

May 10, 2020

“The Lord Is Our Refuge”
Psalm 11

FCF: Overwhelming troubles

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Though the world around us is collapsing,
(magnet) the LORD is our refuge.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

What do you do when you feel overwhelmed by troubles? A fairly new option is a rage room, a place you go to smash things. Some provide golf clubs, sledgehammers, baseball bats, and pipes to the guests so they can release their frustration by breaking office equipment or other fragile items. You have protective gear, of course. But the idea is that it's supposed to help with stress relief and anger management. And besides that, for some it can be a good exercise.

The reality is that time in a rage room really doesn't address the deep heart issues as to what is actually troubling us and why. We need a better answer. Which brings us to Psalm 11.

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 11**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

I want to take you to a time in the life of David, before he became king. This was in the period after he slew Goliath and served in King Saul's court. We read about this in 1 Samuel 18-19. As David's success on the battlefield grew, so too did Saul's jealousy. Initially, Saul tried to ensnare David into marrying one of his daughters. That gave way to trying to get rid of David by sending him out into battle against overwhelming odds. In time, the jealousy gave way to rage and the subtlety gave way to outright attempts at murder. All of this was leadership training for David. Actually, it was but one of several stressful situations he faced - any one of which could be the background for Psalm 11. The fact is that we are not sure of the exact context of our text. But that's fine because that allows it to be applicable for us in a wide variety of ways.

My point? Given all the great hardships and difficulties David faced, if the approach of this psalm served him well, how much more so for us? Put another way, David's circumstances were extreme. And they point to a reality for us all. Though the world around us is collapsing, the LORD is our refuge. Though the world around us is collapsing, the LORD is our refuge.

To better appreciate that, we need to look at the two sides of this dynamic. The first thing is the temptation to despair. And the second is the path of resistance, the way we get through it.

I. THE TEMPTATION TO DESPAIR

First, the temptation to despair. That is, the desire to just give up (READ Psalm 11:1-3).

A) Sounds Reasonable

At face value, the counsel of David's advisors sounds reasonable. It makes sense.

1. Hostile opposition

There is a hostile opposition. Possibly skilled assassins. At the very least, hateful slander.

2. Hopeless situation

David is facing hostile opposition. And what appears to be a hopeless situation. All is coming apart. Anarchy reigns and there seems little point in trying. So this is a reasonable, sensible, practical assessment of the scene. And, with that, it looks like it's time to throw in the towel.

B) Likely Well-Intentioned

All very reasonable. And likely well-intentioned. These men have David's best in mind.

1. Meaning to help

Their words are not meant to hurt. They are not schemers secretly trying to bring David down.

2. But in the dark

They don't intend to hurt but to help. They mean well. The problem is that they are in the dark. Their ideas of "refuge" conflict with their king. Much like when Peter urged Jesus not to go to the cross, thinking that couldn't be the right path. Peter meant well. But he was in the dark.

Sometimes the counsel we receive sounds reasonable and it is well-intentioned. The problem comes in that it is rooted in fear and so it naturally creates a temptation for us to despair.

Application:

So what do we make of this? We need to face the danger of being deceived. First of all, not all advice is worth heeding. We must always consider the source. Where is this person we are listening to coming from? What is their broader perspective on things? And, with that, we need to ask why we find their counsel compelling. What is it in us that is resonating and why?

But there's something else to consider. What if we are the fear-filled advisors? What if the voices we hear are coming from within? What then? It may be that the shaking of the storm and the drumbeats of the approaching army have overwhelmed us. If so, we need to own that.

And to remember that, though the world around us is collapsing, the LORD is our refuge.

II. THE PATH OF RESISTANCE

That brings us to the path of resistance (**READ Psalm 11:4-7**). This is David's response to the doubts. Note, with the repetition, how the LORD fills David's landscape. This is the key.

A) The Tower

David knows there is a tower, a place up high to see how all things serve God's purposes.

1. He sees all

The Lord sees it all. You see the reference twice to His eyes. Nothing escapes His notice. The judge of all will do right - at least partially now and fully so in the life to come. For He sees all.

2. He tests His own

And He tests His own. The hard things we go through are never random. There is purpose and intent. They are often meant to refine us, transform us, in ways that easier times simply cannot.

B) The Throne

David knows there to be a tower and also a throne. For God's rule knows no bounds.

1. He decides

He decides what will be. His plans are not drafted by a team or subject to polls. He decides.

2. He determines

And He determines - the orbit of stars, the track of storms, the flight of birds, the course of days.

C) The Temple

There is a tower, a throne, and a temple. The LORD is not only purposeful and powerful but close. He is with us, near us. That's really what the Old Testament temple was all about.

1. His presence among us

His presence with His people. The earthly sanctuary was understood to be a wondrous doorway to the heavenly sanctuary. With the temple, the Lord is seen as not only for but with His own.

2. His face turned toward us

This is the movement we see here, the LORD's presence among us. And His face turned toward us (**READ Psalm 11:7**). This is a phrase speaking to access to the king. It's deeply personal.

David could see there was a tower, a throne, and a temple. And that is what he held to.

Application:

There are things here for both the head and the heart, things to contemplate and embrace. How can we lay hold of them? We have to go low. We have to humble ourselves before the LORD, knowing our need of the Tower, the Throne, the Temple - knowing our need and bowing. That is what opens the floodgates of assurance and courage, enabling us resist the pull of despair.

Once our eyes are open to our need, the LORD becomes our daily refuge and the place to which we run. So when we feel our troubles overwhelming us, when the wave is about to crest, we don't need to wonder about what to do. We already know where to turn, where to run.

We already know. Though the world around us is collapsing, the LORD is our refuge.

CONCLUSION:

Let me take you back to where we started (**READ Psalm 11:1a**). What does that mean? Think of the Old Testament "cities of refuge" - a way of handling fugitives who had accidentally caused someone's death. It was a network of cities where you could be safe from retaliation.

Children often have places of refuge. Think of some of the games we play, often a form of tag with a "base" of sorts that you can touch and be safe. No more pursuers. It is a refuge.

(**READ Psalm 11:1a**) Again, what does that mean? This is not a geographical setting but a relational bond between a King and His subject, a Father and His child. This refuge is not a place but a person. So to take refuge in the LORD is to do what? To trust and depend upon Him with all that you are. His instruction for your life. His wisdom for your paths. His strength for your trials. His promises for your assurance. His cleansing for your guilt. His approval for your shame. His and no other. You know there to be no other city, no other base. Only Him.

There is no other. Though the world around us is collapsing, the LORD is our refuge.

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