent to many that means just we know the Psalter version more more familiar with us I have been a wonder to many that's just what that word means I have been a wonder to many maybe he looks back on his experience and people people that he knew maybe have wondered at him for having trusted in the lord in these days of turmoil where other people are questioning why are you why are you still trusting in that lord what can he do for you but he does not let go the lord has not let him down even though he may have walked away he may have walked in a different direction but he comes back to god and this may be a cause of wonder to many but they go out to the world looking for other comforters they come back to their lord and their god they realise the foolishness of their way like the prodigal son that went out on his own way returned to his father his father welcomed him the behaviour of the christian the world doesn't get it the world left baffled and wondered why you would act in such a way the faithfulness of the christian should be the same that we trust in god every day every step we read our bible and are guided by it and the world just look at you and wonder what is he doing they don't grasp it and it is only by the power of the spirit that has been at work within us do we ever understand we look at ourselves at times but not for too long

like shane said every look at yourself have ten looks at christ when we look at ourselves for too long there is kind of every reason that why would the lord save us why would the lord love us we see so much of ourselves it is so sinful but the lord jesus christ will never leave thee or forsake thee we look back at god's faithfulness and the faith that he has worked in us over the years we ourselves can be at times in awe of what he has done the psalmist mouth is filled with your praise and with your glory all the day long all day the psalmist's mind is on his lord but then we see this on element of doubt in verse 9 do not cast me off in the time of old age forsake me not when my strength is spent you know there's people in our lives and we may think of elderly christians witnesses and we may look at them and we think they're so strong and yet it's probably true that they equally have their own doubts this person this psalmist on the outward to the world he probably looks so strong and so faithful and yet he there's an element of doubt coming in which is true of ourselves as well there's times where we doubt that god would hear our cry we doubt that god will go with us we doubt that god would keep us do not cast me off in the time of old age forsake me not when my strength is spent and we look at ourselves we must only do so briefly we come back to the word of god we see

[31 : 50] our lord we see our rock we see a god that does not leave us nor forsake us even when we feel like he should you'll always remain with us and be constantly faithful to the people that trust in him so the psalmist of psalm 71 who is of old age looking back afflicted his strength is spent the attack of the enemies come there in verse 10 and 11 they're chasing him they're almost as if they're pursuing him to catch him to trap him but we know he is not left there we know that the psalmist even in this situation he lifts his eyes heavenward to god and he finds himself praising god all the day long for the lord's faithfulness in every step every year every day we come to the beginning of our new year and what does the lord ask for of his people that they would be faithful but to be faithful is maybe one of the hardest things of our lives as

Christians it is hard to be constantly faithful and to be obedient to what he asks of us but we must be that is what forms a Christian our faith that is our identity our faith in Jesus Christ what is it that Christ asks for on the day of judgment not that you understood your bible you knew everything you didn't you weren't anxious you weren't in turmoil so you can enter heaven good and faithful servant the servants of the lord who hold fast to his word cling to his promises and do not let go even when all their strength is spent when the tank is empty maybe you feel like that's the beginning of a new year maybe you feel like you feel so dry come back to God cry out to him oh lord rescue me oh lord hear my prayer oh lord save me we turn to him we look back over the years and may we lift our heads and voices heavenward prayerfully praising our lord who is faithful to those who are faithful the lord will never leave his people nor forsake them may these thoughts be blessed to us this evening we'll conclude by singing and sun joy of a verse and extend to them for and let's say well that's this evening and do to tab out and say how to instead of