

# An Aged Saints Covenantal Request

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**Bible Text:** Psalm 71:17,18

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## **Loveland Protestant Reformed Church**

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We read God's Word this morning from Psalm 71. I will read the entire psalm. The text this morning is verses 17 and 18.

Psalm 71.

In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee. I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee! Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou

shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side. I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.<sup>1</sup>

We read God's Word to that point.

This morning the text is verses 17 and 18 of Psalm 71.

O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.<sup>2</sup>

Beloved of God, most believe that Psalm 71 was written by David by inspiration. Although there is no reference to David explicitly in the psalm and no title to Psalm 71 that states that he was the author. Most believe that he wrote it, because the author of the psalm is obviously an older man reflecting back on his life. And this one is also in a position where there are people around him seeking to hurt him and persecute him and possibly even to take his life and that fits with David as an older man. So most have said this is a psalm of David and I am going to assume that that is the truth as well in this sermon this morning.

King David of Israel is pondering his life in Psalm 71. He is thinking back on the trials that he has been through. He is remembering the salvation that God has granted to him and he is thinking of God's faithfulness to him from his birth all the way to his old age. But all of these thoughts, all of these reflections lead David to make a request that God be with him in his old age, but also that God grant him life yet on the earth for a while longer. David does not want to die yet in Psalm 71. For there is something that is a burden to him. He feels that there is something he must complete before he ends his time upon the earth. And it is that burden that provides the content of the sermon this morning as we take up the text under the theme: An aged saint's covenantal request.

Let's notice, first, what that request is; second, the motivation for it; and then, third, the goal for requesting it. An aged saint's covenant request: the request, the motivation, the goal.

In verse 18 of Psalm 71 David asks God to not let him die yet.

“Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 71:1-24.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 71:17-18.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 71:18.

Forsake me not here in the sense of don't let me die yet. There is a burden upon me. I have something to do. Until I do this, something that I must complete.

What is very striking is the reason David asked God to keep him a while longer yet.

“... until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.”<sup>4</sup>

David asked God to keep him alive for a while longer, because he feels he has not completed his God given task of telling the generations following him of the strength and power of Jehovah God. That is most striking when you consider what are not David's reasons for asking God to keep him alive yet in his old age.

First of all, the reason David wants to stay alive yet and request that of God is not because David has so many problems to deal with and so many loose ends to tie up before he dies. And that is not his request in spite of the fact that, indeed, David does have many problems yet to deal with in his old age. He talks about them in verse 10.

For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul  
take counsel together, Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take  
him; for there is none to deliver him.<sup>5</sup>

As one reads Psalm 71, one gets the sense that perhaps David thought when he got to be an older man, his enemies would leave him alone so that he could end his days in peace and die in peace. What he discovers in his old age is that that is not the case at all. His enemies are pressing him harder and, in fact, his enemies are coming from the members of his own family. Think of Absalom who was trying to take David's throne at this time as David is an old man. You can see why David cries out what he cries out with in verses 10 and 11. He is being attacked by his own son and he is alone and all of his enemies speak to him as though God has left him, forsaken him in his old age. He has much to concern himself with at this time in his life. His family is an absolute mess. His throne is in jeopardy. It is even harder to deal with these things now because David is an old man. It takes more time because he has all the normal physical problems of old age. He talks about those in verse nine. He says he is old and his strength is leaving him.

So at this point in his life, he is slowing down. He is getting old and yet he still has pressure on him of all of these, stresses and difficulties of his earthly life and yet David does not say, “Lord, keep me alive yet in my old age. Give me help and strength a while longer, because I have all these things to take care of. My family is a mess. I have all these loose ends to tie up before I go.” That is not David's request.

Nor does David ask God to keep him alive because he is looking forward to settling all of those problems in his life and then entering into a time of leisure. The driving burden for

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 71:10-11.

David here is not retirement. That can sometimes be what drives us in older age, or even what drives us in middle age, to want to be healthy, to want to be in a good situation. God, keep me strong so that I can have a relaxing, easy time of retirement, the prospect of what all those ads for cruises on TV show us, older retired couples living a life of wealth and ease. Of course, there is nothing wrong with a cruise and there is nothing wrong with a relaxed pace of life in retirement. But the question is: What drives us as we get into older age? What drives us to ask God to keep us healthy and strong? What drives us to ask for time upon this earth yet?

It wasn't for David to have a time of ease and relaxation. For David there was one reason, one reason why he requests of God health and strength as he is getting older. There was a burden upon David. But he yet declared to coming generations the power and mercies of Jehovah God. He wanted to make sure that the generations following after him know God and know God's faithfulness that weighed heavy upon David's soul. And if he had his health and strength yet in his old age he knew he could be used of God for that end. Absalom and the future of his throne was not his greatest concern in his old age.

“Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.”<sup>6</sup>

David senses that his time is running out, declared the majesty and sovereignty of God to those who were coming after him and he wants to die knowing that he has done everything he possibly could to ensure that the truths of God's Word and the knowledge of God's faithfulness are repeated to the generations that are coming after him. He is driven by this.

The word that he uses twice in verses 17 and 18 is declare. Verse 17:

“I declared thy wondrous works.”<sup>7</sup>

And that is, in fact, the exact same Hebrew word that is translated show in verse 18.

“[not] until I have shewed thy strength...”<sup>8</sup>

Declare. The sense is David is driven by this. He is not going to suggest the things of God to the coming generations. He is going to declare them. He is going to speak with boldness, with fervency. He wants so badly for the generations following to know the Lord, trust his Word. He is going to tell them that he loves them and this is how he loves them. He will make known to them the things of God. He cares for their souls and for the life of the Church.

The precise content of what David wants to declare is, first of all, the strength and power of God, verse 18.

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<sup>6</sup> Psalm 71:18.

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 71:17.

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 71:18.

“O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power.”<sup>9</sup>

Interesting, isn't it, that God's strength and power are what David wanted to communicate to the next generation. Not even God's love and mercy—although I am sure he wanted that, too—but that was not the driving burden, not even his love and mercy, but his power. He wanted them to know that their God is a God who is able. He wanted them to understand, to grasp the great principle of the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah God, that God rules this world and that he rules them, their lives according to his eternal decree and his good pleasure. Why? Why is that in particular David's burden? Well, first of all, because David knows how prone we are, especially when we are young to think that we rule our own lives, to think that we are sovereign, to think that we are the director of our own symphony, that we are the playwright of our own production, that we are the quarterback of our own game, that we can run our lives, that we can plan our future, that we can carry our days out and we can even do something to save ourselves before him. We are sovereign over ourselves. And David knows that that is pride and that that pride that naturally rises in the hearts of all men must be stricken down again and again. Generation after generation must proclaim the sovereignty of God. David knows that true religion begins with humbling ourselves before God, the God of heaven and earth. And David knows that nothing strikes that pride down other than knowing this God is sovereign over absolutely everything over all the lives of men, that he is God and I am not. He is the one who gives life and he is the one who takes it. He is the one who by the power of his almighty Word created the world and created us and therefore has the right to tell us what to do with our lives. And he by sovereign power alone saves his own, not because they have done something to separate themselves from the pack, not because they have opened their hearts to him, first of all, but he saves, he works, he is in control, all things are done according to his eternal decree. I must tell them that. They must know that. I must ensure that they know, says David.

Secondly, David knows what a temptation it can be for you to look out at the world and to think there can be no way that God is in control of what is happening here. There is so much trouble in this world. There is so much pain and there is so much suffering and there is absolute chaos when you look among the nations. How can it be that God is in control over all of this? David knows that the youth must be taught with fervency. God is sovereign and his power and strength is over every single thing that takes place in this world. Every molecule, every event is under his almighty control. And every single thing that has happened from the beginning of the world and that will happen until the end of the world... it is like millions upon millions of little puzzle pieces that God in his sovereignty fits together, plans to fit together, decrees to fit together for the good of his Church and the glory of his own name.

Thirdly, David knows that it is tempting for youth to despair of God's love and mercy when things are difficult for themselves. He thinks about the generations that are coming after him and he knows that they are going to face trials as he does, as he had. David is

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<sup>9</sup> Psalm 71:18.

burdened that generations following not throw up their hands in their troubles and say it is vain to serve this God, like Asaph says a few psalms later in Psalm 73. David knows that the only comfort in life is this sovereign power of a gracious God. It is the knowledge that God sends trials and difficulties, that God sends them for a reason out of love for his people, to grow them, to draw them to himself. Only that truth will stay the generations in the hour of uncertainty. He wants the generations following him to be able to say that they trust the sovereignty of their God so much that they would rather have the hardest, the worst, the most difficult trial given to them that they can know that their sovereign God gave it to them and to have a hang nail on their end of their thumb and know that it was sent by someone else. David carries the burden of that the coming generations know the absolute sovereignty of God.

And it is the glory, the crown jewel of the reformed faith, of course, that it recognizes what David recognizes here that all of Christianity begins and ends with the powerful sovereign God, God who is sovereign in salvation, God who is sovereign in providence, God who is sovereign in all of the hope of his people. This is the comfort in life and in death that we are not our own, but belong to this sovereign, gracious God, that he saves when I know I cannot save myself in my depravity and sin, that he sovereignly holds and preserves all the way to the end and will not let us out of his {?}. The children, the generations of the Church must know this sovereign God.

But that wasn't all that David wanted to declare to the coming generations. Notice David also declared God's wondrous works. Verse 17.

“...and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.”<sup>10</sup>

And a more precise translation of that would be that up until now, oh God, I am still declaring thy wondrous works and I want to keep declaring them to the generations following. So keep my alive a while longer yet, oh Lord.

The wondrous works of God were on David's mind. The wondrous works of God and the sovereign power of God are connected to each other, of course. The wondrous works of God are the works of his sovereign power, the effects of his sovereign power. The wondrous works of God are the works of his sovereign power to save, first of all. They are his care for his Church down throughout history. All of the record of redemptive history and of Church history that we have, of his sovereign work to keep his Church, to preserve them from the attack of Satan and the world. That is his wondrous works. When he brought about the Messiah and the fullness of time, the way he gathers now his Church over the face of the entire earth, the way he has saved and the line of generations from that first generation of Adam and Eve on all the way to the present. All of this is the wondrous works of Jehovah God.

But God's wondrous works are not only the powerful works of his sovereignty in preserving his Church. God's wondrous works are also powerful works of his creation, the works in his world, generally.

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<sup>10</sup> Psalm 71:17.

In the book of Job this same word, wondrous works, is used to describe God's work in creation. Let me read a section of Job 37.

God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.

For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength. He sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work. Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places. Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened. Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud: And it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth. He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.

Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.<sup>11</sup>

The wondrous works of God are all his works in all of creation. They are the subjects that the children study in school. They are the wonders of true science uncovered by that means. They are the beauty of God's creation of language that is used in poetry and literature and in rhetoric. They are the majesty and complexity and yet simplicity of mathematics. All these things are {} the wondrous works of God. All things about God and about his covenant history, but also upon his world that he has created are wondrous works. And David wants to ensure that not only the generations following him know his sovereign salvation, but he wants them to know all of his works and all of his majestic world, everything that he has done so that the generations might be full, complete, mature generations, able to praise God and work for his glory and every aspect of life. David wants all of those things to be known as God's wondrous works.

Verse 17.

"I declared thy wondrous works."<sup>12</sup>

These wonderful things the generations must know are God's wonderful things. History is God's history. True science is God's science. The use of words in literature and poetry and rhetoric is God's gift. It is not the result of evolution. It is not the result of human ingenuity. It is not the result of blind chance. It is God's gift to his people, the glory of his name. They must know. They must uncover the riches of his gift to his people in creation and must be used by the generations as avenues to glorify and praise his holy name.

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<sup>11</sup> Job 37:5-14.

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 71:17.

David wants all this to be known, because in all of the God of strength and power and majesty is known. The creation is enjoyed. God himself is glorified.

That is why we and our forefathers started grade school 50 years ago, is it not? This is why we have started a high school now, is it not? So that our generations might be taught the absolute sovereignty of God and the wondrous works of God so that those generations might be taught both of those things together, the absolute sovereignty of God in all things and then the effects of that absolute sovereignty in all of redemptive history and in all of his works in all of creation, all for the glory of his majestic name.

Who specifically does David want to know about this great God? First of all notice that David is concerned about the next generation and also the subsequent generations following that one.

“O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.”<sup>13</sup>

David has a concern for the generation under him then living that he sees with his own eyes, but his burden does not stop there. He is thinking generations upon generations down the road. David knows that God has promised to save in the line of those generations and that leads David to have a concern that these generations be taught the things of God as the means by which God will fulfill that promise that he has made for generations to come.

Certainly David had that burden for his own generations as a father and a grandfather. He had a concern for the generations following him in his own family. That was David's primary responsibility, of course, to teach his own children and his own grandchildren and every parent and every grandparent here must take that seriously and know that that is his calling. This must be a burden upon our souls, parents and grandparents. By God's grace, our family and our generations know God, not vaguely and generally, but know him in depth and truth and love and piety and holiness. Personal love for this God.

But notice that David is not only concerned about this own family. He is also concerned about the entire covenant community. Notice what he says here in verse 18. Do not let me die, Lord, until I tell this generation and every one that is come. He is not only concerned about his children and grandchildren and great grandchildren, but for all the children of the church in the generations following. David understands that the people of God are a community. He understands that he has a responsibility to see to it that all of the children of the Church are raised in the fear of Jehovah God for generations to come. David understands that God does not only save him and his family in the light of generations, but saves him and his generations as part of the family of God and their generations, that there is a covenantal principle then, that the members of the Church care for each other and work together in the raising of their generations in the fear of the Lord.

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<sup>13</sup> Psalm 71:18.



That, too, is why a generation that has almost passed away now started Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian grade school, a school that has affected generations with the knowledge of the sovereignty and wondrous works of God. And as I stand here this morning I cannot help but think of God in his sovereignty giving that burden to those who have gone before. And I can't help but wonder if I would be standing here this morning were it not for God's use of that means giving them that burden.

And now another generation rises that shares that same burden of the generation gone by and that also shares the same burden of the psalmist David and the text that is before us. Isn't this, congregation, what you said collectively when we began to work on this high school? Did we not say with David, "Before we die, oh Lord, we want to make sure that we have done together all in our power to ensure that the generations following us know the sovereign power and wondrous works of God"? What better way to accomplish what David is burdened with here, what our forefathers were burdened with here and what we are burdened with here than to ensure that our schools are established and maintained, grown and strengthened spiritually and academically so that generations following will be raised with that great principle of the sovereignty of God in the center of all teaching and know wondrous works of Jehovah God and all of his creation and all of his redemptive work and glorify him through them?

This must drive us, all of us together in this covenant community, the sovereignty of God in salvation, in grace, in the covenant and in all the subjects of all of his wondrous creation. This is why we build schools that teach the children to discover all of those wondrous works of God with all of their ability, all of their power. God in his might, majesty and glory might be known. This is why we sacrifice to pay tuition bills. This is why we have funds set up to help each other as we carry out this calling. This is why people donate land for the building of schools and volunteer hours of labor and work building and to be on boards and societies. Is not David's confession in the text the confession that drove every penny that was donated, that drove every hammering of every nail into a piece of wood, that drove every gallon of paint applied to the side of a building, that drove and drives every lesson plan that is prepared, that drives men of the Church to work, the women of the Church to work hours and hours to provide a wonderful building for the generations to come? Is it not this, the confession that David confesses?

Oh, God, we must declare with everything in us the wondrous works of God and of his sovereign power that the generations following might know him.

It must drive us as parents in the home, too, to teach as parents the things of God to our children which we must do as parents even though we have a grade school and now a high school. These gifts of grade school and high school are servants to the home. They do not replace the home. Let us not, beloved, every become I sent them parents, parents who say, "I sent them to catechism, I sent them to church, I sent them to the grade school, I sent them to the high school. That is my job as a parent. I am done."

The parent must send them to those places, but as helps for the work that the parent is doing all the time, full time in their own home, teaching and training, disciplining, opening the mouth with wisdom to their children for the glory of Jehovah God.

What is the motivation, the motivation for all of this? It is important to know that drives David here in the text is, first of all, the fact that he himself has experienced the benefits of this covenantal instruction. Verse 17.

O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.<sup>14</sup>

And the same thing in verses five and six.

“O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother’s bowels.”<sup>15</sup>

David himself has received the blessings of being raised in a covenant home and covenant community. He has received the benefits himself of the covenant community’s care for their children and children’s children. David was taught the Word of God by his parents and David was taught the Word of God, too, by the Levites and by the rabbis as a young boy. David himself had heard of the strength and power of almighty God and of the wondrous works of Jehovah in creation as taught to him in the religious schools of his day that the generations then had run. David understand that others before him had sacrificed for his spiritual welfare. They had the burden that the generation that he was a part of would know God and his wondrous works. And in all of this David understood that as he was taught these things of his parents and of the rabbis and Levites in the religious schools of that day, it was God who instructed him.

Verse 17.

“O God, thou hast taught me from my youth.”<sup>16</sup>

Through the words that his parents spoke which were the words of God from the Word through the training, the teachers in his schools, David says, “God taught me. God spoke to me in his Word. I learned from God’s own voice as my parents spoke and disciplined and raised me, as the Word of God has expounded to me in those means.”

God worked that teaching down into David’s heart so that now as an old man David looks back and reflects and he says, “I was a child of God from the very moment I was born.”

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<sup>14</sup> Psalm 71:17-18.

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 71:5-6.

<sup>16</sup> Psalm 71:17.

And verse six he puts it strikingly. It is as though God was the O B doctor that delivered him into the world.

“... thou art he that took me out of my mother’s bowels.”<sup>17</sup>

He was a child of God from when he took his first breath. There was no moment when he was not under the influence of a covenantal home and covenantal community by the power of the Spirit of Christ. And through that means he was taught the things of God from his youth up. He knows the benefits of being raised this way. And therefore he is burdened as an older man that this be carried to the generations following. David wants to ensure that his generations are born, that the heritage that he himself had received. And this, beloved, must be our motivation as well. This must drive us, that the man of us who have received the benefits, covenantal home and community, be burdened that the generations following receive those same benefits and that is what drives us.

But perhaps you weren’t raised in a situation like that. Maybe you come into the house of God this morning and you say that I was born into a very weak home spiritually. Maybe I wasn’t even born and raised in the Church at all. Perhaps you were sent to a public school. The Lord saved you, preserved you through all of that and the Lord can certainly do that, can’t he? He can preserve from anything. He is sovereign. But because he can do that does not mean that that is what he wants for your generations following you, then. Not to make someone want these blessings for their children and children’s children even more and often that is the case in fact. God can save an alcoholic, but that doesn't mean you go around telling people it is a good idea to be alcoholics. God saves from extraordinary situations, but he normally works through ordinary means, the means of faithful church, home and school, creating a triangular shaped womb for the child to grow up in to save his people in the line of generations.

Secondly, the motivation that drives David in the text to declare to the generations following him the wondrous works and sovereignty of God is that by God’s grace not only had David received covenantal instruction from his youth up, but he had experienced the truths of what he had been taught from his youth up. That is what gave David such a great desire and burden, the truths that had been driven into his mind were driven also down into his heart and soul about the Spirit of Christ and the experience of his own life.

First of all, David experienced God’s sovereign providence and faithfulness. That comes out in verses 20 and 21 of the text.

Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Psalm 71:6.

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 71:20-21.

David experienced trials upon trials in his life, but he also saw the faithful, saving, preserving hand of God in his life. He looked back and he saw what he had been taught in his own experience. He knew God's sovereign preservation for himself. He looks back and he sees God driving that stone into Goliath's forehead. He sees himself fleeing from Saul and God preserving him from Saul who wanted to take his life. He sees God powerfully giving David the throne against all odds in Israel. He sees God using David to bring the entire nation through him to a strong state spiritually. God preserved David through so many difficulties and trials in his entire life. He has experienced it. And all of us can look back on our lives, as David does, and see God's hand of faithfulness leading and guiding us, his sovereign providence in our lives personally. That is the experience of what we were taught and what we want to teach to the children. We know that in our own lives.

But even more than that, David is driven to teach the generations following because he has experienced the gospel of God's sovereign salvation.

Don't you love that in this psalm about the generations following David sings of his salvation? Verse 23.

"My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed."<sup>19</sup>

And verse 15.

"My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof."<sup>20</sup>

What drives David is that he knows the redeeming love of this sovereign God. He knows God's sovereignty in salvation, not just as something in his head. He knows it not just as something he read in a book. He knows it not just as something that he memorized, not just as a principle that fits nice with other principles in the Word of God, but he knows that sovereign salvation as the sovereign salvation that forgave him of all his sins, redeemed his soul from destruction. And he says it is so wonderful, I don't even know the numbers of it. In other words, I can't fathom the limits of God's sovereign salvation and his mercy. It is beyond what he can even comprehend. For think about it. It has forgiven me the sin of adultery, David says. It has forgiven me the sin of murder. It is a sovereign power and mercy that broke into my life when I was hardened in my sin after Bathsheba.

For two years I held out and would not repent of my sin before God until he sends his sovereign Word through Nathan the prophet to break my hard heart. This is the sovereign salvation that I know and I have experienced.

And that is why he is so burdened that the generations following him know it, too.

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<sup>19</sup> Psalm 71:23.

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 71:15.

This must drive us as well, beloved. This must be at the root of the motivation that drives the Church to sacrifice of the sake of generations following in the Church and the home and in the school the knowledge, the experiential knowledge that the God of sovereign grace saved me, wretched me and that this is the grace that can save my child and the children of the Church for generations to come.

If this is not at bottom the driving force, then we are simply playing games. It is the gospel of sovereign, redeeming love, experienced by each one of us that must drive the parent in the home, that must drive the teacher in the school, that must drive the minister and elder and deacon in the Church. This God is the God of my salvation.

And when it is by grace the goal of our burden for the generations it will be accomplished as well. The goal of and the covenantal request and by God's grace will be that not only the next generation, but generations upon generations until Christ returns share the faith that David himself has in Psalm 71. The goal is that generations arise that sing of their salvation like David sings of his in Psalm 71, generations that are comforted by the sovereignty of God in their trials of life as David is comforted by that sovereignty here in Psalm 71. Generations that have a burden that the strength and power and wondrous works of God be shown to their generations following like David has that burden here, generations that when they grow old will reflect like David reflects here and remember God's faithfulness to them all their life long and who will be willing to die, yes die. For persecution may be coming to our generations. Be willing to die for the sake of this sovereign God who redeemed us.

One commentator on Psalm 71 recounts the martyrdom of Polycarp, the early Church father who was martyred in AD 156. That is about 50 years after the apostles of the New Testament had died. Polycarp the Church father was an old man at the point of his martyrdom, just like David is an old man in Psalm 71. Let me quote for you the story of his murder.

As he was being driven to the arena where he would be given the choice of worshipping Caesar or upon refusing being offered to the lions, the city officials tried to persuade him to make the gesture of homage to Caesar. They had respect for Polycarp because of his age and reputation and argued, "What harm is there in saying Caesar is Lord and saving your life?"

Polycarp answered, "For 86 years since God took me out of my mother's womb, for 86 years I have been Christ's slave and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my king who has saved me? Bring forth what thou wilt."

May God use our Protestant Reformed grade school and high school and covenant homes and this true church to give the generations such conviction for the glory of his name. Amen.

Let us pray.

*Father, we give thee thanks for what thy hand hath wrought. Continue they work to generations following for thy glory that Christ might return and find some faithful left upon the earth, for he is worthy of such. Amen.*