

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
LXXI. Handling Nostalgia In A Spiritually Failing World
(Psalm 71:1-24)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In today's spiritual climate, it is easy to struggle with nostalgia, a sad longing for past, better times:

(1) A letter by George Lampron of Watertown in the June 23, 2023, Republican-American, p. 6A, expressed nostalgia, asserting, "Of the 246 years since 1776, I have lived 91 of them . . . I've lived through nine years of the Great Depression . . . I worried about invasion in 1941 and nuclear war in the 1960s. I saw 40 uncles, cousins, and a brother go to the jungles of the Pacific. I lived the heights of Victory over Japan Day and Victory in Europe Day . . . I have the internal pleasure of knowing I did it my way and succeeded. Until now. I have never been so disgusted with the United States . . . (U)nder the Biden administration," I have been "as depressed as any human could be . . ."

(2) One can argue that nostalgia has always been with us: "An April Pew survey found that nearly 6 out of 10 (58%) Americans think the country was better off for people like them 50 years ago . . . (But) (i)n 1939, Gallup found that 62% of Americans thought people were better off in the horse-and-buggy era (though only 25% said they'd actually want to live then) . . . (I)n recent surveys, the 1980s and 1990s are starting to supplant the 1950s as the new 'good old days' . . . But . . . Americans were pining for the good old days back then, too (because) . . . in the 80s and 90s, popular culture was shot through with baby boomer and Gen X angst about contemporary society . . ." (Jonah Goldberg, "No, life wasn't better 50 years ago," *Ibid.*, June 21, 2023, p. 7A; parentheses ours)

(3) However, more than regular nostalgia is stirring people today – it's an alarm over a seemingly steep plunge in morality: (a) The April Pew Survey found that though 58% of Americans thought they were better off 50 years ago, among "Republican and Republican-leaning respondents, nostalgia for the early 1970s reached 72%," *Ibid.* (b) Mr. Goldberg's report that "baby boomer and Gen X angst about contemporary society" in the 80s and 90s was caused by their concern "that life was unsatisfying because it lacked purpose – or something," *Ibid.* (b) A recent poll by The Wall Street Journal and National Opinion Research Center found that "only 39% of respondents said that religion was very important, down from 62% in 1998" just 25 years ago. ("Cultural News," Answers, July-September 2023, p. 30) (c) Recent letters to the Republican-American give evidence of a concern over a steep moral decline: George Lampron's letter asserted, "The DOJ, the FBI, the teachers unions have more power than the People's House (of Representatives). When we speak, when we protest against certain subjects being taught in school or an obvious plan to influence an election, we are labeled domestic terrorists." (*Ibid.*, Lampron; parentheses ours) (d) A letter by Joe Bello of Waterbury (*Ibid.*, Republican-American, July 1, 2023, p. 6A) added ironically, "Christopher Wray's FBI and Merrick Garland's Department of Injustice have come a long way from being arbiters for truth and justice . . . Both departments have become highly weaponized and politicized since Joe Biden became president . . ."

Need: *So, we ask, "How does God direct that we handle the nostalgia we experience in a spiritually failing world?"*

- I. Psalm 71:1-24 was authored by an "unnamed, aged writer" who needed God's deliverance from trouble he faced even in his old age, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Psalm 71.**
- II. To address his current needs, he called upon the Lord for protection from wicked enemies, Psalm 71:1-4.**
- III. In Psalm 71:5-13, the psalmist prayed for God's help "based on God's lifelong care for him," *Ibid.*:**
 - A. God had been the psalmist's hope in Whom he had trusted since his youth, Psalm 71:5.
 - B. In fact, God had upheld him since his birth, so he would continually praise the Lord, Psalm 71:6.
 - C. The psalmist asked God not to forsake him in old age when his strength waned, for his foes spoke against him, and took counsel to destroy him, saying that God had forsaken him with no one to deliver him, Psalm 71:7-13.
- IV. Nevertheless, in his lifelong pilgrimage with the Lord, the psalmist testified that he had been taught by God to trust in Him for deliverance and to testify of God's help to the next generation, Psalm 71:14-24:**
 - A. The psalmist declared that God had "taught" (*lamad*, in the Piel verbal stem, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 540) him from youth about God's wondrous works, Psalm 71:17a.
 - B. Then, a play on words occurs in Psalm 71:17-18, describing the psalmist's calling at his late stage in his life:
 1. The word '*ad*' that means "until" in this context appears three times in verses 17-18, and each time '*ad*' is followed by a maqqeph, a short horizontal line connecting it to a word that is closely associated to it in meaning, forming a unique expression. (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 1036; *Ibid.*, B. D. B., p. 723-725; J. Weingreen, A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew, 1969, p. 12)

2. In verse 17, the *'ad* expression reads *'ad-hennah*, “until here (in time = now),” in verse 18a it reads *'ad-zignah*, “until (in time of) old age,” and in verse 18b it reads *'ad-'aggid . . .*, “until I declare [to the next generation] . . .” (B. D. B., *A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T.*, p. 244, 279 and 616-617 respectively)
- C. These three expressions convey the psalm’s theme that the psalmist had been taught by God to trust in Him and thus see His wondrous works “until now” (*'ad-hennah*), so “[now] in old age” (*'ad-zignah*) he would rely on the Lord to deliver him “until he had declared” (*'ad-'aggid*) to the next generation, teaching them his insight and testimony of a life of faith so that the next generation might live a life of faith in God!
- D. Psalm 71:14-16 and 19-24 describes the psalmist’s resolution to continue to rely on the Lord and to praise Him not only for God’s current help, but for the Lord’s record of faithful help throughout the psalmist’s life.

Lesson: *Though still facing serious trials from foes in old age, the psalmist relied on his confidence in God’s past help throughout life for current deliverance, and thus to teach the next generation to rely on the Lord like he did.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) To handle the temptation to struggle with nostalgia over today’s steep drop in morality in the world, (a) may we recall God’s past deliverances of us when we trusted in Him (b) for confidence to trust Him in our current trials (c) that we might teach the next generation to rely on the Lord.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and provide additional guidance . . .)

We apply this sermon’s lesson to the issues of concern mentioned in our sermon introduction (as follows):

(1) Each issue of concern in our introduction is caused by “woke” ideology that is actually fueled by Marxism, and Marxism is a false religion: its founders Engels and Marx viewed Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution with its idea of natural selection as a major support for their “class struggle” ideology that rejects man’s accountability to a personal Sovereign Creator God. (Bolton Davidheiser, *Evolution and Christian Faith*, 1976, p. 353-354)

(2) However, we have an application match for what we face in 2 Kings 2-6: (a) Pagan Baal religion, much like Marxism for us today, had been pushed on Israel’s people by evil king Ahab and his wife Jezebel (1 Kings 16:29-34). (b) So extensive and corruptive was this religion in Israel that when God “raptured” Elijah, taking him to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11), 42 young men mocked Elisha’s claim that God had truly “raptured” him, so God sent two female bears to kill the 42 young men. (2 Kings 2:23-24) Also, in 2 Kings 2:15-18, even apprentice prophets under Elijah and Elisha called “sons of the prophets” in the KJV doubted that God had actually taken Elijah to heaven to where they looked for Elijah’s body as if God had dropped it somewhere on the ground. (Similarly, belief in the “rapture” of the Church is doubted by some professing Christians and mocked by many “woke” parties today!)

(3) Thus, God used Elisha to teach the apprentice prophets to trust in God and not Baalism to meet their needs (as follows): (a) In 2 Kings 4:1-4, ***God met the INCOME needs of an apprentice prophet’s widow in proportion to her faith and obedience to God and Elisha.*** When she inherited her late husband’s debt that she could not pay unless her two sons were taken as slaves by the loaner, Elisha told her to borrow many vessels from her neighbors, then pour out what olive oil she had in a vase to fill up all those vessels. After she did so, Elisha told her to sell the oil required to pay off the debt and then live off of the rest! God’s provision was only as large as the widow’s faith and obedience to the Word of God through Elisha! (b) In 2 Kings 4:38-41, ***God met the HEALTH needs of the apprentice prophets even when good intentions were mixed with perilous ignorance.*** During a famine when Elisha had the apprentice prophets gather what vegetation they could get to fill a pot of stew, one prophet ignorantly put in poisonous gourds, but Elisha added some flour, neutralizing the poison so the prophets could safely eat the stew! (c) In 2 Kings 4:42-44, ***God met FOOD needs when the donations to the apprentice prophets were insufficient.*** When a believer gave some food to the apprentice prophets during a famine, and it was not enough to feed all 100 prophets, Elisha told the server that God had promised that if they ate the food that was set before them, they would all be filled and have leftovers. They thus ate, were filled, and had leftovers! (cf. John 6:5-13) (d) In 2 Kings 6:1-7, ***God met HOUSING needs when the apprentice prophets needed help erecting a building.*** After getting Elisha’s permission to build a bigger meeting place, an apprentice prophet lost the head of an axe he had borrowed when it flew off its handle into the Jordan River. The apprentice cried out for Elisha’s help, fearing that he might have to go into slavery to pay off the debt of the lost axe head, so Elisha threw a stick into the water, miraculously making the axe head float so that it could be retrieved.

(3) Like Elisha, may we who have seen God be faithful to us over the years teach the next generation that is exposed to the false “woke” religion of Marxism to trust in God and not Marxist entities or ideology for their needs!

May we trust in Christ died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God’s gift of eternal life. May we live by faith and teach and testify to the next generation to trust in Him as well.