

GROWING OLDER

Text: Psalms 71

A senior citizen began her poetic letter to an old friend with these words:

*Just a line to say I'm living, that I'm not among the dead;
Though I'm getting more forgetful, and mixed up in my head,
I got used to my arthritis, to my dentures I'm resigned;
I can manage my bifocals, but I sure do miss my mind.*

Of course, such self-deprecating humor shows the writer actually possesses a very sharp wit, and is not in the least mentally diminished.

Yet, the writer of this Psalm is not enjoying life as his biological clock winds down. We know that he is elderly because he talks about his waning strength and gray hair in verses 9 and 18. Things aren't easy. Otherwise, why would he ask for rescue and deliverance (vv. 2-4), or feel peril from his adversaries (vv.10-13), or indicate his troubles are many and bitter—that he is in “the depths of the earth” (v. 20)?

There are several *assurances* that he relies on during these difficult times.

I. HE RELIES ON A LIFETIME OF EXPERIENCE (vv. 1-13).

A. He knows that the Lord's care can be depended on (v. 6).

■ Verse 6 reads, “From birth I have relied on you...” (NIV)

B. Life hasn't gotten easier but the Lord is always there.

■ I remember watching a father play with his little boy, repeatedly throwing him in the air and catching him just before he hit the ground. The child is relaxed and having a great time saying, "Do it again! Do it again!"

I thought, If that was me, I'd be stiff as a board .

"Can you explain why he's so relaxed, even when he's out of control?" I asked the father.

"It's very simple," he said. "We have a history together. We've played this game before, and I've never dropped him."

-- Rod Cooper, "Worship or Worry?" Preaching Today, Tape No. 108.

II. HE RELIES ON A DEEPER CONFIDENCE (vv. 14-18).

A. A lifetime of perspective has built up his confidence in God.

■ Notice verse 14 "But as for me, I will always have hope." (NIV)

■ Someone wrote, "Hope stands up to its knees in the past and keeps its eyes on the future. There has never been a time past when God wasn't with us as the strength beyond our strength, the wisdom beyond our wisdom."

-- Frederick Buechner, Christian Reader, Vol. 35, no. 2.

B. He wants his life to be a witness to his children and grandchildren of the power of God.

■ In verse 18 he says, "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, *till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come.*" (NIV) Italics added

III. HE RELIES ON A POSITIVE OUTLOOK (vv. 19-24).

A. He looks to the future with great hope.

■ Look in verses 19-21 the Psalmist writes, “Who, O God, is like you?...*you will restore* my life again; from the depths of the earth *you will again bring me up*. *You will increase* my honor *and comfort* me once again. (NIV) Italics added

B. In spite of all life’s hardships, he chooses to worship.

■ Notice verses 22-24, “*I will praise you* with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; *I will sing praise to you* with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel. *My lips will shout* for joy when I sing praise to you—I, whom you have redeemed. *My tongue will tell* of your righteous acts all day long, for those who wanted to harm me have been put to shame and confusion.” (NIV)

CONCLUSION

■ In *The Cure for a Troubled Heart* author and pastor Ron Mehl writes:

I heard once about a dear, saintly old woman who was gradually losing her memory. Details began to blur...Throughout her life, however, this woman had cherished and depended on the Word of God committing to memory many verses from her worn King James Bible.

Her favorite verse had always been 2 Timothy 1:12: “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

She was finally confined to bed in a nursing home, and her family knew she would never leave alive. As they visited with her, she would still quote verses of scripture on occasion—especially 2 Timothy 1:12. But with the passing of time, even parts of this well-loved verse began to slip away.

“I know whom I have believed,” she would say. He is able to keep... what I have committed...to him.”

Her voice grew weaker. And the verse became even shorter. “What I have committed...to him.”

As she was dying, her voice became so faint that family members had to bend over to listen to the few whispered words on her lips. And at the end, there was only one word of her life verse left.

“Him.”

She whispered it again and again as she stood on the threshold of heaven. “Him...Him...Him.”

It was all that was left. It was all that was needed.

(Larson, 149)

The Longer I Serve Him

The longer I serve Him
The sweeter He grows
The more that I love Him
The more joy He bestows
Each day is like Heaven
My heart overflows
The longer I serve Him
The sweeter He grows

*Adapted from *A Psalm in Your Heart* by George O. Wood pp. 285-88