

Psalm 71: 1-24; “Praying to God in Old Age”, A message prepared for those gathered at the Carrington Place Nursing Home to hear it; Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on January 15th, 2012 in the afternoon.

The trials and difficulties of getting older cannot be sufficiently understood until one gets there. It does not get any easier the older that you get. However those of us who are Christians should anticipate that time and so learn how to pray to God, that we might have the full assurance that we know God and belong to God, and that He will be our helper all the way to heaven. Those who are not sure that they are Christians should listen and I will preach to you the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which, if believed, will give you good hope and eternal comfort all of your days. And, you will find that believing in Christ will lead you to see where you can find true inner strength to face every trial and difficulty in your life. Engaging in prayer to God is the way to find God becoming your helper in everything. The Bible says, pray without ceasing. Jesus says, “men ought always to pray, and not lose heart.” But some times are harder than others. So listen to me this afternoon while I speak to you about praying to find God’s help in our most difficult hours. Here are 5 things to remember. 1st of all – Pray in faith (Verses 1-5) 2^{ndly} – Pray with praise upon your lips, remembering what God has done for you. (Verses 6-8) 3rd – Pray and tell him what is on your heart; especially your fears and the difficult situations that you are facing. (Verses 9-13) 4th - Pray and tell Him your hopes for the future. (Verses 14-18) 5th – Pray with the certainty of what God can, and what He will do for you, and what you will do for Him. (Verses 19-22)

So, 1st of all – Learn to Pray to God in Faith (verses 1-5)

“In you O Lord I put my trust, let me never be put to shame.” “Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline Your ear to me, and save.” “Be my strong refuge, to which I may resort continually.” “You have given commandment to save me.” “For You are my rock and my fortress.” Notice that this is the first thing out of David’s mouth. He declares his faith and trust are in God. This is surely how to learn to pray. As it says in Hebrews 11: 6 – “He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” There are great rewards; there are great blessings, and there is the sweet assurance which comes to us from the Scriptures that if we seek God, that we shall find Him when we search for Him with all of our heart. David knew this by experience. Do you? But David had been driven out of his own home and palace at Jerusalem by his son Absalom. That is the context of his writing of these verses. He had no certain dwelling place but the fields and caves, and so he asked God to be his strong habitation; his strong refuge to which he might continually resort. You who are here today have also been led to leave, or you were forced to leave your comfortable homes to come to live at the nursing home here. And

perhaps this has really worked for your good. You are thankful for the staff and the care that you are getting and yet you might rather be back where you were before. Perhaps, however, it has not worked out as you thought it might. I do not know how you think about it, but I do know that whenever you are in such circumstances, of being in a place which is unfamiliar or difficult, that you should pray to God in faith and declare to Him that He is your strong refuge, your habitation to which you would continually resort. Declare to Him in prayer that He is your Rock and your fortress; the sure dwelling place where your heart resorts and finds rest even in the most trying of times. Truly the reality of seeing God in this way only comes by faith, and only when we learn to pray by faith in Him, will we fully realize it. Have you ever prayed to be saved from your sins and to be given the free gift of eternal life? This is where we really find that God draws near to us, if we never have before. When we call upon His name, believing that Jesus' work on the cross is the only basis of our being heard by God in prayer, then God answers us. When we do this, we will never be put to shame. God Himself hears the prayers of the one who comes to Him through Jesus. "Rock of Ages, cleft for me; let me hide myself in Thee; let the water and the blood from Thy wounded side which flowed; be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure." Once you begin by faith in this way; then God gives command to save you from your sins, and to deliver your life from all distress. "I sought the Lord and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." (Psalm 34: 4) The Psalmist says in verse 5 – "For you are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth." This is something to rejoice in; if you have known the Lord from your youth. But even if you have not, you can still begin now by faith in Jesus.

2ndly- Pray with praise upon your lips, remembering what God has done for you.

(Verses 6-8)

"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." "I have become as a wonder to many, but You are my strong refuge." "Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your glory all the day." Let me ask you, when you pray, if you praise the Lord? Are you determined, that by grace, that your praise will be continually of God? You may have become a wonder to many because of the difficult and unusual circumstances that you find yourself in. You may have never dreamed that you could become so physically weak, or emotionally weak; and yet, you still praise God. Oh how this glorifies His name. Most people around you, who are younger, do not understand what it means to grow old. They do not. But you can show them the way to eternal and everlasting life. And you can show them the meaning of life. It is found in praising God for the wonderful works that He has done, and is doing, for you. He has upheld you from your birth; He is upholding you now even amidst your great weakness. He is the strength of your physical body; but more importantly, He is the strength of your eternal soul. O

praise Him that it is so. Let your mouth be filled with His praise and with His glory all the day.

3rd - Pray and tell him what is on your heart; especially your fears and the difficult situations that you are facing. (Verses 9-13)

“Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails.” “For my enemies speak against me; and those who lie in wait for my life take counsel together...” Now this is a common fear; even of those who know the Lord, that God might not be with them as they grow older. And perhaps they also have people around them who they think are against them; those who are speaking against them in some way, and so they are fearful and anxious about it. What is to be done? Well, what is to be done is to pray and tell the Lord what is on your heart. Tell the Lord your concerns; that you are worried that somehow He might forsake you when your strength fails. Tell Him of the people who may be speaking against you, and who seem not to have your true interests at heart. And then pray the prayer of verse 12 – “O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me.” God hears the cries of the poor and needy and him who has no helper, when they are brought to Him in the name of Jesus.

4th - Pray and tell Him your hopes for the future. (Verses 14-18)

“But I will hope continually, and will praise You yet more and more.” “My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits.” “I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.” Your hope for the future ought to be, if it is not now, that you would be able to declare God’s strength to this generation; God’s power to everyone who is to come. You will say to me, how can I do this when I am so very weak physically. Well let me tell you about the experience of the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul was a man who was given very great visions and revelations from God. He might have had a tendency to boast in such things, except that God taught Him how he should view things related to himself. In 2 Corinthians 12: 7 he says, “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.” “Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.” “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’” “Therefore most gladly I will boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake.” “For when I am weak, then I am strong.” Paul had learned this very important lesson which is linked to faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ is different from self-determination and self-sufficiency. Faith in Jesus Christ trusts in, and draws on His righteousness and His strength. This is how you come to know God in the first place; you realize that you cannot save yourself from your sins; and you realize that you do not have the strength to do and keep God’s commandments. And you place your faith in Jesus,

whose righteousness is perfect because He did do and keep God's commandments perfectly. God imputes that righteousness to you when you believe. And His Spirit comes into your heart. And with the gift of the Holy Spirit, you receive the needed strength to go on to learn by Christ's grace what God would have you to learn in connection with the truth of the Bible in this life. Sometimes when we pray we do not receive the answer to our prayers to remove "the thorn in the flesh" that we have. Our physical complaints become more instead of less. But God says to us, when we are in that situation, "My grace is sufficient for you; My power is perfected in your weakness." Trust in me and I will give you the grace and the strength to go on. This is one of the most important reasons that Christ died; only in the Lord are righteousness and strength. But tell the Lord what your greatest hopes for your future are. If they are related to declaring His strength to this generation, He will consider them carefully and give you grace and strength proportionate to your hope of bringing glory to His name. But remember, no matter what your physical condition is, that your faith in Christ will do you good, bring you comfort, and save your soul. Hold fast to Christ.

And then finally and 5thly – Pray with the certainty of what God can, and what He will do for you, and what you will do for Him. (Verses 19-22)

"Also Your righteousness, O God, is very high, You who have done great things; O God, who is like You?" "You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth." "You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side." This is what God was going to do for David. Even though he had seen great and severe troubles, God would revive him again. He would help him to come back from the trials which had come to his kingdom and His personal reign and re-establish his greatness and comfort him on every side. But the words also speak of what the Lord will do for every one who believes in Jesus. Yes, each of us will die if Jesus does not come back first, but God will again bring us up from the depths of the earth; raise us from the dead and increase our greatness and comfort us on every side. Pray to Him with that certainty of what He will do. And then also tell him what you will do for Him. You will sing to Him and praise Him for all of these good things. You will worship Him forever, and be thankful to Him forever. Praise Him this afternoon that God has given you your life and praise Him for His great salvation which is found by faith in Jesus Christ.