

Psalm 71 – Study Guide¹

“It would be a good thing if young people were wise and old people were strong, but God has arranged things better.”
Marin Luther²

Regarding the general context of Psalm 71, James Boice states, “...the psalm is a song of old age and is therefore for all who are old or will be, which is going to be true for most of us sooner or later.”³

Boice himself died approximately one month before his sixty-second birthday after a short battle with cancer, and while he did not have the natural privilege of becoming an “old man” he also did not find a lack of appreciation of richness and application from this “song of old age.” I would encourage you to not be short sighted when hearing the petitions from an old man (the unknown psalmist) pleading for perseverance as his natural strength diminishes as it is quite clear that his inner man was quite robust. Lord willing, if we have or presently enjoy old age, may we too persevere well.

Finally, where Boice was most helpful to me was his deliberateness to recall that the psalmist is old and has walked with God his whole life, his whole life, and he has something to say – listen to his testimony.⁴

“This quality of steadfast endurance in one’s final years is the central theme of Psalm 71.”⁵

Structure

David Crowe

71:1-6	A petition to his lifelong help to be kept secure and free of shame.
71:1	Request to never be put to shame (71:13, 71:24)
71:2-3	The LORD is his refuge to whom he petitions.
71:4	The threat is identified.
71:5-6	Petition rooted in lifelong care by The LORD.
71:7-13	A petition for righteousness/justice: his keeping and the opponents’ shame.
71:7-8	Though an object of derision he worships his refuge.
71:9	Request to not be forsaken in his old age.
71:10-11	The murmuring of the enemy.
71:12-13	Petition in response to the enemy.
71:14-18	Hope transitions the psalmist from petition to praise.
71:14-16	The psalmist’s response: I will hope, praise, tell, and remind.
71:17-18	Request to persevere in service.
71:19-21	Worshipfully rejoicing in what his great God has and will do.
71:19	God’s great works. <i>Has done</i> .
71:20-21	God’s great works... again! <i>Will do</i> .
71:22-24	Concluding with worshiping with voice and instrument in thanks for being answered – the one who would shame has been shamed.

¹ Prepared by David Crowe for Pray’s Mill Baptist Church Adult Sunday School

ALL Scripture Quotations are from the ESV Bible unless the Scripture reference is in a quote from another author – their original translation was kept.

² Holman Old Testament Commentary: Psalms 1-75, Volume 2. Steven J. Lawson. B&H Publishing Group, 2003 (Hereafter: Lawson), Pg.351

³ An Expositional Commentary: Psalms, Volume 2. James Montgomery Boice. Baker Books, 1996 (Hereafter: Boice), Pg.593

⁴ Boice, Pg.598 (This alone made Boice’s commentary the singularly most helpful resource outside of my own laboring in the text.)

⁵ Boice, Pg.351

John MacArthur⁶

I. Confidence in God Stated (71:1-8)

II. Confidence in God Practiced in Prayer (71:9-13)

III. Confidence in God Vindicated (71:14-24)

ESV Study Bible⁷

71:1-3 Be My Refuge Always.

71:4-11 Rescue Me from the Wicked Who Want to Hurt Me.

71:12-16 Do Not Be Far from Me.

71:17-21 Care for Me from Youth through Old Age.

71:22-24 I Will Praise You for Your Deliverance.

“The exposition here discerns the stanza structure of the psalm by following the vocatives, ‘O God’ or ‘O LORD.’”⁸

Keil & Delitzsch⁹

71:1-6

71:7-12

71:13-18

71:19-24

John Calvin¹⁰

71:1-4

71:5-8

71:9-13

71:14-16

71:17-19

71:20-24

Steven Lawson¹¹

71:1-8 A Prayer of Confidence

71:9-13 A Prayer of Contrition

71:14-21 A Prayer of Commitment

71:22-24 A Prayer of Celebration

⁶ The MacArthur Study Bible, NKJV. Word Bibles, 1997. (Hereafter: MacArthur), Pg.804

⁷ English Standard Version Study Bible. Crossway Bibles, 2008. (Hereafter: ESV SB) Pgs.1023-1024

⁸ ESV SB, Pg.1023

⁹ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch; Keil & Delitzsch: Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume 5 – Psalms. Hendrickson Publishers, 2001. (Hereafter: Keil & Delitzsch), Pgs.474-476

¹⁰ John Calvin; Calvin's Commentaries, Volume 5 – Joshua-Psalms 36-92. Baker Books, 2003. (Hereafter: Calvin), *Third Volume with Volume 5*, Pgs.81,84,87,89,94,96,97

¹¹ Lawson, Pgs.352-354

Willem VanGemenen¹²

- A Prayer of Confidence (vv.1-4)
 - B Affirmation of Confidence (vv.5-8)
 - C Prayer in Old Age (vv.9-13)
 - C' Hope in Old Age (vv.14-18)
 - B' Affirmation of Confidence (vv.19-21)
- A' Thanksgiving with Confidence (vv.22-24)

Derek Kidner¹³

- 71:1-3 Rock and Fortress
- 71:4-6 Friends from Birth
- 71:7-11 Failing Powers
- 71:12-16 Rising Hope
- 71:17-21 Late Harvest
- 71:22-24 Unremitting Praise

James Boice¹⁴

James Boice chose to not provide a structural outline, but a thematic outline without an identifiable verse breakdown.

- 1) Old age and its problems.
- 2) How the past looks from the perspective of old age.
- 3) The future in terms of what is yet to be done.
- 4) Praise from one who has lived long enough to have observed God's faithful ways.

Header

All of the psalms in the Second Book of the Psalter have title lines or headers with two exceptions, Palm 43 and Psalm 71.¹⁵ Because Psalm 71 is one of these exceptions we do not have authorship information, we do not have any historical or contextual backdrop, and we do not have instructions regarding its application in a corporate context. Further, because of its strong Davidic language and themes as well a mildly revised introduction from/like Psalm 31 some argue for Davidic authorship, but Davidic influence is not necessarily indicative of Davidic authorship. However, in the interest of fairness, the Septuagint does ascribe Davidic authorship, though I have not observed this to be a compelling argument in and of itself and such is the case with other respected men.¹⁶

¹² The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition: Psalms, Volume 5. Willem A. VanGemenen. Zondervan, 2008 (Hereafter: VanGemenen), Pg.538

¹³ Derek Kidner; Kidner Classic Commentaries: Psalms 1-72. IVP Academic (Digital Copy), 1973. (Hereafter: Kidner), Pgs.269-272

¹⁴ Boice, Pg.593

¹⁵ Boice, Pg.593

¹⁶ Boice, Pg.593

71:1-6 A petition to his lifelong help to be kept secure and free of shame.

Psalm 71:1-3 and Psalm 31:1-3

While Psalm 71 appears to draw strongly from various Davidic Psalms in regard to both themes and vernacular, its introductory verses are almost identical to Psalm 31's introductory verses.

"In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me! For you are my rock and my fortress...."

Psalm 31:1-3

While the two psalms are all but identical in their opening verses John MacArthur draws out a consequential difference, Psalm 71:3's inclusion/addition of "continually," which becomes among other words a redundant micro-theme in the psalm.¹⁷ The use of continually is observed again directly or thematically in 71:6,8,14,15,24.

71:3 Be to me a rock of refuge to which I may *continually* come....

71:6 My praise is *continually* of you.

71:8 My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory *all the day*.

71:14 But I will hope *continually* and will praise you *yet more and more*.

71:15 My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation *all the day*....

71:24 And my tongue will talk of your righteous help *all the day long*....

This sub theme, as it were, is a striking insight into the heart and disposition of the psalmist. The requests amidst struggles, the stages in life he has walked with God, and his declared dependence on The LORD find a clear richness and depth with this disposition of continually and all day consuming acts of praising, hoping, and proclaiming. It clearly was not a scribal error or a way to refresh the material, it was a vital element of what he intended to communicate in the opening verses and throughout the psalm.

Also noting similarities between Psalm 71 and other psalms Keil & Delitzsch make a valuable statement that I hope might increasingly resonate true with us as well as this anonymous psalmist. "The whole Psalm is an echo of the language of older Psalms, which is become the mental property, so to speak, of the author, and is revived in him by experiences of a similar character."¹⁸

What might your song or prayer sound like when you too encounter various trials and hardships? Does it resonate with truth?

Shame, Shame, Shame

The psalmist begins with an exclamatory request to The LORD, his refuge, to never be put to shame. He requests that he not be a reproach, rejected, embarrassed, disgraced or wrongfully abused, and this request serves as a structural framework for the whole of the psalm. It opens the psalm (71:1), the initial request of a man who has walked with God his whole life and is consumed with worshipping him, requested shame for his attempted shamers marks the definitive transition in the psalm (71:13), and the shaming of his enemies closes the psalm (71:24). So while shame only appears three times in the psalm its appearance is consequential both in placement and in its own development.

The LORD Provides: Safe Keeping & Deliverance

The psalmist identifies The LORD as his refuge, a place of shelter and safekeeping, a place where he finds security by taking the well-worn path of prayer and petition. He does not arrive by applying the secret knock, but by his knees knocking to the ground. He knows the truth of Psalm 2:12 "Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

¹⁷ MacArthur, Pg.804

¹⁸ Keil & Delitzsch, Pg.473

The LORD is also his Deliverer, Rescuer, and Savior. Each of these elements/relationships (and the requested disposition of an inclined ear) are identified by way of redundant petition, but each articulating not just the need, but the answer and each rooted in God's righteousness – his perfect justice and the doing of what is absolutely right. Just as he can request to be delivered from shame as he secured his safe dwelling in his refuge, so he can petition for salvation because of the Redeemer's righteousness.

The psalmist continues, requesting that The LORD would be to him a rock of refuge. The refuge here is an image of a high and unassailable rock that provides secure protection.¹⁹ It is here he requests that he might continually come. However, by this running to the refuge he is not securing his safekeeping, but is fleeing to the one who will. This is a familiar place and one that, until this present life of sojourning is over, he will not stop seeking.

A Command To Save

The reference to a command to save directed my thoughts toward possible covenant assurances that the psalmist, be it a king or a faithful man of God, could expect. However, while there are clear assurances and blessing for those who walk in covenant obedience (made quite plain in places such as the Abrahamic Covenant, the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy, and even in Psalm 1), that may not necessarily be the spirit of the point here.

Operating off of the basic understanding of the term command: a directive, order, charge that is expected to be submitted to in complete obedience; I am at a bit of a loss for something that is that precise in its directive to a particular person or persons – specifically to save someone such as the psalmist. So the problem could be an over simplistic or rigid definition when other options are available such as what Keil & Delitzsch propose for command, that it is being used to communicate something that is, “unalterably determined.”²⁰ Effectively the surety of his salvation is absolute. Another option is supplied by Willem VanGemeren who translates the passage in a way that reflects a different conclusion, that of a request and not a statement, “...give the command to save me...”²¹

Finally, this command is rooted in The LORD who is rock and refuge and affords him such petitions and assurances.

The threat is identified.

The psalmist again requests to be rescued, but here there is a precise need/reason expressed: the hand of the wicked and the grasp of the unjust and cruel man. Without identifying these persons, a sufficient description is provided, they are wicked, unjust, and cruel. Clearly a people who stand opposed to one who has made The LORD his refuge and the object of residual praise.

This is not just a 'personal' matter, but a distinction between good and evil. Recall that the foundation of his deliverance resides the righteousness of God (71:2).

Petition rooted in lifelong care by The LORD.

Additional clarity is provided regarding not just the identification of the threat, but in the relationship of the Redeemer who has been his hope and trust from his youth and he who has cared for him from his birth. The psalmist testifies that from the time of his very birth The LORD has cared for him and that from his youth he has entrusted himself to The LORD. There has not been a season of life that he has not been in some measure of caring relationship with God. Note however that the preciousness of this relationship is made a bit unclear by the wording of the English Standard Version (the text that this Study Guide is built off). For reasons not made clear the ESV came to a peculiar decision in their translating this verse and seems to be implying an active trusting of the psalmist in The LORD from the time that he was in the womb (at best). However, there is not theological merit to this translation and I have not found any linguistic or grammatical support

¹⁹ Keil & Delitzsch, Pg.474

²⁰ Keil & Delitzsch, Pg.474

²¹ VanGemeren, Pg.538

in my reading either. What is clear is that the psalmist has had a life of care and trusting in The LORD and that the fruit of this life is that his praise is continually of The LORD.

“For you, O Lord, are my hope...” Hope: confident expectation of an outcome or result.

“The ground for hope lies both in his trust in the Lord and in his belief that Yahweh is ‘righteous.’”²²

71:7-13 A petition for righteousness/justice: his keeping and the opponents shame.

A Portent to Many

The term portent has a range of application within its basic meaning of being a sign, but not a neutral sign. It is communicating either warning or wonder. It is on account of this range that there is a debate regarding what direction the context drives the conclusion as to just what kind of sign the psalmist was to those around him.

A Positive Sign

“Brought safely through dangers of every kind, he is become, as a wonder, a miracle to many, who gaze upon him as such with astonishment.”²³

A Negative Sign

John MacArthur references the term as it is used in New King James Version, “wonder” and states that it is a reference to the psalmist’s trials and the various ways that they are being perceived.²⁴

Willem VanGemeran argues more toward the psalmist being a sign of warning, “a sign of trouble, chastisement, and divine retribution.”²⁵ He states that this is on account of the psalmist’s present circumstances of hardship or struggle that he is now enduring.

A Positive and Negative Sign

James Boice argues that “portent” can be either a positive or negative sign and that the context would appear to be more positive than negative.²⁶ However, my conclusion is that the contrasting conjunction would appear to indicate otherwise: care by God and praise, *I am a portent – present condition from which he is pleading for help*, followed by **but**, followed by testimony of God’s goodness and praise.

However, Boice does extend a potentially interesting conclusion at this point – referencing J.J. Stewart Perowne’s conclusion that with the presumption of Davidic authorship he could be a portent or sign in both a positive and negative regard given the extraordinary gambit of praise, struggle, victory, and failure David experienced.²⁷ I think this is a very valid point and that it very well could have the strength to stand even without Davidic authorship, but I recognize that Davidic authorship would all but secure this conclusion.

A Portent, But...

Though an object of derision (or otherwise) the psalmist worships his refuge. In direct contrast to being a “portent” to many he states that The LORD is his strong refuge.

The psalmist continues, “My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day.” This very well may be an articulation of his statement in 71:6 “My praise is continually of you.” His mouth is filled with praise to God! Whatever his lot his pattern of consistency is demonstrated again here, “all the day.” He is praising and glorifying God all the day.

²² VanGemeran, Pg.538

²³ Keil & Delitzsch, Pgs.474-475 (Linguistic and parenthetical material not provided for clarity for this non-technical Study Guide.)

²⁴ MacArthur, Pg.804

²⁵ VanGemeran, Pg.539

²⁶ Boice, Pg.596

²⁷ Boice, Pg.596

Request To Not Be Forsaken In Old Age

As stated in the introduction to this Study Guide, James Boice's greatest contribution to my work on Psalm 71 was his focused reminder on the psalmist as an old man, not just someone addressing various stages of life and its experiences. There are several references to age throughout the psalm and they do frame the psalmist's relationship with The LORD, but it is clear that he has not only run his whole race entrusting The LORD, but is now seeking to finish it well. With this in mind we can better appreciate his request for deliverance and better understand the vulgarity of the wicked, unjust, and cruel man circling as it were around one that they perceive is now weak and abandoned.

The psalmist is asking that he not be forgotten or disregarded by his Redeemer when he is old and his strength is spent. However, knowing the character of his God this request is hyperbole at best and is more in response to the nature of their attempts at taking advantage of his present circumstances in life – not weakened by sin, but by age. The psalmist is effectively stating that he is weak, he is tired, and he hears the enemy regarding his disposition as vulnerable to their efforts. His prayer is that the Lord would please have mercy... would you please deliver again.

"The basest of men, as we all know, become more bold and audacious, when, in tormenting the innocent, they imagine that this is a matter in which they have not to deal with God at all. Not only are they encouraged by the hope of escaping unpunished; but they also boast that all comes to pass according to their wishes, when no obstacle presents itself to restrain their wicked desires."²⁸

Petition In Response To The Enemy

Note that in the conspiring of the wicked company they offer an extraordinary testimony about the psalmist – if God has forsaken him then he has none to deliver. His legacy has not been in trusting horses, chariots, or men. If God has forsaken him and severed their relationship, then he has none to deliver. Fundamentally this true of everyone, but it is a particularly clear and precious reality when a man has been cared for since his birth and trusted and hoped in God since his youth. His own petition confirms this too as he pleads for God's presence and quick help.

Shame The Shameful

This is the second reference to shame in the psalm and it comes at what appears to be a transition for the psalm as a whole. The general themes continue, but the petitions do not, and the disposition begins to shift from hear, to confidence of being heard, to have been heard.

Now the psalmist has made his request for deliverance quite precise, he is requesting not only deliverance from shame, but that the shameful would themselves be shamed, that they would be finished. He is not simply requesting that these enemies would leave him alone, but that they would be definitively dealt with by God. He requests that they be put to shame, consumed, covered in scorn and disgrace.

These enemies have been identified as wicked, unjust, and cruel in 71:4 and wicked opportunists in 71:10-11, and now here in 71:13 they are also referenced as accusers. They will receive their justice from his righteous deliverer.

Additional Details

While the psalmist references his strength is spent (71:9), here he requests that the enemies be spent (same word translated as consumed).

The emphasis on shame is quite intense here. In addition to its plain reference there are strong synonyms too: scorn (reproach and shame) and disgrace (dishonor and shame). The request is not ambiguous. What they wickedly sought for him is what they righteously have coming to them.

²⁸ Calvin, Pg.88

71:14-18 Hope transitions the psalmist from petition to praise.

The Psalmist's Response: I Will Hope, Praise, Tell, and Remind.

Again, we see the pattern that identifies the psalmist, it is a continual or habitual hope and praise to God. This is by way of direct contrast with his enemies who would seek his hurt. He hopes continually, he is confident that The LORD will hear and respond. He also praises God more and more. This is not an impulsive thanks to God in the moment of deliverance, but a life marked in an ever increasing pattern of worship.

"For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth." (71:5)

"My praise is continually of you." (71:6)

"My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day." (71:8)

Here we also secure a peek into how one fills their day in praise to God, it is not exclusively the psalmist's own story, as valuable as that is, and it should be declared in a context of thanksgiving and praise. The psalmist expands the content of his praise to God's righteous acts and deeds of salvation – too innumerable to recount. Further, note that it was this very righteousness that provided the grounds for his opening petition and it is this righteousness that God has and continued to act upon for the benefit of his people and the magnification of his name (the very thing that has been displayed here).

The deeds of salvation would certainly have included the psalmist's own experience as we clearly see an example of here (note the opening petition's language: deliver, rescue, and save). However, they would certainly also include other elements of Redemptive History (both individually and corporately).

Finally, in view of the larger picture, it would be remiss to fail to provide proper emphasis on the psalmist's personal deliverance too as this does provide the immediate context and resolution is affirmed at the end of the psalm. He is an old man who has walked with The LORD his whole life, has had hardships even to the present, and now is experiencing vulgar enemies who seek to capitalize on the weakness of age, so the deliverance here is of no small consequence.

Sidebar: Righteous Acts

John Calvin strongly tethers salvation to God's righteousness – the source and the fruit as it were.²⁹ This appears to be consistent with the flow of the psalm's discourse too, as the psalmist states that he will declare of The LORD's righteous acts and then goes on to reference the inexhaustible testimonies of The LORD's salvific acts. This is further bolstered by the series of verses that follow too. In 71:16 we see that he is recalling the mighty deeds of The LORD and in a parallel statement that he will remind the people of The LORD's righteousness. In 71:17-18 the psalmist is declaring The LORD's wondrous deeds and his might – immediately followed by 71:19 where The LORD's great acts are again extolled in a context of magnifying God's righteousness. So, again, the pattern is one of testifying to the great acts of God: salvation/redemption being chief among them and all such things rooted in a clear context of the righteousness of God.

Sidebar: Salvation

The word for salvation is almost exclusively used for military/personal victory over a natural enemy - a reasonable plea and expectation for a Theocratic Nation, a kingdom consisting of persons ruled by a king and that engages enemies in military combat - fundamentally though this is not simply a "natural nation" but a nation in covenant relationship with God and that submits itself to his Law for their lives individually and corporately. It is this magnificent and consistent deliverance for which the psalmist is rejoicing in experiencing, witnessing, and testifying to others. Salvific deeds too great in number to even know. As we have seen as recent as in the last psalm that we studied, Psalm 69, David had more enemies than the hairs of his head, but here the psalmist has more salvific deeds by The LORD than can be known.

²⁹ Calvin, Pg.90

Continuing with his pattern of being one who declares the excellencies of God in redemption, the psalmist is expanding his actions from praise to proactive testimony: The LORD's mighty deeds and righteousness/justice.

Request To Persevere In Service

Here the psalmist again references the seasoning of grace that he has experienced since the time of his youth (first referenced in 71:5). This seasoning has included a lifetime of having been taught by God – through Scriptures, through his family, through the priesthood and sacrificial system, and through other faithful believers. This lifetime of instruction was not one of accumulated debt – knowledge that took no effectual root in the heart, but a life of becoming a better worshiper. His is a life that has patterned itself after, and now even its weaknesses continues to call to recollection, the righteousness of God. This is seen in his petitions (rooted in the righteousness of God in 71:2) and in his public declarations (testified to in 71:15).

Therefore, in view of this diligence of lifetime service and with a view of the work before him, he requests not to be forsaken in his old age. The request is not rooted in prior merit, but future longing. The weaknesses that his enemies sought to capitalize on are not a deterrent from his declaring testimony of The LORD's might, his powerful arm of deliverance, to future generations – to a people that have not been seasoned by decades of walking with God and now need to see an old man speak of God's great power. Finally, it is no irony that might, power, strong arm are frequently demonstrated in deliverance – what he is requesting to enjoy are the very things he is requesting to proclaim.

Sidebar: Wondrous Deeds

Psalm 40:5	"You have multiplied, O LORD my God, <i>your wondrous deeds</i> and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told."
Psalm 72:18	"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does <i>wondrous things</i> ."
Psalm 75:1	"We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near. We recount <i>your wondrous deeds</i> ."
Psalm 78:4	"We will not hide them from their children, but tell them to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and <i>the wonders that he has done</i> ."
Psalm 86:10	"For you are great and do <i>wondrous things</i> ; you alone are God."
Psalm 96:3	"Declare his glory among the nations, <i>his marvelous works</i> among all the peoples!"
Psalm 98:1	"Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for <i>he has done marvelous things</i> ! His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him."
Psalm 105:2	"Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all <i>his wondrous works</i> !"
Psalm 107:8/15/21/31	"Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for <i>his wondrous works</i> to the children of man!"
Psalm 119:27	"Make me understand the way of your precepts, and will meditate on your wondrous works."
Psalm 136:3-4	"Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever; to him who alone does <i>great wonders</i> , for his steadfast love endures forever...."
Psalm 145:5	"On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on <i>your wondrous works</i> , I will meditate."

71:19-21 Worshipfully rejoicing in what his great God has and will do.

God's great works. *Has done.*

The psalmist has established that it is his practice and intent to continue to be a proclaimer of The LORD's wondrous deeds and might. Here he establishes some of those elements beginning with recognizing again (71:15 and 71:16) God's righteousness that provides the foundation for his salvific and great deeds and wonders. This righteousness reaches the heavens; it is unsearchable. He then asks the only question in the psalm and it is a question rooted in a heart of a worshiper, "You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?" He boasts of the of incomparable – there is none

like God of whose righteousness alone he will remind the people (71:16). He *has done* great things and next we will observe that will continue to great things.

"His righteousness is nothing less than his perfections as evidenced in the 'great things.'"³⁰

God's great works... again! *Will do.*

Before addressing the magnificent revival that is assured for the psalmist, from the very depths of the earth, the apparent tension regarding The LORD's role in the psalmist's experience with troubles and calamities needs to be addressed.

Sidebar: Troubles and Calamities

The apparent tension with making the righteous see many troubles and calamities:

Psalm 5:4	"For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; <i>evil</i> may not dwell with you."
Psalm 9:9	"The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in <i>times of trouble</i> ."
Psalm 27:5	"For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of <i>trouble</i> ; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock."
Psalm 34:6	"This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of <i>all his troubles</i> ."
Psalm 34:17	"When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of <i>all their troubles</i> ."
Psalm 34:19	"Many are <i>the afflictions</i> of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all."
Psalm 37:39	"...the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their stronghold in the <i>time of trouble</i> ."
Psalm 46:1	"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help <i>in trouble</i> ."
Psalm 50:15	"...and call upon me in the <i>day of trouble</i> ; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."
Psalm 54:7	"For he has delivered me from <i>every trouble</i> , and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies."
Psalm 86:7	"In the day of <i>my trouble</i> I call upon you, for you answer me."
Psalm 120:1	"In <i>my distress</i> I called to the LORD, and he answered me."

Further, within Psalm 71 we see some tension regarding "calamities" as used here, in 71:13, and in 71:24.

Psalm 71:13	"May my accusers be put to shame and consumed; with scorn and disgrace may they be covered who seek my <i>hurt</i> ."
Psalm 71:24	"And my tongue will talk of your righteous help all the day long, for they have been put to shame and disappointed who sought to do me <i>hurt</i> ."

What is plain from a cursory, and arguably also from a more complete, study is that there is consistent expectation of deliverance - the pattern understood and articulated throughout the Scriptures and particularly, as noted here, in the Psalms. What is obscure, at this time or at least in the immediate, is how The LORD choses to use troubles and calamities. What is clear is that even troubles and calamities are tools in The LORD's hand and that the dominating consistency is deliverance and salvation.

Contributing to the conversation The ESV Study Bible states that the intended meaning here is that God sovereignly governs all things, including one's troubles and therefore can relieve them too.³¹ However, he not only governs them, but is exalted through them.

Returning to what God will do: revive me again, bring me up again, and comfort me again. We see here a demonstration of a supernatural and magnificent rescue of the psalmist from the depths of the earth. A depth from which natural recovery is not going to prevail. The LORD who is a deliverer and redeemer loves to act consistently with these character qualities,

³⁰ VanGemenen, Pg.542

³¹ ESV SB, Pg.1024

and the psalmist in turn gets to exercise the joy of proclamation of continued care and deliverance. Further in this deliverance we see exercises of additional graces: a greater esteeming of the psalmist and the kindness of his comfort.

VanGemeran contrasts the righteousness that excels to the high heavens to the scope of redemption he exercises in bringing the psalmist up from the depths of the earth.³²

Lawson stated that the imagery of the depths of the earth is reflecting near death or life threatening situations from which the psalmist is delivered and that such a delivery would serve as a substantial testimony of God's presence and deliverance.³³

71:22-24 Concluding with worshiping with voice and instrument in thanks for being answered – the one who would shame has been shamed.

With all the worship that has been testified to in this psalm we have here the introduction of praising The LORD with musical instruments! With the lips, mouth, and heart being limited in their capacity to most fully and properly worship and praise The LORD instruments are summoned into service to join the effort!

Here the psalmist is praising God for his faithfulness. He is affirming in praise the Holy One of Israel!

Holy One of Israel: a magnificent title for The LORD, but rarely used outside of Isaiah who uses it approximately twenty-six of its thirty-one times in the Scriptures.

"The phrase *sing praise* (Heb. *zamar*) occurs exclusively in the Hebrew poetry sections of the Old Testament and means 'to make music' or 'to celebrate.' This phrase expresses great joy directed toward God and is prominent in the Psalms."³⁴

The worship continues with his lips shouting for joy (recall his mouth 71:8,15 worshiping and testifying). He is joyfully worshipping! Lips shouting for joy as he sings praises to God. His redeemed soul also will shout for joy.

The emphasis is quite clear, in two short verses building up to the conclusion: praise, praises, praises! (71:22-23)

Mouth, lips, and now tongue being solicited into service and, again, God's righteousness is on display. (71:2,15,16,19,24).

The psalmist has wholly transitioned from petition to praising God for answering the petition and simply being himself with all of his excellences and this subject is consuming - all the day long (maintaining that pattern of continually and all day – 71:3,6,8,14,15,24).

Finally, we return to *shame* as this particular season of continuous worship appears rooted in the psalmist's petition having been answered and his enemy having been put to shame and disappointed. *Delivered from shame – Opening (71:1), Put the shamers to shame – Transition (71:13), and The wicked are shamed – Conclusion (71:24).*

The petition and praise of an old man that is becoming increasingly weak in the outer man and as robust as ever in the inner man. Declaring the wonderful excellencies of his deliver until his final deliverance home.

As your years increase... what are your petitions and praise? Do you pray more for strength and health or perseverance in faithfulness? Lord do not just deliver us *from* shame but also *to* worship.

³² VanGemeran, Pg.542

³³ Lawson, Pg. 354

³⁴ Lawson, Pg.356 An extensive list of references was provided in the commentary.