

Fear-filled or Faith-fueled

PSALM 11 ESV

TO THE CHOIRMASTER. OF DAVID.

- [1] 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.

The righteous do not succumb to fear but rather put their faith in God, standing firm on their sovereign Lord.

INTRO: • 2 hikers + a bear

• What should you do if confronted by a bear in Ontario?

- sometimes instinct or the prevailing wisdom of the day suggests you should run when faced with fearful bears... But the Bible in Ps 11 suggests otherwise

- o most people's instinct? RUN → bad idea
- o play dead → grizzlies, yes → black bears, no
- o MAKE YOURSELF LOOK BIG... MAKE LOTS OF NOISE... AND FIGHT

Fear-filled Advice – v1-3

David's position

In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to my soul,

To take refuge in the Lord = seeking God for shelter and trusting him for protection

Verb tense = continual trusting, past and future

Rhetorical ? = amazed at the audacity of the advice that follows

★ Confident stance - does the world see this from us? It is compelling! Texting Steve this week

- WHAT IS YOUR STANCE IN REGARDS TO TRIALS AND TRIBULATION, ATTACKS AND ADVERSITY? ARE YOU AMAZED WHEN YOU RECEIVE UNGODLY ADVICE BECAUSE YOU ARE SO THOROUGHLY CONVINCED OF THE BIBLICAL TRUTH?
- WHEN FRIENDS ADVISE YOU TO SLEEP WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND BEFORE MARRIAGE, DOES THAT SOUND PREPOSTEROUS TO YOU? OR DOES IT CAUSE YOU TO CONSIDER IT?
- WHEN YOUR ACCOUNTANT SUGGESTS YOU FUDGE YOUR TAX RETURN, ARE YOU SHOCKED AT THE RIDICULOUSNESS OF NOT REMAINING FAITHFUL TO GOD'S COMMANDS? OR DO YOU CALCULATE THE FINANCIAL BENEFIT BEFORE MAKING YOUR DECISION?
- WE SHOULD BE SO IN TUNE WITH WHAT THE BIBLE TELLS US ABOUT WHO GOD IS, AND WHAT HE HAS DONE, AND OUR APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THOSE THINGS THAT WHEN WE RECEIVE ADVICE CONTRARY WE ARE UTTERLY AMAZED!

Friend's advice

Flee like a bird to your mountain

Moyter

Moyter: "Flutter off, bird, to your mountain"

This advice is from well-wishers, not enemies – they recognize the righteous – but they make no mention of Yahweh

*Sympathetic friends?
Nominal, luke-warm Christians?*

They give two reasons for their advice:

1. Fear of the wicked

a. 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;

Bend the bow = string the bow; fit the arrow to attack the upright

Fleeing would seemingly solve the problem; it appears as wise advice to avoid the attack of the wicked

- ADVICE FOR THE CHRISTIAN – THE EASIEST ROUTE IS OFTEN ANTITHETICAL TO CHRISTIANITY
- AVOIDING A PERSON IS EASIER THAN ASKING FORGIVENESS
- REMAINING BITTER IS EASIER THAN FORGIVING
- SINNING IS EASIER THAN REPENTANCE

Running from the wicked seemed easier and safer, so this was the advice given! But the wicked were not the only fear inducing problem David's acquaintances pointed to!

2. Fear of failing foundations

a. if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

Foundations = the established customs, laws, and ways of life – these are being destroyed or are already destroyed

And another rhetorical ? = this destruction cannot be stopped

- IS THIS NOT AN ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF OUR CURRENT EXPERIENCE? OUR LAWS, CUSTOMS, AND WAYS OF LIFE ARE UNDER ATTACK OR HAVE ALREADY BEEN DESTROYED!
- ABORTION, MARRIAGE, GENDER, SANCTITY OF LIFE FOR THE ELDERLY (LIQUID – EUTHANASIA)
- ARE YOU AFRAID? ARE YOU GOING TO RUN? DOES YOUR VIEW OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF YOUR LIFE CAUSE YOU TO CONSIDER GETTING OUT OF DODGE? → celebrities leaving US because of TRUMP
- SOMETIMES EVEN WELL-MEANING PEOPLE WHO ARE CLOSE TO US GIVE US ADVICE THAT SEEMS WISE IF IT IS BASED SOLELY ON OUR CIRCUMSTANCES. WE NEED TO BE WISE, AND DISCERN THE BEST OPTION BASED NOT ON OUR CIRCUMSTANCES BUT ON GOD'S CHARACTER, HIS WORKS, AND HIS WORD

+ that is what David does!

Faith-fueled Answer – v4-7

Commentator (Ross): this advice is the “divine alternative”

Commentator (Goldingay): “against the [seemingly] justified hopelessness [the psalmist’s response] sets a series of affirmations about Yahweh”

WE ARE IN DESPERATE NEED—AS WE FACE FEAR CAUSED BY ATTACKS OF THE WICKED, THE CRUMBLING OF OUR SOCIETY, AND THE SEEMINGLY WISE YET UNBIBLICAL ADVICE OF ASSOCIATES AND ACQUAINTANCES—OF THE DIVINE ALTERNATIVE WHICH LOOKS TO WHO OUR GOD IS AND NOT WHAT OUR CIRCUMSTANCES ARE!

How do we do this? Follow the psalmists example!

See God’s Sovereignty

The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.

- Holy temple = set apart from anything earthly
- Throne in heaven = confirmation of god’s sovereignty over humanity
- God is not like us; there is an infinite gulf separating the creature and the creator
- Yet, his eyes see us; he is not the absent watchmaker – DEISM
- His eyelids = testing, analyzing, evaluating
- Parents squinting to really look at something
- Though God is separate from us, and sovereign over us, he is aware of us and evaluating us

The faithful, and faith-fueled, fight fear by fixing their gaze on the heavenly sovereign, not on the earthly situation! And they recognize that though God is far above us in existence he is close by in his care for men and women

ELDERS – when I report concerns (others + themselves)

See God’s Justice and Power

The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.

Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.

- The psalmist points to who God is to thwart the fear inducing advice. And he also points to how God acts.
- God’s penetrating and powerful examination allows him to deal justly with the wicked who attack his faithful ones and undermine their society
- And the psalmists points to God’s power to judge both the wicked and the godly
- Rain coals on the wicked is an indication the judgment is supernatural; the fire and sulfur and scorching wind indicates a powerful judgment of God
- The literal translation is hard to put poetically because, in the words of a commentator, “it heaps up expressions for devastation”

Because God is righteous and just he can differentiate the wicked from the godly. And because he is powerful he can act on what he has determined. This brings the psalmist great courage in regards to the fear-promoting advice. He fights fear with faith in who God is and how he acts.

Difficult situation + Fear-filled advice ⇒ See Sovereignty
(Health, family's faith, finances) Justice
Power

See God’s Favour ⇒ Very compelling!!

For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.

Will you do it?
↓
Will I?
↓
Elders,
do!

God is righteous (and the standard of righteousness) and therefore can determine who is righteous and determine who does righteous deeds

And since he is righteous he can respond to the wicked and the righteous justly, wisely, and appropriately

To the wicked, he responds with devastating judgment, but to the upright he responds with favour

Behold his face = show favour

Numbers 6:22-27 ESV

[22] The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [23] “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,

[24] The LORD bless you and keep you;

[25] the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

[26] the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

[27] “So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.”

We stand fast in faith by looking past our difficult circumstances to our God who we see is sovereign, is just, and is powerful. But what really convinces us to reject fear and what fuels our faith is the divine favour of God. He loves the upright.

But, this should cause us to pause. Are we the upright who will behold God’s face? Or are we the wicked who will face the outworkings of God’s displeasure?

Take stock:

Are we the wicked? Are we the unrighteous? We sin. We love violence. We hurt people with our actions and our words. We lie. We are jealous, and prideful, and selfish. How can we be certain that we will behold God’s face and not endure his judgment?

2 Corinthians 3:16-18 ESV [16] But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. [17] Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. [18] And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 ESV [3] And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. [4] In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

upright = favour, not run because sovereign
just
powerful

Paul describes the difference between the upright and the wicked this way: The upright behold the glory of the Lord because there is no veil that blinds them. The wicked, which all sinners once were, do not behold the glory of God because of the veil which prevents them from seeing.

2 Corinthians 4:6 ESV [6] For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Psalm 11 indicates that the upright will behold God’s face. Paul takes this further and says the upright, the ones who will see God’s favour, are the ones who behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus. And verse 3 of chapter 4 indicates that receiving the gospel is the means by which we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

So, to know you will experience God’s favour and not his judgment, you must believe the gospel.

So for those who have never received and believed the gospel...

To those who have received and believed the gospel, know that God’s favour towards you is assured because of the grace of Christ in his work for you. And as one that God looks upon favourably, we can reject fear-filled advice and fuel our faith by looking at our sovereign, just, and powerful God.