

**THE PRAYER OF AN OLD BELIEVER**  
**September 11, 2016 morning service**  
**Psalm 71:17-18**

A few weeks ago I sat outside a hotel room in Edenborough, Scotland, opened my Bible, and just had my quiet time with our Lord. I found myself in Psalm 71 and God really drove into my heart some verses of scripture. I want to open that to you today in Psalm 71, verses 17 and 18. We believe that David is the Psalmist here. We're not sure. Spurgeon says it is so we know that's got to be close. We know David wrote Psalm 70 and we're going to find him and Solomon in 72 but we believe Psalm 71 is a carryover from the Psalmist, King David. David's an old man when he writes this Psalm.

In Psalm 71, verses 17 and 18 God gripped my heart and He said to me, "Your generation must teach another generation which much teach another generation." So this morning not that you have grandchildren but if you are old enough to have grandchildren I want you to rise while we read this scripture. If you're old enough to have grandchildren – you may not even have children but you're old enough to have grandchildren had God blessed you with children and your children's children. Okay?

Now I want you to look right here at me. If you're on your feet, you have a grave responsibility. You are to teach your children and you are to teach your children's children. That's why in the front of my Bible I keep a picture. I look at it before I preach every time. It's a picture of my family, my children, my children's children. At the back of my Bible I keep a picture of my grandchildren. I look at it from time to time to smile or pray but every time before I preach and I'm sitting over here, sometime along the special music I'll crack the Bible open and just look and say, "Dear God, speak to my kids. Help us raise up that generation and the coming generation in the way that they ought to go." Then David slays me. In Psalm 71 in verse 17 and 18 the old king of Israel says:

*O God, You have taught me from my youth [here's an old man saying, God, since I was just young you've taught me], And I still declare Your wondrous deeds. And even when I am old and gray [and bald – that's just my interpretation there a little bit, alright?], O God, do not forsake me, Until [God, you can leave me along after] I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come.<sup>1</sup>*

"Lord, don't leave me now. Stay with me, O God, until I can declare to the generation that's here and to the ones that are coming that have been born and are young or have not even yet been born that I tell them of Your power." Now listen to me. If you're on your feet, you still stand in the judgment of God for what you do with your children and your children's children and for what you do with the children and their

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children that may not even be related to you but that you are the influential one that God's raised up in their life for you to point the way.

You see, some of the most influential people in my own children's lives are not Liz and myself. They're people in this room that have helped us rear those kids. It's some of the folks that work with Dennis down here on Sunday morning and AWANA on Wednesday night. It's some of the folks like Ken Lobby that's teaching that New Believer's class we've just kicked off that's going and if you're a new believer you ought to know about it. If you know new believers, you ought to let them go in there for about four weeks. They'll help train them up. You see, you hold influence in your hand.

Now most of the time we like to have fun times with kids. It's good to have fun times. You give money and you spoil. That's okay but they're all ears to you. In Jesus' name, let them hear about the power of Almighty God. Teach your children and your children's children. This is the prayer of an old believer and all of you that are on your feet qualify to be old believers. Can I get a witness? Some of you are saying, "Preacher, if you let me sit down I'll say Amen louder." Well hang on just a minute. Now while everybody else is sitting down, listen to me now because when I come to the second service it's going to be backwards. There are going to be more people sitting down than there are standing up. You have responsibility to listen to elders and you see, if a church is not multi-generational in its ministry it will lose its effectiveness. We're not to be an old people's church or a baby boomer church or a generation X church or Y or Z or L, M, N, O, P or millennials or whatever name they tag. It takes all of God's people to be the family but this morning I'm zeroing in on us. Old enough to be grandparents and David has prayed a prayer that I want us to take a part for a few minutes this morning.

Father, teach us, speak to us, and help Olive always be a church that is multigenerational in its ministry so we can have a long term effectiveness. Bless the kids in children's ministry that are going to walk in this middle school building and help us be ready to work with them and teach them, I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now I want you to look in this text with me. David said, "Lord, you taught me since I was a young person and I declare three things." There's three things that David declares in this text. "Number one, Your wondrous deeds." "Oh," David said, "Don't ever forget what God's done." Amen? So you've got to look back. Don't let this generation forget what God's already done. History is a great teacher. Today's a historical day in America. Fifteen years ago when 9/11 came, it was a day when we cried out to God. It was a day God stirred some things within us. We didn't learn everything we should have learned but it was a day of history. We need to remember old days of revival and repentance. God, Your wondrous deeds and the great things You've done.

Secondly, he said, "I declare your strength to this generation." Notice it right there in verse 18. "I declare your strength to the generation that's here and your power." Number three. He declared God's wondrous deeds, God's strength, and God's

power. Now listen. Those are two Hebrew words. He declared God's strength and he declared God's power. I've looked into those two words and while on the surface they seem to be the same thing they really are not. The word strength is often translated arm. The arm of God. So I think what he's speaking of when he says the strength of God is the outward, the outward display of God's might. Then when he uses the word power to all who come it seems to be the inward working of God.

So what he's saying is, "Lord, I declare to this generation all of your mighty deeds, both those things of your arm that we see outwardly and of Your Spirit that we see inwardly." What you must be teaching this coming generation is that the deeds of God are both external and internal, the power of God with the arm of God, and the internal fortitude and persistence that God will give you to stay by the stuff even when your world is on fire. So we declare God's got great deeds. He's done them. The arm of the God and the power of God to this generation and the generation to come.

The phrase I want you to look at this morning is in verse 17 where he said, "O God, you have taught me from my youth." I want you to think back when you were just a new believer. God's taught you some stuff, hasn't He? Some of the things now you hardly think about but remember what God – I want us to trace David's life for just a few minutes. I want to give you seven things that God taught David that he was giving to the present generation and the generation to come. As we trace back through David's life, there are seven places I want you to look with me to see the things that God taught David in his youth and He's taught you and you need to remember these and pass them on to the coming generation. Let's jump in real quick.

Number one. God taught David, first of all, with the shepherd's crook. When you find David in I Samuel 16 and verses 11, 18, and 19 you find him on the back side of the desert. No one is around. Samuel's come and asked Jesse, "Are these all your sons?" and he said, "No, no, I've got one more boy and he's out there in the pasture looking over the sheep." Jesse said, "Bring him in here," and when he brought him he said, "There's God's man right there." You see, there are some things that you will never learn until you are by yourself on the back side of the desert as a young person. No one knows your name. You have no standing. You just don't have any influence. You're just by yourself with God. That's the first thing the Lord teaches you, that on the back side of the desert there's some things to be learned that you won't learn anywhere else and you need to teach the coming generation. You don't start where I start. You start at the very bottom of the rung and work your way up. That's the way it is. People say, "I want to come in and have a seat at the table immediately." Friend, you don't get a seat at the table immediately. You serve on the back side of the desert with the shepherd's crook.

Number two. The sling of Goliath. David's just a young man. You find him in I Samuel 17. He's still keeping those sheep and the boys, three of them, are down there fighting the Philistines and Jesse says, "Go down and take some refreshments to your brothers." He takes a tin cup of cheese and some other things down and when he gets there he hears this giant cursing the name of God and you know the story of how young

David went out and his brothers told him to shut up and sit down and he said, “No, I’ve learned some things out here on the back side of the desert,” and he went down. “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that curses the God of Israel?” The Bible says he went down and picked up five smooth stones and put them in his pouch. With his sling he went out. He would not trust the armament of Israel or the king of Israel.

Let me tell you, the second thing you’ve got to teach your children and your children’s children is that there are some situations where you have to trust God plus zero. Ain’t nobody going to help you. You fill out your resume trying to get your first job and you’re looking everywhere but let me tell you, there comes a time when you are by yourself and God alone is all you’ve got. Whenever you learn that lesson you’re going to be better off.

He picked up those stones. Somebody asked me once, “Preacher, why in the world did he get five stones?” Because Goliath had four brothers. He didn’t know who he was going to run into. It just took one shot. He let go of that sling and, bam, it hit him in the head. He fell. God taught David with the shepherd’s crook. He taught him with the sling with Goliath.

Number three. He taught him from the javelin of Saul. You remember in I Samuel 18, verse 11 and I Samuel 19, verse 10. David has been blessed and they’ve been singing the praises of David. He’s a young warrior and God’s raised him up and the Bible says that Saul became jealous. They’re sitting at the table one night having dinner and Saul had a javelin next to him and two times we find it in scripture. Now this is no way to treat your dinner guests. He takes a javelin and out of his anger and his jealousy, he throws that thing and I can just hear it hitting in the wall and David looks over like, “This is not good.”

What in the world did young David learn from the javelin of Saul? You must teach the coming generation that when God blesses them there will be others that will be jealous and angry with them and they must trust God above any friend. When the blessings of God come, the people you thought were on your side may not always stay on your side. When they get jealous and they get angry – friend, this is coming from someone that David had been singing hymns to and playing the harp for and yet jealousy and anger. You’ve got to teach your kids not to let jealousy and anger rule their heart but to trust God and God alone.

Number four. Not only from the shepherd’s crook, from the sling with Goliath, from the javelin of Saul, number four, he learned as a young man from the arrows of Jonathan. In I Samuel chapter 20, you remember the story, he went out and he didn’t know if he should run off from Saul or if he should stay and so Jonathan who became his dear friend, he said, “Jonathan, I don’t know if I ought to stay or go.” Jonathan said, “Listen, I’m going to go out and shoot tomorrow,” like some of you go out and shoot. He said, “If I shoot the arrow and it just goes a short way and I send the servant to go get it, you can know you can stay. But if I shoot the arrow over your head and it goes a long way you’ll know that when he runs you should leave here.” Jonathan of course feared

for his friend's life and he shot the arrow a long way and when the servant went to fetch it, David knew that he had to leave his friend.

You need to teach the coming generation to build Godly relationships with true friends and to trust who true friends are. If you've got five of them, you're a rich person. I'm talking about people that will lay down their life for you. Jonathan was willing to lay down his life and he shot the arrow to say, "Oh, my friend, run, run." David, before he ran, fell on Jonathan's neck and kissed him and hugged him and said, "I love you." David learned some things about true relationships from the arrows of Jonathan.

Number five. He learned – now don't miss this – he learned from the faithlessness, the faithlessness of Joab. Now when David finally became king, God gave him great people around him. One of those people was Joab. Joab was the general. Now let me tell you, Joab was a stud. This is a guy you'd want on your team. This was Patton and Eisenhower and McArthur all rolled into one. I'm telling you, Joab was the man and he stayed with David and he was there with David and he fought for David and he helped David but when David got ready to transfer the kingdom to Solomon, Joab went with the other candidate. Adonijah had put himself forward and said, "I'm going to be king," and Joab made an alliance. He left him after all those years. Learn this, teach the generation to come, learn that old friends may disappoint you and sometimes those you thought were close and did work with you will disappoint you in the end.

Now listen to me. That doesn't mean you don't trust people. That means you must make yourself vulnerable but don't be surprised when some faithful people become faithless people in your life. I've been here now, as I said, almost 26 years come October. This couple that I baptized today, I love that young couple. I sat at the table with them, prayed with them about trusting the Lord. I've been discipling, getting Ryan ready to be baptized. I've got people like that across this city, other families that I've done the very same thing with and they don't go to church here anymore. They just walked out the door. They didn't say goodbye. They didn't say why. They just walked out. I've called them and they won't talk to me. I've been to their house and they won't answer the door. If you do find them, they'll say, "Well, it's nothing, we just..." Well there's got to be something. You see, if I'm not careful I think they owe me. They don't owe me anything but it still hurts. When people you've led to Christ and when you've helped and you've disciplined and some of them, you've prayed them through storms and they go. You say, "Why?"

Learn this. There'll be some Joabs in your life that have helped you a long, long time and they'll just turn and go another direction. I don't know about you. Every now and then I'll talk to Liz and kind of, you know, I don't do it a lot but I just kind of unload my heart. A few years ago I said, "You know, honey, I don't understand this. Is it something about me? Did I do something?" She said, "Listen to me. Let me tell you something." I always know I'm fixin' to get me a real lesson. She said, "This happens in every church, everywhere." She said, "Most preachers just don't stay around long enough to see it. You've stayed and you're seeing the cycle." I said, "I don't like it."

She said, "You don't have to like it. God didn't make you that you had to like it." She said, "You don't get your joy and jollies by what people do. You get it from God's faithfulness, not the faithfulness of people." Amen.

I still don't like it when they leave. I love people. I really do. I'm not a big hugger and all that but I like people to come get right, stay, and be faithful but when people just walk away it hurts my heart and I wonder about that. Now on the other side – and our deacons, when we ordain deacons and we're getting ready here to nominate in the next two or three weeks for the next year. For the last five years every time we ordain deacons I say, "Listen, if you decide you need to leave this church you owe it to the pastor to come sit in his office and tell him why." That's the truth. If you're a lay leader and a deacon, an ordained man, most deacons we've ever had do that have done it but I've had one or two just walk out the door and not say, "Kiss my foot," or nothing else. I'll see them in town. I just want to run over there and say, "You sorry dog." I don't get my joy and my jollies from what they do. I get it from what God does. That's what you better be teaching this generation because people will let you down. Not all of them but you'll find those that'll hurt your heart. You learn from the faithlessness of Joab.

Number six. You learn from the faithfulness of Mephibosheth. Everyone say his name with me right now out loud. Mephibosheth. Did you spit on the person in front of you? Mephibosheth. I have read where in history that George Whitfield had the greatest voice of any preacher, that great man that led the spiritual awakening in America and it used to be said that women would almost faint when he said Mesopotamia and Mephibosheth. He had such a rich voice. Who in the world is Mephibosheth? We find him in II Samuel 9, verse 8. David is the young king and he said, "Is there anybody from Saul's family that I can be kind to?" One of the men said, "Oh yes, there's young Mephibosheth."

Now if you remember the story, Mephibosheth, when he was born, the midwife dropped him and it injured his feet and he couldn't walk. They brought Mephibosheth to David and said, "This is of Saul's family," and he put him at the table and said, "Young man, you will eat at the king's table for the rest of your life." In the word of God in II Samuel 9:8, Mephibosheth, Mephibosheth said, he came to David. I can see it. Those feet. It's like he's crawling and he bows and he said, "Dear king, I come like a dead dog unto you." That's faithfulness. Not my will, yours be done. And I'm telling you, what you'll learn is that there'll be people – now watch this. There'll be people that you think they're not much because they're wounded in their feet and they're crippled and it doesn't look like they've got a lot of giftedness and by the power of God He'll touch them and raise them up and they will become some of the greatest blessings in your life because it's not what man can do. It's what God can do with a man totally yielded unto Him.

You need to teach this coming generation. Don't look on the external. Watch what God can do with the faithfulness. There's an old boy at the First Baptist Church of Henrietta, Texas. The Bible says about David that he was comely, ready, handsome. This guy was the opposite of that. You'd see him and you'd think, "Oh." He didn't look

too good. He had some problems from his youthful days and his face was drawn. I'll never forget the Sunday. I'll never forget it, Brother Jerry. I hear Brother Jerry Wood over here hollering Amen. He so encourages me. I'll never forget it, Brother Jerry. I gave the invitation. That boy came down the aisle and his face was kind of twisted like this. I said, "Why have you come?" He said, "I've come because God's called me to preach." I remember thinking in my heart, God, you ain't called him to preach.

From that day forward I prayed for him and I used this phrase. I said, "This is God's unlikely candidate for kingdom activity." That's what I always called him. God's unlikely candidate for kingdom activity. In my eyes he didn't look too swift but let me tell you, he became one of the most powerful tools of God we had in that church. He became a janitor in a local school. He probably shared the gospel with more kids over there in that school than I ever shared with in all my life. He had a mind like a steel trap. He could remember anything. He could teach the word of God. Never let the coming generation miss the faithfulness of Mephibosheth. God may raise up somebody that you think, "Mmm, don't know about them."

Number seven. Not only did David learn from the shepherd's crook, the sling of Goliath, from the Javelin of Saul, the arrows of Jonathan, from the faithlessness of Joab, and the faithfulness of Mephibosheth, he also learned from the rebellion of Absalom. This is his own son. Absalom's been sent away and not allowed into the kingdom but finally David lets him in the kingdom and he stands out at the city gate. You know these people. They're in every church. People go up to see the king and when they go out – and maybe David didn't have time or whatever, old Absalom, he'd be leaning out there on the gate. They'd be walking by kind of grumbling around, "You know, if I was the king, it wouldn't be like this." You read it. That's what he said. "If I was king, things would be different around here." "If I was a deacon, if I was the pastor, if I was running that deal, if I was teaching there, it wouldn't be like that."

Absalom, the Bible says that he gathered the heart of Israel and they made him king. David had to leave the city and they clashed. You know the story. Absalom was handsome. He had that long, flowing, thick hair and when he ran up under that oak, his hair got caught in the limbs. If he'd have been in northwest Florida it would have been banana spiders that would have got him, wrapped a web around him. He's hanging in that tree and Joab when he used to be faithful came with three spears and ran him through. They went and told the king and David asked about the welfare of his son and he said, "He's dead." The king went out and wept at the death of his rebellious boy.

Never forget to teach this generation that sometimes even family will turn on you but you always weep even when judgment comes to your own family. Never get so hard-hearted that you can't believe God would do something fresh in your child's life. Sometimes your family, your own family will turn on you.

What is it we're supposed to teach this coming generation? Just one thing. Teach them this one truth. It is the key of life. Trust the power of God above everything. Above your family, above your friends, above your church. Hear me. This

key truth, teach the coming generation the power, the power, the power of God. Say that last phrase with me. The power of God. Teach them what? The power of God. We've got to believe that God can when man can't. Let me tell you, if we ever get that in your heart, in this generation, the coming generation, the generation to come after that, then we will believe God can save anybody. Amen. I'm telling you, God can save anyone because the key truth is the power of God. God can reach and save anyone.

That dear couple that I baptized today, it was Kelly's daddy that called me to the hospital on his deathbed. I went to that hospital room two years ago this coming Thanksgiving. I walked in and when I walked in the room there were, I don't know, ten, fifteen people in the room and I said and called his name and said, "He's asked me to come talk to him." I'm telling you, they got out of that room. It was like they evaporated. It was like rats getting off a ship. They tried to all get out the door. It looked like a three stooges cartoon. I'm telling you, they just rushed out the door.

Here's one of the leading business people in this city and I pulled up a chair and sat down and I called him by name. I said, "You asked that I would come." I didn't know him. He said, "Pastor, I've got one question." I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "I'm going to die. They've done everything they can do. They've done every procedure. I'm going to die. If God doesn't do a miracle, I'm going to die and I've got one question. Can you assure me that when I pass from this life to the next life that the first face I will see is Jesus? That's what I need to know." In my heart, I didn't say this out loud but I said, boy, I'm glad you didn't call some liberal that doesn't believe the Bible. I said, "Yes, sir. I can help you with that."

The Bible says to be absent from that body you're in is to be present with the Lord. You've got to know the Lord Jesus and confess that you're a sinner and call on His name. Jesus died for you. He gave His life for you and if you'll trust Him, I'm telling you, when you open your eyes on the other side, He'll say, "Welcome." I put my hand out and I said, "Just pray and ask God." I'll never forget it. He looked right at me and he said, "You know, preacher, I'm not too good at praying." I said, "Well you haven't practiced enough." Let me tell you, a dying man, he needs to know the truth. I said, "Just tell him what's in your heart like a kid." He prayed the most sophomoric prayer. He confessed his sin, asked Jesus to come in his life, forgive his sin, and save him. I prayed. We cried. He died. He got the reward and I'm still stuck here with you.

What I'm telling you, friend, is that God has the power to save anybody. I don't care who you are, how big you are, how lucky you are, I'm telling you, God will save you. It's why He came. If He can save Saul and make him Paul, if He can save Nicodemus, He can save you. God's got the power to save any man. I'm telling you, God's got the power to revive any church. Yes He does. He's got the power to revive any church, including Olive Baptist. He could do it. He's got the power to fix any relationship. He's got the power. If you get honest and transparent, I'm telling you, God can fix a relationship. Amen. You say, "Oh no, preacher." You don't know God if you don't think He can. Got put that together. The key truth you've got to teach this coming

generation is about the power of God. If God ever got in all this stuff we've got at Olive, it would be amazing. All these screens and microphones.

I baptized somebody. It was two weeks ago. I saw a guy down at the University of West Florida football game last night. We baptized his son. He told me yesterday at the game. He told me, he said, "You know, pastor, I'm amazed. I'd never been back up there in the back." He said, "It's amazing at the facilities we have at our church." I said, "Well it is. It's incredible." If God ever got in all this. I mean we make a little old bitty splash in the flesh. What if God? You see, some of our problem becomes we won't believe God but some of the problem is we won't get right with each other.

God can save any man. God'll revive any church. God can restore any relationship. Yes, sir. That's the God we serve. Now, Sharon, put that Psalm 71:17-18 back up on the board for me. Let's read this out loud all together. *O God, You have taught me from my youth, And I still declare Your wondrous deeds. And even when I am old and gray [and bald], O God, do not forsake me, Until [God, you can leave me alone after] I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come.*

Power. Power. Power. There's a whole lot of power songs. You know? "There's Power in the Blood." Yeah, there's power. That's what we've got to teach the coming generation is the power. It's too late in the game. Friend, let me tell you, just ten years from right now. If you get to 2025 and something doesn't happen in America, this church will be under incredible scrutiny. If the next three Supreme Court justices are named from the left, religious liberty will take such a beating and if you work at a place where if you don't take the side of certain morality issues and you're a member at a church that's on the other side, you'll have to decide, can you work where you work and still be the member of a church like this that's involved in hate speech?

You're going to have to decide. But you know it could be that if God's people pray, we may get some justices that go the other way. It could be that religious liberty gets an up. You don't know and you don't even know where they're going to come from. It's not just a Democrat/Republican thing. We've got some justices that Republicans appointed that ain't doing so hot. It's way too late in the game to think some political party's going to fix this. The truth we've got is we're going to trust God whether we live or die. That's what we've got to become is the people that trust the power of God. That's why you ought to be in that building tonight crying out, "O God, let the fire fall. Let the fire fall." Send the power and help me declare it to myself, to my children, and to my children's children.

God will save you if you'll call on Him. God'll work in your heart if you'll call on Him. You say, "Preacher, God's working in my soul right now." Then when Jon sings this song I want you to get out of your seat and walk right down here to the front and just tell me what God's doing in your life. Some of you may want to come lay your family before the Lord, I don't know. The call of God's in here. You may just want to kneel where you are and cry out unto God and say, "O Lord, do something fresh in me."

Thank the Lord for all the giftedness, all the things we have, the methodology but oh, it's just a hollow shell.

Right out here in this parking lot on this side there's a big oak tree. It's really pretty but it's dead. It's dead. It's got green leaves on it. You can run your hand through it. When you dig down in there – we're fixin' to have to take it down because if we don't there's going to come a little wind one Sunday and your car's going to be under it and you're going to backslide and expect the church to take care of that. You see, it looks good. There'll even be some people that will get on us for cutting it down. They wouldn't park their car under it. You see, I know a lot of churches that look good but when you look down on the inside, death. We need the power of God, that He might prune us and bring new growth.

Lord, there's somebody here that's going to get saved today. Somebody's going to join this church, going to come unto the Lord. God's call is in this room. Let's rise to our feet and as we stand, Jon's singing, you join him. "Lord, I'm coming. I'm confessing. I'm bowing."