

Psalm 11 • Resisting the Temptation to Run

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Psalm chapter 11 is just 7 verses. We're going to read through it, and then we'll pray, see what the Lord has for us.

Follow along now with me as I read. *“In the LORD I take refuge;. how can you say to my soul, ‘Flee like a bird to your mountain,² for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark 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 see, his eyelids test the children of man.⁵ The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.⁶ Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.⁷ For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.”*

Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank You for Your Word. And, as we do each and every Sunday and Wednesday, we pray for understanding and insight that You would open our hearts to receive from You and all that You desire to say.

As we get into this Psalm, Father God, I pray that You would just direct our hearts according to what's going on in each life and that You would bring application.

Give us the courage to walk out Your Word. We ask it in Jesus’ name, amen.
Amen.

The really cool thing about this Psalm is that it speaks to a situation that I believe that every one of us have gone through and certainly will again. It's that time in life when pressure mounts and life isn't going well at all. The enemy seems to be coming in from all directions, relationships aren't working, resources are stretched beyond the breaking point. It seems like everything and everyone is against you. It's just a bad time of life, it's a hard time of life.

And here's the big problem; we have these people in our lives who love us and they mean well, but they often give us the worst possible advice you can

imagine. And the reason they do it often is because they do love us and they want to see the pressure gone. They want to see us happy.

And so, often what happens is, family will come along and they'll do what is happening to David in this particular Psalm; someone or some group of people is commenting on David's situation which is so desperate that they are saying to him, run for the hills. You got to get out of here because this is a dangerous situation and, if you don't run, if you don't take matters into your hands and get yourself into a safe place, you are going to be in for some deep, deep trouble.

And that's what we read here. If you look in the middle of verse 1, it's written in poetic language but if you look at it here, in the middle of verse 1, what they're saying to David is, *"Flee like a bird to your mountain, ²for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string."* And that just means they're ready. I mean, they're primed and cocked we might say today, and this thing is ready to come down. It's going to happen.

He goes on, and this is what they're saying to him that, they're shooting in the dark. You're not going to see it coming unless you take this matter into your own hands and get yourself into a safe place. You're never going to even see it coming because they're shooting in the dark and they're aiming at the upright in heart and that's you, David, so, take this situation in hand and get yourself into a safe place.

And then, I want you to notice here what David goes on to hear in verse 3. Look in your Bible. It says, this is what they're saying to him, *"³if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"*

And this is something I hear a lot from people who take the advice that they shouldn't take from someone well-meaning who comes along and says, hey, what can you do? There's nothing else you can do. And they'll take that advice and then they'll come back to me later and say, well, what else was I supposed to do? I was literally between a rock and a hard place. There was nothing else I could do but run, run for my life. Take it into my own control, into my own hands and run for my life.

Well, we don't know exactly what David was facing as it relates to the particular issue he was going through that inspired these words. But we know that, whatever was happening, it was affecting those around him to the point where they were gripped with fear, and so, they were speaking that fear into his life. And I don't know if that's ever happened to you. I got to be honest with you, I rarely tell people when I'm going through a difficult season of life. And one of

the reasons is it bounces off people's fear mechanism and it comes right back at you. And that makes it worse sometimes. You want to be able to share with people who are mature enough to sit down and say, all right, let's put our faith and trust in the Lord.

But sometimes when you say to people, here's what's going on in my life, they go (Pastor Paul makes a sound of fear) and what they reflect back to you is just this fear based response that makes you feel all the worse for the situation. And then, after they've expressed their fear, they're like, well, what are you going to do? Because let me tell you what I would do; if I were in your place, man, I tell you... Or, my aunt went through that...or my uncle...my cousin...and let me tell you what they did; run! You need to get out of that situation. You need to get yourself free from that thing, or whatever the advice might be.

You got to be careful sometimes who you're talking to, because sometimes, again, people will respond in fear, and they communicate that fear to you, and you end up taking it on.

I want you to notice David's response. Look at verse 1. Because he starts off this Psalm with his response to these fear gripped friends or counselors, and he says here, "*In the LORD I take refuge.*" And that's David's established declaration, really for the remainder of this Psalm; "*In the LORD I take refuge.*" And what David is saying here is, I refuse to take the safety and protection of my life into my own hands.

Wow! That is amazing. Because, you see, it is hardwired in our DNA to protect ourselves. That flinch reflect when we know something's coming, that ability to just recoil and protect yourself. It is as natural as breathing. And along come these people to reinforce that natural inclination in David, you better run, buddy. You better protect yourself. You better do it now!

And David comes back and he says, no, in the Lord, I take refuge. And that's a very significant word when he uses, refuge. And here's why. We actually have...our youth group is called, Refuge. But you may not know that the word, refuge comes from a Hebrew root word that means, to flee for protection.

But, here's the deal; David is saying, if I'm going to run, I'm going to run for protection to the Lord. The Lord is my refuge. The Lord is the one I flee to. I don't flee away from the battle to save myself. I run to the Lord for that kind of protection. That's that initial declaration that he's making at the outset of this Psalm and, like I said, it's so important for us to hear because it's not natural for us to do that.

Can I just say that? It's not natural to trust the Lord, okay? Let's just admit it. It's supernatural. What's natural is to protect myself, is to run and to do what I feel like I need to do; to either fix the issue, resolve the issue, or just run from the issue, whatever the case might be.

What David is saying is, I am going to resist my natural temptation to protect myself and to resolve the issue in my own strength. And instead, I'm going to run to God.

And then, in the following verses that he gives us in this Psalm, he describes the reasons for trusting in the Lord. And we're going to put these on the screen for you. In fact, we'll title it for you, Reasons to Trust the Lord. Alright?

REASONS TO TRUST THE LORD

And David is basically going to outline 4 reasons here that he responds to these counselors of his as to why, instead of running, he's going to put his trust in the Lord.

And the first is found in verse 4. Look with me there. Verse 4. It says, "*The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven;*" Why would David mention the throne of God? Well, it's all centered in this first reason of why we should trust the Lord.

REASONS TO TRUST THE LORD

1. God is still on His throne

God is still on his throne. And you see, that's such an important thing to say, God is still reigning, even in the midst of my painful trial, even in the midst of this difficult, and the panic, and the difficulty, and so forth.

And the temptation that we feel to run in our own strength is based on the idea that something else is now in charge. Are you with me? In other words, when we're going through a very challenging and scary sort of a situation in our life, that situation, whatever it is, is essentially communicating to us, I'm in charge of your life right now. You are mine.

And so we feel like I've got to do something. What David is coming back and saying is, no, even in the midst of this situation, God is still in charge. He's still on the throne. He still rules. He still reigns. And I am not going to allow the

difficulty of this situation, even the counsel of my well-meaning friends, to detract me from the understanding and the belief that my God is still in charge.

That's huge, isn't it? That's absolutely huge. What David is basically saying when he says God is on His throne, he's saying God is sovereign. And I hope you know what that word, sovereign means. The word, sovereign means no one is above Him.

And that includes the trial you're going through right now or the difficulty you're facing. It is not above God. It's not higher than He is. He is higher than it, right? And all things submit to the One who is ultimately in charge. And the sovereignty of God is expressed in many ways but, Jesus expressed it so beautifully to us. In Matthew chapter 10, let me put this on the screen for you.

Matthew 10:29-31 (NIV)

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

He says, "*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?*" And then, look at this, He says "*Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.*" And that means apart from His sovereign oversight. And He says, "*Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth so much more than many sparrows.*"

Now, this is a wonderful passage that reminds you and I God is in control. Listen, if He knows and even a sparrow doesn't fall out of a tree apart from His will, how do you suppose He's overseeing your life. You, His beloved child.

Do you really think He's blind to what's happening in your life? Do you really think He's cut off or that He's helpless to do anything about it? Do you really think the problem you're going through is above Him?

David is making the declaration that we need to make at a time like that. God's on the throne. You'll hear people say that sometimes when they're telling you about their problem. They'll say, well, here's what's going on right now. But, you know what? God rules. He's still on the throne. And that's a good thing to say. That's exactly what David is saying.

Reason number 2. Let's keep reading in verse 4. He goes on to say, “*his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.*” ⁵ *The LORD tests the righteous,*” And so, we'll put this as number 2 on our list here.

REASONS TO TRUST THE LORD

1. God is still on His throne
2. **God sees and tests**

Reasons to trust the Lord: 2, **God sees and God tests**. All right. There are times in our lives when the Lord allows challenging situations, there's no better way to put it, to test us and our faith in Him. Let me remind you of what James wrote in James chapter 1.

James 1:2-3 (ESV)

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

He said, “*Count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*” And that's another word for perseverance.

Here's the point: God allows difficult seasons to come into our life not to torment us, not to torture us, but He does test our faith to see where it's at. I don't like tests. I've told God that. I don't like them any more than I did when I was in school. And the teacher said, close your book, put them away, take out a pencil and a piece of paper. We're going to have a test. It's like, shoot me now.

I did not test well in school. I honestly didn't. I don't have a good memory for irrelevant facts and I deemed most of it irrelevant. The majority of it, so testing was never fun. And the tests of the Lord are just about as fun as they were in school. But, here's something I do know: God's testing have this incredible benefit of bringing perseverance into my life. And I need to learn how to persevere, and so do you.

Have you ever seen a believer who's going through a hard time? Who's been through enough hard times, they've learned how to persevere in the Lord, and to trust in Him, and to wait patiently for the Lord's deliverance? It's an amazing thing, it's a beautiful thing, it's a lovely thing.

We see it, and we're all just like, wow. Have you ever gone to minister to somebody, and they ministered back to you? I mean, you went there to go help

encourage them and you walked away encouraged because that person had learned how to persevere in the midst of trial. And that's what the testing of the Lord do in our lives. And, you know what?

When we take the advice to take an easy way out, which is not perseverance, but to run for your life, or take it into your own hands, try to work out your own deliverance, your own fix.

We miss out on all that incredible benefit of learning how to persevere and to trust the Lord in the midst of trial. We miss it. And so, you know what happens? God's got to bring us by that milepost again, and again, and he'll keep doing it until we start learning lessons along the way.

Reason number 3 is laid out at the end of verse 5 and then on to verse 6. Look with me in your Bible. David writes, *“but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. ⁶Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.”*

What is this all about? Well, these verses remind us that God is just. In other words, He's the final Judge. And that's number 3 that we'll put on our list.

REASONS TO TRUST THE LORD

1. God is still on His throne
2. God sees and tests
- 3. God is Just**

God is Just. Reasons to trust Him. You see, a lot of David's issues, a lot of the fearful circumstances that came into his life were people issues. There were people who hated him, who desperately wanted to hurt him, or whatever. And David had to learn that God is the Judge.

God is just and He's going to take care of these things. Maybe not in my perfect timing, but He ultimately will and I need to learn to trust Him to do that. And that sort of a reminder gave David great confidence in the midst of all this advice he was getting to run for his life or to take matters into his own hands.

You'll remember that on two separate occasions when David was running from king Saul, God gave Saul into David's hand. Two different times where he could have done whatever he wanted. He could have taken the matter into his own hands and killed the man, and he even got encouragement from his men to do it that way.

And the men even couched it in language from the Lord. This is the work of God. He's given your enemy into your hands. One of them even offered to do it for David. Because there was Saul's spear sitting right next to his head.

Remember, he was asleep. God had put him into a deep sleep. David and one of his other men crept into the camp and one of David's men said, I'll just take his spear and just thrust it through once. That's all it'll take. We'll be done with this thing.

And what did David say? No. This is, that's God's job, not mine. I am not going to exact judgment. I'm not going to step into that role of judge. Meeting out justice, that's not what God has given me to do. I'm going to let the Lord take care of it. And, you'll remember, the Lord ultimately took care of it.

The point is that David learned through those circumstances to trust God instead of taking matters into his own hands and so forth. David is essentially saying here, I don't need to be afraid. My God is going to judge those who are in the wrong. If it's people that are attacking me, or people are behind some of the things that are causing me to be afraid, I'm going to leave that to the Lord.

And finally, the fourth reason to trust God. Look with me in verse 7 in your Bible. It says, "*For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds;*" And then, I love this last part, "*the upright shall behold his face.*" And, I'm going to sum up that whole verse there as our fourth reason to trust the Lord and that is the Lord favors the righteous.

REASONS TO TRUST THE LORD

1. God is still on His throne
2. God sees and tests
3. God is Just
- 4. The Lord favors the righteous**

The Lord favors the righteous. What David is basically saying here is that the righteous are objects of God's favored regard and, therefore, they have nothing to fear. Listen to this, this is important. The righteous are God's favored. He gives them favor and, therefore, they have nothing to fear. I want you to see this, how David wrote this same sentiment in a different Psalm, somewhat later on. On the screen, from Psalm 55.

Psalm 55:22 (NIV)

Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.

Alright, there it is. There's a promise from God's Word that He will not let the righteous fall. And so, there's this favored status that God gives the righteous.

Now, here's the problem that most people have: they would quickly say, well, that doesn't include me because I don't think I'm righteous. Oh, yes you are. One of the things we learn from the New Testament is that when we come to Christ, like we talked about during Communion, and we receive what He did on the cross for us, the Bible says that He imputes righteousness to us. In other words, it is given to you and I as a gift, and righteousness is right standing before God.

Are you righteous before God? Yes, I am. Is it because you're such a great person? No. It's because of what He did for me. Now, through Jesus, I have right standing before God. You know what that means? I have favored regard. Yeah, like teacher's pet. I have favored regard with the Lord. And that's what David is saying here in this Psalm.

And he's responding to these people that would say, run! Or, take it into your own hands, or whatever the thing might be. And he's saying, why? What do I have to fear? Right? What do I have to fear? In fact, let me show you how Paul said the same thing from Romans chapter 8. He said,

Romans 8:31 (NIV)

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Here's the point. Do we believe it? Do we believe it? Or are we just like, Well, those are nice words in the Bible but I'm not really sure they apply to me. Listen, they apply to you. They apply to you and they apply to me. And you and I don't need to hear the voice of the fearful who say run or you better... if you don't...you better get your act together...you better take this thing in hand. Listen, here's what I suggest you do...let me tell you what...I talked to this person...

It all comes down to this: they're telling you to run. And the last thing we need to do is run. The first thing we need to do is take our issues to the Lord and let Him be our refuge. I choose to trust the Lord.