

Psalm 11

[To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David]

1 In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?

It is not in man-made fortresses or strong holds that the Lord's children place their trust, but only in the Lord – his power, his love, his mercy and his faithfulness.

That being the case, the Psalmist asks how anyone could suggest to him that he flee in fright as a timorous bird from the fowler to yonder mountain. The idea conveyed by this language is that of a flock of birds with a hurried flap of wings fleeing for their lives. So we see this concept in the following passage: **Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest.** (Psalm 55:5, 6).

The true Christian, in perilous times, *should make God his fortress, and continue doing his duty in his station; he should not, at the instigation of those about him, like a poor, silly, timorous, inconstant bird, either fly for refuge to the devices of worldly wisdom, or desert his post, and retire into solitude, while he can serve the cause in which he is engaged. Nor, indeed, is there any mountain on earth, out of the reach of care or trouble.* (Benson). **Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.** (1 Samuel 26:20).

²For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.

If nothing else, we see from this language imminent danger to the believer (represented by David). The arrow is on the string and the bow is bent. The sniper has his victim in the gun's sights. A deadly blow is about to occur at any moment.

And the goal is to do this mischief privily, in darkness, secretly and treacherously. They are not interested in a fair fight in the light of day but they mean to do their destructive antics when their victim is unawares.

This they do to the upright in heart, those who have manifested integrity towards God and his word and have faithfully served the true and living God.

Please note all of this is prefaced with “lo”, suggesting the state of affairs described in this verse is amazing and of vital interest. The etymology of that word is an exclamation of surprise, grief or joy. This is big and important stuff that you better pay attention to and grasp. **When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.** (Matthew 2:9).

³ If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

The first obvious inquiry here is what is meant by “foundations.” That term certainly includes principles of morality and laws – those things on which any society rests. So, we find Benson remarking: *If men have no regard to laws and public decrees, which are the foundation of human society, but will boldly violate all known and standing rules of justice and truth; what can the righteous do?* Clearly, this condition of affairs exists today in our country and other parts of the world. Lawlessness has become a hallmark of American society. Failure on the part of governmental authorities to fairly and equally enforce existing laws has only caused that condition of affairs to grow and flourish.

Yes indeed! When the foundations are destroyed, truth is no longer respected, justice is no longer practiced, fraud and violence have taken the place of honesty and honor, error prevails and character for integrity and virtue no longer affords any security or recognition. Anything goes; it’s the wild, wild West in spades.

Looking at some other scripture may further enlighten us. At Psalm 75:3 these foundations are referred to as **pillars of** the earth. Psalm 82, a Psalm we often look at on the topic of unjust judges, proclaims that **all the foundations of the earth are out of course** when judicial corruption is the standard fare. (Psalm 82:5). The image in Psalm 82 is that of a house shattered by an earthquake. Ellicott tells us a better rendition of this language would be: “If the foundations be destroyed, what will become of the tower or superstructure?” On September 11, 2001 we saw the answer.

What can the righteous do when such a condition prevails, as it surely does in this time and place of human history? Well, first, the righteous should place no trust, confidence or hope in that miserable condition of affairs extant in the earth. See it for what it is. Second, the righteous must place all trust, confidence and hope in their Savior, go to the throne of grace, go to God in his holy temple, and plead for relief, escape, wisdom and understanding. Third, the righteous should work to build

each other up in this most holy faith, placing no truck in the world's operations. Fourth, constantly affirm the truth of God, the soundness of the Word, and contend earnestly for it. Fifth, rejoice in the slanders, calumnies and persecutions the world will doubtless throw your way, blaming the righteous for the failing foundations.

There is likely more the righteous can do, a sixth and more serially, but those five courses of conduct and behavior just mentioned will go a long way towards being an effective antidote to the collapsing foundations.

⁴The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

In substance the Psalmist says he has nothing to fear because he had a protector in heaven that he can appeal to for help, defense and safety. Given that the Lord is in heaven, we know that the world is not governed by chance and all wicked designs lie open before him. The heavenly throne assures us that God is king, ruling the universe. He administers his government unerringly from heaven.

From the Treasury of David we glean these good words: *"Jehovah's throne is in the heavens;" he reigns supreme. Nothing can be done in heaven, or earth, or hell, which he doth not ordain and over-rule. He is the world's great Emperor. Wherefore, then, should we flee? If we trust this King of kings, is not this enough? Cannot he deliver us without our cowardly retreat? Yes, blessed be the Lord our God, we can salute him as Jehovah-nissi; in his name we set up our banners, and, instead of flight, we once more raise the shout of war.*

Strong scripture tells us more of this heavenly temple: **Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.** (Micah 1:2, 3). **Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.** (Revelation 7:15).

Eyes and eyelids! Here we detect the power of seeing and the potency of penetrating vision. The Lord thoroughly, exactly and accurately discerns all men and all that is in men, their most inward and secret actions and motivations. God's eyes see right through everything. The eternal Watcher never slumbers and his eyes never know a sleep.

Barnes reports on this scripture: *He sees everything in all parts of his vast empire, and therefore he knows all the purposes of the wicked, and all the wants of the righteous. The thought here, as one imparting a sense of safety, is, that God sees us. He is not ignorant of what our enemies are doing, and he is not ignorant of what we need.*

⁵The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

There's no free pass even for the righteous. The Lord proves them, searches them and tests them. This trying or testing process is elsewhere addressed in scripture. **Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.** (James 1:12). **Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.** (1 Peter 4:12, 13).

The Lord tries and exercises his sheep by afflictions, or corrects them for their sins, but such is no sign that he does not yet love them. To the contrary, it is a token of that love and he will in due time deliver them from all testing. It is a purification or refining process. **And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God.** (Zechariah 13:9). This **trying of your faith worketh patience.** (James 1:3).

God may think fit to try the fidelity of him whom he knows to be upright, by many adversities, that he may afterward give him the more illustrious testimonies of his approbation and love, as well as that he may thereby correct the remaining imperfections of his character, may purge away his dross, and more thoroughly refine him for his Master's use. (Benson).

Now contrast that loving and beneficial faith-trying with the Lord's attitude towards those who are wicked and love violence. This verse says the Lord hates those people. Again, we say, GOD HATES!!! Unless there is genuine repentance, God will surely severely and eternally punish those enemies of God.

The people who are here described as being hated by God are violent. Just look back at verse 2 discussed above. Moreover, consider the crucifixion, the ultimate act of violence. Indeed, one can fairly say the Bible tells of this violence

and blood thirst from early in life to life's conclusion, and has so been from the beginning. **Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.** (Matthew 2:16). **And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.** (Genesis 4:8).

They are quick to resort to weapons of violence. And worse, this kneejerk tendency towards violence is directed at the Lord's people, who are gentle, meek, mild and harmless. They display and implacable hatred towards the Lord's people and, as Barnes writes, *all such persons [are] the objects of the divine displeasure, and [will] be appropriately punished.*

⁶Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

Rain: Comes directly from the hand of God; plentiful, swift, sudden, violent and unavoidable. Such is a fair description of rain that falls from heaven. Consider these comments from Pink from his exposition of Hebrews:

There is nothing in nature that God assumes the more into His own prerogative than the giving of rain. The first reference to it in Scripture is as follows, 'For the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth' (Gen. 2:5). All rain is from God, who gives or withholds it at His pleasure. The sending of rain He appeals to as a great pledge of His promises and goodness: 'Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven' etc. (Acts 14:17). Whatever conclusions men may draw from the commonness of it, and however they may imagine they are acquainted with its causes, nevertheless God distinguishes Himself from all the idols of the world in that none of them can give rain: 'Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?' (Jer. 14:22). Hence the prophet said, 'Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain' (Jer. 5:24).

Snares: Several concepts here, all of which are good but combined are quite potent. One would be a noose, such as we read of in 1 Corinthians 7:35: **And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you** (think cowboy lassoing a cow), **but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.** A second would be coals of fire, as we find in Psalm 18:13: **The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice;**

hail stones and coals of fire. A third would be fuel for burning fire as described in Proverbs 26:21: **As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.** A fourth would be what we would see in current use, as found for example in Job 18:10: **The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.** And another example also from Job appears at chapter 22 verse 10: **Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee[.]** Wicked men are often surprised with these snares that come when they are least expected, from which they cannot escape or otherwise untangle themselves, but instead are held fast and destroyed by them.

Fire and brimstone: Who can see or hear those words and not instantly think of the destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah and the surrounding cities? **Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven** (see the twice mention of Lord in this single verse?); **and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.** (Genesis 19:24, 25). That, my friends, is scorched earth! All mankind knows of this conflagration, just as they know of the flood. It is stamped indelibly on the human heart and mind. The topography and geology of this place witnesses to it even today. History knows it. Writers speak of it. Shakespeare alluded to it in Richard II: *Put we our quarrel to the sill of Heaven who, when he sees the hours ripe on earth, will rain hot vengeance on offenders' heads.* And the Bible describes and references this event from beginning to end, including that famous Jude passage that is contained on a banner that hangs over the entrance to this building: **Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.** (Jude 7).

Horrible tempest: Literally, wind of heats; this combines the ideas of heat and violent motion. The word is simoom which is a strong, dry, dust-laden and scorching hot wind, generally found in Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, Syria and the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. The word simoom comes from root words meaning “poison wind.” The sudden onset of a simoom may cause heat stroke because the wind brings more heat to the body than can be disposed of by sweat. The Nuttall Encyclopedia describes a simoom this way: *The storm moves in cyclone (circular) form, carrying clouds of dust and sand, and produces on humans and animals a suffocating effect.* And please note, this is a “horrible” simoom we read of.

*Portion of the wicked person's cup: A proverbial phrase in Scripture: God's gifts and dispensations, whether pleasing or painful, consolatory or afflictive, especially the latter, being ordinarily expressed by a cup, poured out and given men to drink. (Benson). This is their portion, and as it were the meat and drink appointed to them by God. This shall certainly and unavoidably be their state or condition; which is oft called a man's part or portion, * * * He alludes to the ancient custom of masters of families, or of feasts, who used to distribute the several portions of meat to their domestics or guests. (Poole). **For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.** (Psalm 75:8).*

⁷ For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

Jehovah is righteous; he loves righteousness. The idea is that God himself is righteous and, consequently, he loves those who are righteous in him. **Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting, and I shall live.** (Psalm 119:142-144).

When speaking of God's countenance the concept is similar to his "eyes" and "eyelids" addressed above at Psalm 11:4, to which you are referred. Here, we understand that God's fully informed and penetrating eye towards the upright is an eye of approbation with true and tender paternal affection and watchful and gracious providence. **And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.** (Exodus 2:25). **But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews that they could not cause them to cease [building][.]** (Ezra 5:5). **Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.** (Psalm 33:18, 19). **The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.** (Psalm 34:15).

And for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good. (Nehemiah 13:31).