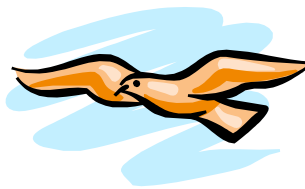


Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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Psalm 11 — Trusting a Righteous God

1.0 Introducing Psalm 11

1.1 Flight or Faith?

- Perhaps the historical context for this psalm is the period in David's life when Saul was hunting him "as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains" (1 Samuel 26:20; cf. Psalm 11:1).
- "When the righteous are threatened by the power of the wicked, what course will conduct take: flight or faith? Psalm 11 is a song of trust that answers that question" (James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, 75).

1.2 What Can the Righteous Do?

- Verse 3 voices the question that accompanies the choices of flight or faith: "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"
- Consider the problems believers face in contemporary American society:
 - ✓ Loss of personal identity.
 - ✓ Threat of pluralism.
 - ✓ Assault on Christian values.

2.0 Reading Psalm 11

11:1 A Psalm of David.

In the LORD I put my trust;
How can you say to my soul,
“Flee *as* a bird to your mountain”?

11:2 For look! The wicked bend *their* bow,
They make ready their arrow on the string,
That they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart.

11:3 If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?

11:4 The LORD *is* in His holy temple,
The LORD’s throne *is* in heaven;
His eyes *behold*,
His eyelids test *the* sons of men.

11:5 The LORD tests *the* righteous,
But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.

11:6 Upon the wicked He will rain coals;
Fire and brimstone and a burning wind
Shall be the portion of their cup.

11:7 For the LORD *is* righteous,
He loves *righteousness*;
His countenance beholds the upright.

To the Chief Musician. On an eight-stringed harp.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 11


3.1 Outline

- I. The Lord Is a Refuge (vv. 1-3)
- II. The Lord Is in Control (vv. 4-6)
- III. The Lord Is Righteous (v. 7)


3.2 Notes

- v. 1 “Flee *as* a bird to your mountain”
 - A fitting statement in light of David’s experience. See 1 Samuel 23:14, 19; 24:2; 26:20.
 - Sometimes believers themselves feel more like fleeing than trusting God to give relief. See Psalm 55:6, “So I said, ‘Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.’”



- v. 2 “They make ready their arrow on the string” 
 - The psalmist uses the picture of a sudden attack from an assassin hiding in the dark — a sudden, unanticipated attack.

- v. 2 “the upright in heart”
 - “Upright” involves the concept of straightness as opposed to crookedness. Such persons are characterized by honesty and integrity.
 - This phraseology is found also in Psalms 7:10; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10; 94:15; and 97:11.
 - The use of “the upright” in verses 2 and 7 of this psalm form a kind of envelope around the psalm.

- v. 3 “If the foundations are destroyed”
 - “Foundations” is a word found only here in the Hebrew Bible.
 - The reference is to established institutions of the community including social and civil order.
 - ✓ Psalm 82:5
 - Cf. Ezekiel 30:4,
“The sword shall come upon Egypt,
And great anguish shall be in Ethiopia,
When the slain fall in Egypt,
And they take away her wealth,
And her foundations are broken down.” 

- v. 4 “The LORD *is* in His holy temple”
 - Some commentators (e.g., Wilson) take this as a reference to the earthly Temple in Jerusalem. It would be speaking of the Lord’s presence among His people. The following line (“The LORD’s throne *is* in heaven”) would indicate that He is also transcendent.
 - Other commentators (e.g., VanGemeren) prefer to see the two lines as synonymous parallelism — both referring to God’s heavenly position as Lord of all creation.

- v. 5 “The LORD tests”
 - Yet another metaphor is employed by the psalmist. It draws on the refining of metals by melting them and removing the impurities.

- v. 6 “coals; Fire and brimstone”
 - The Hebrew text has “snares” instead of “coals.”
 - “coals and burning sulfur”
 - Cf. Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24).

4.0 Singing Psalm 11

(Tune: “How Firm a Foundation”)



- 1 *In God will I trust, though my counselors say,
O flee as a bird to your mountain away;
The wicked are strong and the righteous are weak,
Foundations are shaken, yet God will I seek.*
- 2 *The Lord in His temple shall ever abide,
His throne is eternal, whatever betide;
The children of men He beholds from on high,
The wicked to punish, the righteous to try.*
- 3 *The Lord is most righteous, the Lord loves the right,
The evil He hates and will surely requite;
The wicked His anger will drive from their place,
The upright in rapture shall gaze on His face.*

— Author: Unknown

5.0 Praying Psalm 11

- Lord, help me know when to run and when to stay. [v. 1]
- Give me faith to trust in You, Lord. [v. 1]
- Thank you, Lord, for being my refuge. [v. 1]
- Protect me and my family from the subtle forces of evil that assail us daily. [v. 2]
- Test me, Lord. Examine my heart and teach me how to be more upright and godly. [v. 5]



4.0 Applying Psalm 11

- We might not be able to do anything about the condition the world is in, but we can trust the Lord.
- God is just and will execute justice for the righteous and the unrighteous.

***Sinning times have ever been
the saints' praying times.***

William Gurnall
(in Spurgeon's *Treasury of David*, 1:137)