

Psalm 71: David's Evangelism in the Midst of Persecution and Old Age

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John Piper has spoken about how “retirement” is a word that is not in his vocabulary. I believe I recall him saying that if his wife were to die first, that he would go to some place that is very hostile to the gospel and begin preaching there, and leave the results to God- whether by death or by life- his desire, to glorify God till his last breath.

In Psalm 71, David speaks of how God was there from his birth

“For You are my hope, O Lord GOD; *You are* my trust **from my youth**. 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.” (v. 5-6)

David also trusts the Lord will help him to never be put to shame- even in his old age

“Do not cast me off in the time of *old age*, do not forsake me when my *strength fails*.” (v. 9)

His burden was to be an evangelist to the next generation, telling everyone of the glories of God and His salvation. He proclaimed:

“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.

O God, You have taught me from my youth; and **to this day I declare Your wondrous works.**

Now also when *I am* old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, **Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.**

Also Your **righteousness**, O God, *is* very high, You who have done great things; O God, who *is* like You? (v 14-19)

David wanted to be the evangelist until his dying day. From youth he had come to know the Lord and proclaim Him- His glory, His righteousness, His salvation- and David pleaded with the Lord that he would have sufficient courage and strength, fortitude and endurance to continue to be the evangelist of the Lord till his dying day. This evangelist's zeal of proclamation of the good news in *verses 14-19* is sandwiched between intense persecution from those who sought his life in the midst of David's frailty in old age:

v. 10-13: “my enemies speak against me; and those who lie in wait for my life take counsel together, saying, “God has forsaken him...there is none to deliver *him*”...Let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonor who seek my hurt.”

“*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.” (v. 20-21)

David ends the psalm in praise and renewed zeal to tell the next generation about the Lord!

“Also with the lute I will praise You--*and* Your faithfulness, O my God! To You I will sing with the harp, O Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, and my soul, which You have redeemed. **My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long;**

For they are confounded, for they are brought to shame who seek my hurt.” (v. 22ff)

The older I get, gradually the weaker this body becomes. I pray my soul, and the fire of an evangelist not wane with waning physical strength. May I preach with zeal till my dying day! May I not say to the Lord, “I don't want to go out fishing for souls this evening, I'm tired!” May my heart be set on my Alpha and my Omega, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One who has imputed His righteousness to me! May I never forget I was bought at the precious price of the blood of the Son of God! May I not listen to the whisperings of the devil, who is a liar, who says the older I get, the less the youth will want to hear me. Repeatedly He has shown me that the gospel has no age barriers (indeed no

barriers of any other kind as well)- the youth will listen to the aged! His Word will not return void, but accomplish the purposes it was sent for.