

Psalm 11

What sentence: In difficult times, David takes refuge in the Lord, who examines and judges everyone and rewards the righteous.

Why sentence: When we go through difficult times, Jesus wants us to know that He has gone through them as well, and He wants to guide us.

Introduction

At the heart of our text, Psalm 11, is a question that was relevant in David's time and relevant today, echoing through generations

- "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"
- "When everything falls apart, what can the righteous do?"
- "When what is wrong and evil is now called good and celebrated, what should the righteous do?"

Persecution Stories

Sometimes as Christians we face difficulties because of our faith in Jesus. This could be mockery, insults, being denied what is due to us, or even the threat of being killed.

Accommodation — my story:

I grew up in Nigeria, in the Northern part of the country. The composition of Nigeria is such that the North is dominated by Muslims and the South by Christians. In the North, cases of persecution are prevalent and have been increasing over the last few decades. I remember a time when I was almost denied accommodation simply because I am a Christian — though thankfully the owner of the house overruled the man who wanted to deny me.

Promotion — my mum's story: My mum is a retired nurse. At one point in her career, she had difficulty getting promoted simply because she is a Christian. This was not unique to her but was common among her Christian colleagues as well.

Killed for his faith — My wife Evelyn studied in a state called Borno, which became the epicentre of Boko Haram — the group responsible for kidnapping, killing, and displacing many Christian families. She had a friend whose father headed the federal prison located in that state. During one of their attacks, they specifically targeted him, telling him to renounce his faith in Christ or they would kill him. He refused to deny Christ, and they killed him right in front of his house. There are many stories like his — people killed because of their faith in Christ.

So again:

When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Introduction of the series : Jesus in the Psalms

The book of Psalms consists of songs that show the experiences of the writers navigating the dynamics of life, while being led by the Spirit of Christ to prophecy about Christ. The centrality of the book points to Jesus — showing us who to look to in difficult times.

After Jesus was resurrected, He came alongside two disciples on the road to Emmaus, whose faces were downcast, not knowing what to make of His death. In Luke 24:44–45 Jesus said:

"This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

For the next four weeks we will be going through some of the psalms, seeing how Jesus fulfilled Scripture and what that means for us today. My prayer is that the Spirit of God would open our eyes to see and understand all that the Scriptures say concerning Jesus.

The Psalms give us a window into how Jesus learned to pray in His fully human life, and they show us how the people of Jesus are to pray as the Spirit of Jesus leads us in praying and praising through the Psalms. Though the psalms were written by people like David, Asaph, the sons of Korah, Solomon, and others, they all ultimately point to Christ.

Structure of the Talk

Psalm 11 is headed: *"For the director of music. Of David."* The title indicates the psalm was directed toward the Chief Musician. Some suppose this to be the Lord God Himself; others suppose it to be a leader of choirs or musicians in David's time, such as Heman the singer or Asaph (1 Chronicles 6:33; 16:5–7; 25:6). Christopher Ash, in his books *Psalms for You* and *Teaching Psalms*, points out that while the psalms in David's time were given to music directors like Asaph to lead the choir as they sang to the Lord, we can also see the Lord Himself as the music director — leading the church as we sing through the psalm with our lives unto God.

The structure of sermon as we go through Psalm 11 is we will see it first through the experience of the writer David, then through Jesus — who, as Luke 24:44 tells us, is the one all the psalms point to — and finally through us, the church, as He leads and guides us through the psalm.

- **David** as the writer
- **Jesus** as the Music director — guiding and leading the musical interpretation, giving it its fullest and truest meaning
- **The church** as the choir, led by the music director

Point 1 – God Our Refuge (Psalm 11:1–3)

1 In the Lord I take refuge.

How then can you say to me: "Flee like a bird to your mountain.

2 For look, the wicked bend their bows;

they set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart.

3 When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

The Writer

For David, God is his refuge in the face of difficulty and persecution. Verse 1 is a declaration — David's direct response to advice being given to him because of his current situation.

We don't know for certain which particular event triggered this psalm. What we do know is that after God had rejected Saul and he learned David had been anointed by Samuel and that, he began looking for ways to get rid of David. The advice David's friends and associates gave him was to "*flee like a bird to your mountain*". This is more like saying, "Abandon ship and save yourself. Do what you need to do to stay alive." David's response is clear and immediate: "*In the Lord I take refuge.*"

Why did they urge David to flee? Verses 2–3 tell us: the wicked bend their bows, they set their arrows to the strings, and they shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart. As Christopher Ash notes in *Psalms for You*, "the wicked" here does not simply refer to people who occasionally do wrong things. It describes people who have set themselves and the direction of their lives against God and His plans and purposes. We saw this clearly in our study of 1 Samuel 8–16 — how Saul's behaviour led to God rejecting him, after which Saul devoted himself to pursuing David in order to kill him. That is the kind of wickedness captured in verses 2 and 3. We see the moral societal foundation of order, justice and safety being destroyed.

The Music Director

For Jesus, the pressure was even more intense. He was mocked, insulted, whipped, beaten, stripped, and crucified. Both the religious and political leaders abused their authority. The foundations of justice were being shaken — and yet He remained steadfast. As 1 Peter 2:21–23 tells us,

He committed no sin, no deceit was found in His mouth,
and when insults were hurled at Him, He did not retaliate.
Instead, He entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly.

Jesus fully trusted and rested in God, and that trust is what carried Him through. He is the perfectly righteous One — the Branch of David promised in Jeremiah 33:15, and our righteousness as Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 1:30.

The Choir

Through Jesus, we too have refuge in God to endure difficult times. When the foundations are being destroyed — we have a heaven foundation in Christ that cannot be shaken — we are not left without an anchor. Jesus, our Music director, has already lived and sung this

psalm. He leads us in it. When we face mockery, injustice, or persecution because of our faith, we can join our voice to His: *"In the Lord I take refuge*

Point 2 – God Examines (Psalm 11:4–6)

4 The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne.

He observes everyone on earth; his eyes examine them.

5 The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked, those who love violence, he hates with a passion.

6 On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot.

The Writer

In response to the question, "What would the righteous do?" David said in verse 4

The Lord is in his holy temple
The Lord is on the heavenly throne.

Amid everything David was facing, he knew the Lord was with him. And the Lord is on His heavenly throne — signifying His sovereignty and authority over everything, including those who were plotting against David.

In the Old Testament era, God's presence and glory dwelt in the tabernacle, because that was how He chose to dwell among His people. Today, through Jesus, we collectively are the temple of the Lord. God's Spirit dwells in us (Ephesians 2:21; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

1 Corinthians 3:16

16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple
and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?

Ephesians 2:21

21 In him the whole building is joined together
and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

The second line of verse 4 says The Lord is on his heavenly throne. Indeed, he is on the throne, the Kingdom is his, the power is his, the dominion is his and so the glory. There are days when it doesn't seem like God is on the throne or he is not with us but God wants us to remain in faith through Christ knowing the sovereign God was still God — still reigning, still observing, still examining everyone on earth.

In verses 4b to 5,

*He observes everyone on earth; his eyes examine them.
5 The Lord examines the righteous,
but the wicked, those who love violence, he hates with a passion.*

We see that the Lord examines the righteous. While Saul was pursuing David to kill him, David had two opportunities to do away with Saul. In both occasions, David's associates encourage him to kill Saul and just take the Kingdom, after he was anointed, What was David reply,

In 1 Sam 24 : 6 -7

6 He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord." 7 With these words David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.

Similarly in *In 1 Sam 26 : 9*

9 But David said to Abishai, "Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?"

Unfortunately for David, though he did well here, he failed when saw Bathsheba and he ended up killing one of his trusted lieutenants, Uriah the Hittite, listed among his 30 mighty warriors.

God examines the righteous — not to condemn them, but to keep directing them in the way of righteousness. The examination of the righteous is a mercy; it keeps us on the right path.

By contrast, the portion of the wicked — those who have set their lives against God and love violence — is destruction. Verse 6

6 On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot.

Verse 6 echoes the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 and ultimately points forward to the eternal judgment for the wicked at the end of this age.

The Music Director

Jesus, while on earth, knew the Father was with Him and in control at every moment. He submitted Himself fully to the Father's will, through tests and trials. He was tested in every way as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). And as a result God exalted him and through him God's judgment will come. He will judge the wicked.

In Christ Jesus we have the true righteous man, the king of righteousness. Who was tempted directly by the devil and by the devil again but through religious leaders of his day and yet without Sin.

1 Peter 2:22-23

22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." [a]

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

The Choir

The Lord helps us to rest in the knowledge that God is with us, that He is in control, and that He examines us not to crush us but to refine and guide us in righteousness. When going through trials, difficulties, challenges and temptations, we should look up to Jesus, our director, who is able to lead and guide us through his Spirit. Knowing that God is with us and he is on the throne, and he sees us. As 1 Corinthians 10:13 reminds us, no temptation has overtaken us that is not common to mankind — and God is faithful; He will not let us be tested beyond what we can bear, but will provide a way through.

For the wicked, though they may seem to go unseen, God observes everyone and He will act on what He sees.

Point 3 – God the Righteous Judge (Psalm 11:7)

7 For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice; the upright will see his face.

The Writer

God is our judge. He is righteous, and he loves justice. This ought to be a deep consolation — we have a judge whose judgment will always be right. Though the earthly foundations of our society are being shaken, though what was once wrong is now called right and what was once right is now mocked, we have a judge who will judge everyone in accordance with His righteousness.

The Music Director

Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of faith. As Hebrews 12:2 tells us, "*For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*" He fixed His eyes on the face of the Father and pressed through everything — and now He is seated in the place of authority and honour. He is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30)

The Choir

Jesus, our righteousness, leads us in righteousness. He leads us, toward the great and glorious end of this psalm — that the upright will see His face. For the wicked, eternal punishment awaits. But for those who are in Christ, we will see His face.

In Exodus 33:1, Moses longed for God's glory, but The Lord said you cannot see my face. However, in Psalm 11:7, we see that *the upright will see his face* and Revelation 22:4 says

Revelation 22:4

4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

The promise that one day it will be the reality of every believer. And as 1 John 3:2 tells us that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The upright will see His face.

Invitation

Perhaps you are here today, and you have never received Jesus — never joined His choir, the church. I invite you to receive Jesus today and to join His church and partake of the promise that one day we will see His face. He is the righteous Judge, but He is also the one who bore our judgment in our place.

Conclusion

When we go through difficult times, Jesus wants us to know that He has gone through them and he wants to guide us. Just like David facing persecution, mockery, and threat to his life — you may have gone through, or may currently be going through, something deeply difficult. You may have unanswered questions.

- You may wonder *why me?*
- Why am I going through what I am going through?
- Why do certain things happen to you?

I don't why and 1 Corinthians 13:12 reminds us, *"For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."* There is much we do not yet understand. I want to encourage us all to follow our Music director — the Lord Jesus — who, in Hebrews 12:2, fixed His eyes on the joy set before Him, endured the cross, scorned its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Let us fix our eyes on Him.