

“A REFUGE IN TIMES OF TROUBLE”

Psalm 11

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INTRODUCTION

This psalm, along with Psalms 7:1, 16:1, 31:1, and 71:1, is a **psalm of trust**; David has taken “refuge” “in the Lord.” These words come out of the midst of a crisis. David is being antagonized by ruthless enemies”. David had been given some demoralizing advice (apparently by his friends) to which he here gives an appropriate response as to the reality of the situation for those whose trust is in the Lord, whose love and presence is better than mere safety obtained by human means: “*How can you say to my soul . . . ?*” This psalm shows that even though God necessarily “tries” His servants, **He never forsakes them. “Not the righteous, but the wicked have need to fear.”** (Perowne, p. 171)

The circumstances behind the psalm may be during the days of Saul’s pursuit of David, or maybe even better during Absalom’s rebellion when David’s kingdom had been established, yet the structure of society and rule were topsy-turvy, as reflected in v. 3.

Two divisions may be noted: The Timid Counsels of the Fainthearted (1-3); The Answer of Faith (4-7)

I. THE TIMID COUNSELS OF THE FAINTHEARTED (1-3)

A. Flee as a bird to your mountain.

Someone had advised him to “flee as a bird to your mountain.” Such advice was “still ringing in David’s ears as he begins his reply” (Kidner, 73). They had told him to seek “refuge”; **such voices are those coming from “the natural heart of the selfish and therefore short-sighted and cowardly . . . which always asks first, not What is right? but, What is safe?”** (Perowne, p. 172). He retorts that “in the LORD I take refuge.” **“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”** “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

1. “Birds do fly to forested mountains for refuge.
2. Mountains have often been natural places of refuge in times of danger.

B. The Wicked are Ready to Destroy You (2)

1. They have already fixed the arrow to the string.
2. They are bending the bow in order to shoot.
3. They will shoot when unexpected and covertly—“in the dark.
4. They aim at the innocent and “upright in heart.”

Again, the likely image is of a hunter pursuing birds—cf. David’s words to Saul in I Sam. 26:20—“as one hunting a partridge in the mountains.”

C. Things are too bad—there is no hope (3)

1. The foundations of society and morality are ruined.

2. The work done by the righteous is ruined—and nothing more can be done. Good people often give bad advice: such as Peter’s advice to Jesus in Mt. 16:22— not to die, or that advice of Paul’s friends not to go to the place of danger in Jerusalem in Acts 21:12. As Perowne points out, **trials and special pleadings coming from “well-meaning friends” are often much more difficult to handle than those coming from obvious enemies (p. 172).**

Such troubled times frequently cause good people to have “a feeling of futility”: “What can the righteous do?” The wicked [such can aptly describe the behavior of Saul’s men or that of Absalom’s men] seem to be sweeping “everything before them” (Leupold). **But, the obedient and trusting child of God has hope that the world cannot understand, and that even weak believers cannot claim.**

II. THE ANSWER OF FAITH (4-7)

A. The Lord is in Heaven (4a)

Those things which are built upon unsteady foundations (sand) may become ruined and that can be distressing; but the believer’s hope is solid and eternal. Temporal things are removed so that those things that cannot be removed may remain (Heb. 12:27). Habakkuk quotes “the Lord is in His holy temple” in 2:19, and then adds “let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

B. The Lord is not Unaware of the issues in the World (4b).

C. The Lord tests and evaluates the character and works of men (4b, 5a).

D. The Lord is Righteous in Character (7a)

E. The Lord will work justice—giving both righteous and wicked what they deserve.

1. His Relationship with the Righteous

- Righteous men and deeds He loves (7b).
- Righteous men are tested in order to be approved (5a).
- The Upright “will behold His face (7c).

2. His relationship with the Wicked

- Wicked men He tests (4b, 5a)
- Wicked men (those who love violence) He hates (5b).
- Wicked men He punishes : (6)
 - 1) With “coals of fire and brimstone”
 - 2) With “burning wind”—the portion of their cup

CONCLUSION

What have we learned about the Lord here?

- 1) He is highly exalted.
- 2) Yet He is not remote.
- 3) Nor is He unfamiliar with what is happening.
- 4) Nor is He indifferent toward the concerns of the righteous being mistreated.
- 5) Nothing escapes Him. Each man is under His surveillance.

- 6) “Each man’s actions are under continual scrutiny”—even the actions of kings and those in power and authority.
- Verse 1 showed us where the believer finds **safety**—“in the LORD.” The last line shows where the believer’s “heart should be”—“behold His face.” For “to *behold his face* is a goal in which only love has any interest” (Kidner, 74). The believer can behold his face “even in the midst of gloom and darkness” (Perowne, 174).
 - Psalmists did know spiritual fellowship here on earth (“an inward eye”; Ps. 27:4; 63:2; 21:6; 4:6), but they are knew how “to look beyond this to an unmediated vision when they would be ransomed and awakened from death ‘to behold (His) face in righteousness’ (cf. 16:8-11; 17:15; 23:6; 49:15; 73:23ff; 139:18)” [Kidner, 74]. Paul says, “We know that our light affliction worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” And John states, “When He shall appear . . . we shall see Him as He is.”

Are we really without hope when things in this world get very bad? No, not at all.

“In the Lord I take refuge.”

“The upright shall behold His face.”