

Psalm 11
Trusting God When the Wicked are Powerful

Introduction: In the first book of the Psalms (1-41) we find the sufferings of the historical David. This is the second psalm in Pss. 10-14 that focuses on the wicked. David's reflections in Pss. 10-14 focus on the kind of people who engage in the 2:1–3 rebellion against the Lord and his Messiah. (James Hamilton) But even though the wicked abound, Yahweh is still in His holy temple. Personal experience is real, but sound doctrine is even more sure.

Superscription: *For the choir director. Of David.*

1) Struggling in face of pessimistic advice—11:1-3

- a) He makes a statement of faith—11:1a
 - i) ¹ *In Yahweh I take (have taken) refuge* [Qal pf.];
 - ii) Cf. Ps. 2:12; 5:11
 - iii) See the pattern in Pss. 10-14 (James Hamilton). In Ps 10 he prays with humble vehemence; in Ps 11 he reflects on God's character and presence; in Ps 12 he celebrates the certain purity of God's word; in Ps 13 he trusts, rejoices, and sings; and in Ps 14 he longs for the restoration of the fortunes of God's people.
- b) By faith he questions manward advice from the fainthearted—11:1b-3
 - The advice of fear from the fainthearted is based on experience.
 - Often, this type of advice comes from someone who cares about you, not from your enemy.
 - i) You are told you are defenseless: *how can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain;"² for, behold,*
 - (1) They are locked and loaded: *the wicked* (the unrighteous) *bend the bow,*
 - (2) They hope to hide their sin: *they make ready their arrow upon the string to shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.*
 - (3) This advice mistakenly assumes that safety/self-preservation is most important.
 - ii) You are told the situation is hopeless: ³ *If the foundations* (the ground rules of law and order) *are destroyed, What can the righteous do?"*
 - A negative answer is assumed for this question.
 - (1) This is a time when all the normal protections and securities for God's people disappear. It may indicate a time when the social fabric of life is disintegrating and all the glue seems to be going out of whatever normal civil order seems to be. (D. R. Davis)

- (2) Alec Motyer puts it this way: All the old certainties are gone, nothing is secure or stable; you can't tell how things will be from one day to another—and there's nothing you could have done about it!
- (3) This hopeless question ought to be answered as in 11:1a: take refuge in Yahweh.

2) Trusting in the character of Yahweh—11:4-7

- a) The wicked cannot touch the sovereign Yahweh—11:4a (refers to God the Son's dual role)
 - i) As Priest: ⁴ **Yahweh** (emphatic) *is in His holy temple;*
 - ii) As King: **Yahweh's** (emphatic) *throne is in heaven;*
 - iii) But this does not mean He is distant or indifferent to the believer.
- b) Yahweh examines everything the wicked plan and do—11:4b
 - Don't confuse Yahweh's stillness for inactivity but concentration. (Derek Kidner)
 - i) He perceives everything: *His eyes behold,*
 - (1) Even in the dark! (cf. 11:2)
 - ii) He evaluates everyone precisely: *His eyelids test the sons of men.*
- c) Yahweh is the judge—11:5
 - i) Toward the righteous: ⁵ **Yahweh** (emphatic) *tests (refines) the righteous,*
 - ii) Toward the wicked: *but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.*
- d) An appeal for justice—11:6-7
 - i) The prayer itself—11:6
 - (1) May Yahweh catch them: ⁶ *May He rain snares upon the wicked;*
 - (2) May Yahweh judge them: *fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.*
 - (a) Like what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen. 19:24)
 - ii) The basis for the appeal—11:7
 - (1) Yahweh's character:
 - (a) ⁷ *For Yahweh is righteous, He loves righteousness;*
 - (2) Yahweh's promise: *the upright will behold His face.*
 - (a) Looking forward not simply to worshipping an eternally transcendent God, but enjoying intimate fellowship with Him. (MBC)

3) Things to remember:

- a) The most religious, well-intentioned counsel may lead to living via unbelief. Or, as H. L. Ellison has said: *The love of your friends will often create your most subtle temptations.* (D. R. Davis)
- b) You can either look at the wicked and the problems they cause, or you can look at God.
 - i) The God of the Bible is not a formless blob of celestial protoplasm, not some sort of cosmic jello with a sickly smile. He has a nature, a character, positive and negative. He is not the grand relativist but the living extremist. Let the flaming passion of these words slither down the throat of your soul and see how different this virile biblical God is from the sentimental deity men imagine. There is nothing bland about Yahweh. (D. R. Davis)
- c) We are reminded by Allan Ross: But in the meantime the wicked have to be endured. There are times when one is tempted to flee, but if that is done out of fear and not by faith, it is wrong. The believer must live by faith, and that includes knowing when to leave and when to stay. By staying one can champion righteousness in the midst of a corrupt society, even though there will be malicious attacks and persecution. The believer must not give in to a corrupt environment, and if by remaining faithful the believer suffers for it, at least the suffering will be for righteousness's sake.
- d) D. R. Davis reminds us that faith needs three things: faith needs ***discernment*** to filter out counsels of despair and fear; faith needs ***vision*** to see the just and reigning God; and faith needs ***hope*** that anticipates awaking and gazing on his face.