

“The Righteous”

Psalm 11

The title of this psalm is similar to others in this first book of psalms – “To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.”

The occasion for the psalm is not given but it is clear that it is on one of the occasions that David was counseled to flee for his life – either on one of the occasions of Saul’s attacks or when Absalom revolted against David. Either way, the point of the psalm is still the same – if we are one of “the righteous,” one of God’s children, then we can trust in the Lord rather than run from the enemy.

The words “the righteous,” in some form, is found three times in this psalm – verses three, five, and seven, where it is in noun form (צַדִּיקוֹת) rather than used as an adjective (צַדִּיק). The words “the upright” (יָשָׁר) are found twice – a synonymous word that carries a similar meaning as the word translated “righteous.” “The righteous” in the poetical books often refer to what we would consider “the saved” in New Testament terminology – those that are right with God eternally. It refers to the believer, while the term “the wicked” refers to the unbeliever, or the enemy of Christ. Although the terms “righteous” and “wicked” can point to those that follow God as their King or do not follow Him, as found in the Old Testament, we will look at it as it relates to us today.

As found in this psalm, the one that is righteous:

I. IS TRUSTING – VS. 1A

Psalm 16:1

¹ Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

Psalm 25:2

² O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

Psalm 31:14

¹⁴ But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God.

- A. The word for "trust" here (נָסַח) is one that means to take refuge. This Hebrew word is used in this case because of the point the psalmist is making. He's saying, in essence, "I'm not running from danger for the LORD is all the refuge I need to keep me through the danger, through the trial."**
- B. When faced with a choice to flee the enemy or to stand our ground and put our trust in the LORD, the choice should be obvious – that is the point the psalmist is making. To him, there was no choice – he was going to trust the LORD.**
- C. This is a principle from Genesis to Revelation – the believer's trust, not only for eternal salvation, but for everyday life, should be in the Lord. The problem is that we seem to find it more difficult to trust Him for our everyday needs and decisions than we do for our eternal salvation.**
- D. There will be times when the Lord will guide us in deciding to flee for safety, but when we do that, it is because we are running TO Him for that safety – no matter where that "run" takes us.**

In this case, the psalmist, when counseled to flee, knew that his trust was in the LORD, and unless He told him to go, he wasn't going to go anywhere. Faith is the key.

Hebrews 11:6

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

II. IS TARGETED – VS. 1B-3

A. The righteous are often targeted by the wicked following Satan's direction (or by Satan directly) simply because they are righteous – their standing with the Lord, and His Word is right. Their righteousness makes the wicked (and Satan) uncomfortable, and rightfully so.

B. Vs. 1b – the psalmist was counseled by his friends and by his peers to flee the danger – "Flee as a bird to your mountain."

1. "Flee" – נִדְּרוּ – literally, "flee ye," used in the plural form. Some think this meant that David was to flee with others, and the whole of the context deals with a group that was told to flee, but it is more likely that this plural use, as is common in the poetical books, is used "to refer to the whole class of persons in those circumstances" (Barnes). Even now, there are often times when we will be counseled to flee the enemy, flee from the danger or the persecution, but we need to stay our

ground until the Lord directs us otherwise.

2. "As a bird to your mountain" – get somewhere for safety and security.

Many believers today want to live a life without conflict, without any adversity in their lives, and that's just not going to happen.

John 16:33

³³ These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

C. Vs. 2 – The ones counseling the psalmist are saying that the enemy, "the wicked," are readying themselves to attack him, they are just biding their time until they can inflict as much damage as possible. They are waiting to inflict harm upon "the upright in heart" – literally, "straight in heart." "The righteous" are just that because they choose to keep their attention "straight ahead," focused on the Lord and His Word.

D. Verse three (3) is one that has a broad application, but we will consider it within the context of the believer and the wicked.

1. "If the foundations be destroyed"

a) "Be destroyed" – יִהָרָסוּן – literally, "are destroyed." It wasn't something that might happen – it was something that had already happened or was in the process of

happening.

b) The counsel was given to flee, and the argument used was this: if the foundations of your life, if the stability you were relying on for existence are gone, then what's the point of staying. It was an assumed reality – they were, in fact, gone.

c) It was also pointing to the foundations of sociological norms, which is what is being (or has been) destroyed in our country today.

2. "What can the righteous do?" – "[W]hen the bases of the state are shattered, what can the righteous do? he can do nothing. And all counter-effort is so useless that it is well to be as far from danger as possible" (K&D). That is the advice David was given. What's the point of staying? There is no hope. Which might be true without the LORD – remember the first clause of the psalm. Without God, maybe there isn't much we can do in our society, but with God, all things are possible.

Matthew 19:26

²⁶ But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Mark 9:23

²³ Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

Luke 1:37

³⁷ For with God nothing shall be impossible.

III. IS TRIED – VS. 4-5A

A. Sometimes the Lord allows His children to face trials in order to test "their stuff," so to speak. This is for our benefit, not His – as the omniscient God, He already knows.

B. Vs. 4 – the fact the LORD is on the throne "in heaven," where He can see all, should give us hope that our trust is not in vain.

1. "His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men" – this is an anthropomorphic term. God is a Spirit and has no features that we can relate to, so very often in Scripture, when speaking of God, the writers use terms that we can understand – terms related to body parts (eyes, hands, arms, etc.).
2. The point is to show that He sees all because He is watching – and because He is watching He will judge actions according to His Word.

C. Vs. 5a – "The LORD trieth the righteous"

1. The LORD "does not abandon them; he tries them to show their faithfulness, and he afflicts them for their good" (Clarke).
2. His trials, His testing, are for His glory and for our good.

James 1:12

¹² 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.

1 Peter 1:6-7

⁶ Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

⁷ That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

1 Peter 4:12

¹² Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

IV. IS TRIUMPHANT – VS. 5B-7

A. The contrast in verse five (5) is to be seen as stark and descriptive – just as surely as the believer (“the righteous”) is tried, or tested, to increase our faith, so is the wicked going to be judged according to their deeds.

B. Verse six (6) describes both an historical reference (the enemies of the psalmist were dealt with in severe ways) as well as prophetic – which is the major point we are to see from this verse. The wicked may think they are immune to any judgment of God because they have been free from it, in their view, long enough for them to think there is no God, but the judgment of God will fall on them one day – at that final day of judgment.

Isaiah 30:33

³³ For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone,

doth kindle it.

[Historically a place in the valley of Hinnom where human sacrifices were offered. The word means "place of fire." The symbolic reference is to the lake of fire and the doom of the Beast.]

Revelation 14:9–10

⁹ And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

C. Verse seven is a two-line emphatic conclusion to this point, as well as to the entire psalm. It points back to verse one (1) and shows why we can trust the LORD.

1. Because He loves "righteousness" – which, by definition, means He loves those that are righteous.
2. Because "His countenance doth behold the upright" – He has, as it were, His face set toward those that are walking straight ahead, guarding his path and guiding his steps.

1 Peter 3:12

¹² For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Conclusion: If we are considered “the righteous” in the eyes of the Lord then we can have the utmost confidence that He will guide us and guard us through life.