

Psalm 11

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- 1 In the LORD I put my trust;
How can you say to my soul,
"Flee as a bird to your mountain?"
2 For look! The wicked bend their bow,
They make ready their arrow on the string,
That they may shoot secretly
at the upright in heart.
3 If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?

- 4 The LORD is in His holy temple,
The LORD's throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold,
His eyelids test the sons of men.
5 The LORD tests the righteous,
But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.
6 Upon the wicked He will rain coals;
Fire and brimstone and a burning wind
Shall be the portion of their cup.
7 For the LORD is righteous,
He loves righteousness;
His countenance beholds the upright.

The faith that forms our perspective, v1a.

In Yahweh I put my trust. Whatever is not of faith is sin (cf. Rom 14:23). Here is the great issue of this Psalm. David has received advice to operate out of fear (flee!) or frustration (what can the righteous do?), but this must not be the starting point for believers. So the Psalm starts at the starting point: faith in the Lord.

The circumstances that test our faith, v1b–3.

Fickle friends can be harder than fierce foes, v1b. While it is possible that this is an enemy taunting David, it reads more naturally as the advice of one of his friends or counselors. We can hear the anguish in the question in v1b. "How can you even say that?!" We are already in a battle against our own unbelief. How hard, then, when those who should be strengthening us are making it all the harder upon us! Surely this was the design behind Satan's leaving Job's wife alive (cf. Job 2:9).

The enemy may be strong, v1c. Apparently, David did not appear to be a match for his enemy, but rather like a little bird by comparison.

The enemy may be ready, v2a–b. The bow is already bent. The arrow is on the string.

The enemy may be clever or well-protected, v2c. The shooting is secret, literally "in darkness." This poses two problems. First, it's difficult to know from where the attack will come. Second, this rules out the possibility of response or preemptive attack.

The enemy may be effective, v3. We are not told what these foundations are (commentators speculate that it could be the law, or the priesthood, or the important institutions of the kingdom). We don't need to be told. The idea is that whatever the enemy has done seems to be so effective that it takes all good options off the table.

The present reality that faith sees in the midst of the circumstances, v4–5a.

Our refuge is unassailable and always with us, v4a. The word for "temple" is the same as the word for "palace." They are not two different things for the Lord. He Who is our refuge has no need to run anywhere, nor could He. He is always at home. He is not dependent upon the tabernacle or temple, as Habakkuk will later rejoice to quote (cf. Hab 2:20).

The foundations cannot actually be destroyed, v4b. Human kingdoms can be undercut upon earth, but the foundation of Yahweh's throne is out of the reach of the wicked. His throne is in heaven.

The Lord's wisdom is infinitely greater than the enemy's, v4c. Do the wicked shoot in the dark? They are not so clever as they think, for even the darkness is light to the Lord (cf. Ps 139:11–12). His eyes behold!

The Lord tests the wicked and the righteous, v4d–5a. How dreadful to be engaging one another primarily, when it is the Lord Whom we must first and foremost engage at all times! The wicked is being tested and proven wicked by his failure to realize that he is before the eyes of God. This magnifies God's glory in the judgment that is about to fall in v5b–6.

How dreadful would it be, then, if as the Lord is also testing the righteous, we are proven too similar to the wicked? But this would indeed be the case, if we give in to fear or anxiety. For we too, then, would be forgetting God and engaging first/primarily with man. But we know that the first great commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

The Scripture reminds us here that we are always before Him, and that He puts us in situations like this to bring out the fruit of that grace by which He has been working within us. He tests the righteous to prove out their righteousness!

The coming circumstances that faith finds weightier than the circumstances, v5b–7.

Yahweh hates the wicked (v5b, cf. 5:5), but He loves the righteous (v7a). And that is what is driving the end results. On the one hand, the suddenness and furiousness of the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah were just a foretaste of what is coming upon all of the wicked (v6). On the other hand, Yahweh is making His saints upright, because that is what He loves, and He is bringing them into a condition where they can behold His face (v7c, literally, cf. Heb 12:10–11, 14; 1Jn 3:1–3).

So when the wicked are raging and seem to be successful, and we wonder: "what is going on?!" We can answer that God is hating the wicked and increasing the destruction that they bring upon themselves but loving the righteous and purifying us that we might see His face. This is not cause for fear or frustration, but rather for faithfulness!

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are welcome to listen to the audio recording, which you may find via tynsa.com/hopewellarp)

All right, well we are on Psalm 11 tonight. Which in God's good providence. And this is a rather ordinary thing if you're just systematically going through the scripture in multiple places you very easily and quickly run upon whatever you need from the word and often in multiple mutually reinforcing spots in the word.

Well in Psalm 11, it treats situation where the wicked are out to get the righteous and there are some among the righteous who are giving counsel, like flee to the mountain. And the psalm is David and the Holy Spirit through David for all the godly giving a good answer to that kind of thinking when when the wicked are bearing their unholy arms as it were.

So, Start by reading the scripture. Psalm 11, these are the words of God to the chief musician. A psalm of David. And Yahweh I put my trust. How can you say to my soul Flee as a bird to your mountain. For look the wicked bend their bow. They make ready their arrow on the string that they may shoot secretly at the upright and heart.

It's a foundations are destroyed. What can the righteous do? Yahweh is in his holy temple. You always thrown is in heaven. His eyes behold. His eyelids test the sons of men. Yahweh tests the righteous. But the wicked and the one who loves violence his soul hates. Upon the wicked, he will reign coals fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be the portion of their cup.

For you always righteous. He loves righteousness. His countenance beholds the upright. Or more literally the upright behold his face there in the last part of her seven. So the Psalms starts out with the faith that forms our perspective. In Yahweh I put my trust read in Romans 14 verse 23, whatever is not a faith is sin faith has to be the starting point for how we view everything and how we respond to everything and so that's establishing why David can't take and why the godly can't take this counsel to abandon a post of duty.

Because that doesn't proceed from faith. And that's the great issue of the psalm. The advice has been operate out of fear flee, look at what the wicked men are doing and frustration now that the foundations are destroyed what can we do? But the godly ought not start from fear or frustration it may be wise at some point to take up a different position.

God knows he's even instructed his people to do so. But we don't abandon our duty we don't operate out of either fear or frustration. The psalm starts at the starting point faith in the Lord. It does go on to mention as we already have a little bit the circumstances that test our faith.

Seems that to me that the hardest circumstance the circumstance that actually led to the writing of the psalm is not so much what the wicked are doing, but what some of the righteous have done? Fickle friends can be harder to deal with than fierce foes. Well it is possible that flee as a bird to your mountain is an enemy taunting.

David it reads more naturally as the advice of his one of his friends or counselors not only in the way verse one in particular is written but in the psalm as a whole as he appeals to who y'all is what he always doing what Yahweh will do how what Yahweh loves.

These are the kinds of arguments that you make especially with those to whom they matter we can hear his anguish then in the question, how can you even say that to my soul even the idea of speaking to one's soul? Sometimes a Hebrew uses speaking to the heart to mean tenderly or speaking to the soul to mean pleadingly or sincerely.

And yet one of David's friends or counselors has perhaps even out of love for him, sometimes the those who are under a general or a leader will out of love for both the leaders person and the cause say you're too valuable to be out in front. And so the famous chant lead of the back for instance.

But to David this was like Job's wife. The one who is supposed to be helping him trust in the Lord and keep his post and do it as right as telling him to flee like Joe's wife who must who probably was left alive by Satan for that reason so he just curse God and die haven't you suffered enough dear?

So a fickle friend and this is not fickle towards us but fickle towards God can be harder than fierce foes. When we're reading the reports out of the early rain covenant church in China, it was the compromising churches that were hardest upon them because they weaken their hands and discouraged them and they even would compromise of the government and frown upon those fanatical reformed Presbyterians in the early Ranger.

And sadly many faithful churches in our own land have suffered similar in the last year. With those who are compromising out of fear or either of virus or of the government and it's response to the virus frowning and shaking their heads and saying you should really abandon your duty for a time.

Sometimes that's harder than the direct opposition of the enemy. The enemy on his part he may be strong he may be ready, he may be clever and well protected he may be effective these are all things that make circumstances hard for faith or circumstances such as would test our faith, he may be strong flee is a bird to your mountain.

The fowler and his his little bird that has helped us against him is a common image in the psalms and here apparently whoever said this has suggested that as things presently were David was not a match for his enemy. The enemy may not only be strong but ready the bow is already bent, it's on the arrow is on the string, that is to say he's got David cited in and he is ready to shoot.

The enemy may be clever or well protected. This third part of verse two that they may shoot and literally the word there is in the dark at the upright and heart and that presents two problems. If they're shooting in the dark, they apparently see David but he doesn't see them.

And the second problem then is he is unable to mount a counter attack or a preemptive attack. The enemy may be strong maybe ready may be clever they've executed their plan that ready to pounce and they've done it in such a way that they are undetectable and we are unable to counter they also may be effective.

First part of verse three the foundations are destroyed. Now there's some lot of speculation among the commentators what these foundations might be the law or the priesthood. Some important institution in the kingdom but we don't need to be told what the foundations are the significance of the foundations being destroyed as that whatever the enemy has done is so effective that it takes all good options for us off the table, or at least it seems to.

Says there's nothing that we can do that can have an effect. Of course the believer already knew that to be the case even when the foundations were there, it's not what we do that has the effect to begin with we do what God has called us to because he is the one who has the effect and is there ever a situation that is out of the reach of his arm or too hard for his hand.

Lord says, my arm is not shortened or my hand weakened. So the enemy is strong and ready and clever and well protected and effective. And that's the circumstances that test our faith. But the present reality that faith sees in the midst of the circumstances undoes all of those things what can the righteous do?

Well Yahweh is in his holy temple. Our refuge is unassailable and always with us the word for temple is important to note here is the same as the word for palace, so the advice is to David to flee and if this was during the time that. He was king.

That would imply flee the palace, but the Lord never flees his palace. The palace of God and temple of God are two different things he has no need to run anywhere and really he can't because he's always at home he's everywhere all the time he's not dependent upon the tabernacle or the temple.

And we aren't dependent upon tabernacle or temple to have him with us. Indeed those things looked forward to the Lord Jesus. Remember when he said he would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. He was talking about his body. One of his names is God with us.

The end of all things one of the repeated refrains and revelation 21 and 22 is the dwelling place of God is with man. God is always at home always in control and so when the Lord has told Habakkuk about how he's going to use the Chaldeans to punish his people.

Remember in Habakkuk the prophet starts by complaining about how bad God has let his people get and God says don't worry about that. I'm bringing the Chaldeans. I'm going to wipe him out back and says well that's worse. The Chaldeans are worse than we are. And of course, the Lord humbles his servant and restores to him the confidence of one whose hope is in the Lord alone and it doesn't matter what the Chaldeans or the Chaldean gods are or seem to be doing Yahweh is in his holy.

Temple let the whole earth tremble before him. He says there in the next verse and in Habakkuk chapter 2. So our refuge is unassailable and always with us which means by the way, the foundations can't actually be destroyed because the foundations aren't here on earth. Where's the Lord's throne according to verse 4.

Ya always thrown is in heaven. Well good. Providence to the wicked trying to undo the foundations of that throne. Sure, they may seem to undo the foundations of the throne of an earthly king but the Lord's anointed is not a merely earth leaning. His church is built by God himself.

The kingship is Christ who sits on the throne even now. And so the foundations of the society may be destroyed the foundations of parts of the visible church may be destroyed but our foundations if we belong to God in Christ, and if we are a true congregation of his church, they cannot be destroyed because the throne of the power of the true church sits in heaven the enemy doesn't have access to its foundations to destroy it.

And so let us not be shaken our refuges on a saleable and always with us the foundations cannot actually be destroyed and the Lord's wisdom is infinitely greater than the enemies. The wicked shoot in the dark it said in verse 2 at the upright and heart. Well, what fools are they who forget that God can see in the dark?

Remember Psalm 139 verses 11 and 12 which say I can't hide in the dark from you the darkness is as light to you well the wicked are not so clever as they think as verse 4 says his eyes behold. David may not see where the enemy is shooting from does that mean that God can't see where the enemy is shooting from we hear about conspiracies and rumors of conspiracies, we don't know what to believe it may be a lot more sophisticated and coordinated and, Nefarious evil even than anything we've supposed but suppose it was all of that the Lord can see exactly what they are doing.

His wisdom is infinitely greater than the enemies, in fact what he's doing is he's testing all of us the wicked and the righteous and so it's a dreadful thing to engage one another first of all, rather than engaging the Lord first and foremost and then interacting one and with one another out of obedience and service and trusting him.

Now the wicked is being tested and proven wicked by his failure to realize that he's before the eyes of God and this will magnify God's glory, so the end of verse 40 says his eyelids test the sons of men and then he says Yahweh tests the righteous and will will come to what he's bringing out of the righteous especially when we get to verse seven but when he tests the wicked, what are the wicked being shown to be?

They're being shown to be wicked so he says but the wicked and the one who loves violence his soul hates and so as the Lord tests the sons of men and diverse four, he's doing different things with each group when he tests believers he's bringing out a believers the righteousness that he's working in us by his grace he's sanctifying us sometimes that's unpleasant hebrews 12 tells us as the Lord Jason's us and it's painful for the moment but it's producing the peaceful fruit of righteousness it's producing the holiness without which we won't see him.

But it's not just the righteous that he's testing is it. Often the Lord lets the wicked gives the wicked leash as it were enables him to prove and demonstrate his wickedness to provoke the wrath of God all the more and we see that wrath in verse six don't we upon the wicked he will reign coals fire and brimstone where have we seen that fire and brimstone before?

It's in Genesis. 19, isn't it? God allowed Sodom to get extremely wicked and then his wrath broke out against them and then for the rest of the scripture the Lord often refers back to Sodom and Gomorrah as a reminder that the wicked ought not be overconfident because the wrath of God is gonna break in and it's gonna break in suddenly and it's gonna break in devastatingly.

We read about that in in the gospels. Jesus referring to Sodom and Gomorrah and they're judgment saying it was gonna be even worse for the cities around the Sea of Galilee there read about that and in Peter's letters. Well this isn't just saw them in Gamora because the fire and brimstone have something added to them.

And a burning wind a tempest of fire the kind of thing that. Smaller release film makers straight to be TV stuff yeah, they make these like fire nato fire hurricane movies and they're just trying to come up with the the most frightening spectacle that you can maybe get a few people to buy the film or view it or whatever.

Well God uses one of the most frightening images man can think of. A hurricane of hell. And he adds that to the language that was used in Genesis 19 of of Sodom and Gomorrah. That will be the portion of their cup. And so sometimes we look at what the Lord is for many we say, why is the Lord allowing them to do this?

Well part of the answer is because his wrathburn's hot against them. And he's giving them over to what will be a sudden and great destruction. But another part of the answer is. Because he's getting us ready to behold his face. And in order to behold his face, we need to be made holy.

He always righteous he loves righteousness. And the upright shall behold his face. That's what verse 7 says, he loves you. And he's doing for you that which will end in what you love a little bit now already but will perfectly love then. It's producing for you the ability to see his face to behold him forever and ever with full desire and satisfaction in him he always righteous he loves righteousness the upright behold his face, it's the kind of argument that doesn't work with an unbeliever.

I'm believers as I don't want to behold God's face. I'd rather watch football or go sailing or. Whatever else our hearts go after instead of fellowship with the Lord but the believer knows that that small amount of love that God has already given us for him and to behold his face the more he grows it and the more he reminds us and teaches us who he is in the word the more he awakens our appetite for him what's he doing he's working in us the character of Christ who is Christ he's God the son who for from all eternity has had this perfect love for and delight in his father and now our own hearts are being conformed.

To that. Act. And psalm 11 says that when the wicked seem out of control and unstoppable and impossible to defeat one of the reasons is that God is giving them over to their own destruction, but another reason. Is that he is using them in his love. To prepare us with that holiness that we need so that we can see his face.

Now doesn't psalm 11 transform for us the way that we think about various things that are going on in the nation.