



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Psalms

Psalm 11

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The tradition assigned this psalm to David
- The title is *To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David*
- Some believe that *the Chief Musician* is the Lord God Himself, and others suppose him 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)
- Some believe that David wrote this Psalm when he was under persecution from Saul, who sought his life
- Other scholars find it difficult to assign it to a certain period of David's history because of his troubles under Saul and in the rebellion of Absalom



Introduction

- This Psalm records well-intentioned, but faithless advice of David's friends
- They recommended that he is to flee to some mountain where he had a hiding-place to take cover from the rage of the enemy
- But David, being strong in faith, lifted his eyes to the Lord and determined confidently to repose his trust only in God
- He knew the safest place to stand was in total trust in God
- David did not reject his friends' advice because his escape would be regarded shameful for a leader as he was, but rather because this suggestion implied some mistrust in God
- This Psalm is a song of triumph over the strong temptation that anyone can face to distrust God in a time of danger



Introduction

Psalm Outline

- The Voice Urging Flight 11:1-3
- The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7



The Voice Urging Flight 11:1-3

- Before his friends address the matter of his danger, David has himself recognized it, *In the Lord I put my trust*
- In the years before he took the throne of Israel, David lived the life of a fugitive
- He was constantly hunted by King Saul and lived in constant danger
- In such a time, his friends advised him, *Flee as a bird to your mountain*
- His friends meant well, but David knew it was the wrong thing to do



The Voice Urging Flight 11:1-3

- No matter how well-intentioned his friends were, they gave him the advice of fear
- The advice of fear could not stand with the position of *trust* David had in the *Lord*
- As a life principle, he sought refuge from his enemies in the Lord, his stronghold and protection
- God is the exclusive refuge for His persecuted children
- St. John Chrysostom comments on this verse saying, “What are you claiming? I have the Lord of the universe as my ally, the one creating everything everywhere without difficulty I have as leader and support, and you send me to the wilderness?”



The Voice Urging Flight 11:1-3

- *For look! The wicked bend their bow*, Many commentators consider these also as the words of David's friends
- They were representing to him, as a motive for his flight, the extreme danger he was in, which they compare to that of a bird when a hunter having already fixed his eye upon it, had fitted his arrow to the string, and lying close, was taking aim at it, intending to shoot it
- Everything is ready for his destruction: the arrow that is to pierce his heart is already set on the bow-string; and the person who hopes to kill him is hiding in ambush



The Voice Urging Flight 11:1-3

- This exactly what they signified, Saul and his counsellors had laid their plot *secretly* to destroy David
- The advice given to David was well-meant, but ungodly
- It was like when Peter advised Jesus to not go the way of the cross (Matthew 16:22-23)
- Peter meant well, but he was really being used by the devil
- We must always be careful with the advice we give to others
- *If the foundations are destroyed*, The very *foundations* of law and justice were *destroyed* under Saul's unrighteous reign



The Voice Urging Flight 11:1-3

- *the foundations* The Hebrew translation is, *if the pillars are turned upside down, what can the righteous do?*
- David's timid friends probably are still speaking
- If Saul has cast aside his fear, and now regards neither truth nor justice, a righteous man has no security for his life
- As if they are telling him, 'this is at present your case; therefore flee!'
- *the pillars are turned upside down* Some apply these words to the destruction of Nob's priests by Saul because he thought they conspired with David against him (1 Samuel 22)



The Voice Urging Flight 11:1-3

- The priests are destroyed, the preservers of knowledge and truth; the Divine worship is overthrown
- What remained for David, but to withdraw from a community where there was neither law nor order
- David's counselors believed the very cornerstones of their nation were in jeopardy, namely, the Law and other institutions of the faith
- With a sling and a stone, David had smitten a giant before whom the whole hosts of Israel were trembling, and the Lord, who delivered him from the Philistine, could surely deliver him from King Saul and his followers



The Voice Urging Flight 11:1-3

- There is no such word as "impossibility" in the language of faith
- St. Augustine thinks the righteous one here refers to the Lord Jesus who has offered immense love by shedding His life for the sake of the world. What will He do? Since the heretics destroy the pillars of the faith? He has been intensely patient with them, in the hope of their repentance.
- These words may also point to the last age, when the pillars of the church are about to be shattered due to the deviation from the true faith and lack of love (Matthew 24:12)
- There will be difficult times to come (2 Timothy 3:1), and it will see as if there is no opportunity for the righteous to work



The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7

- David's reply to his timid advisers is an expression of absolute faith and trust in God
- He, having, in the first verse, declared that his trust was in God is now proceeding to show the reasons of his trust, despite what seems hopeless situation
- David's words may seem to mean that the world is not governed by chance, nor can men carry things just as they please
- Saul may reign upon earth; but God is in His *holy temple*
- He is the supreme and most righteous ruler of all affairs
- This was the source of David's confidence; it was not self-reliance



The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7

- Instead, David had confidence in a holy, all-powerful, all-knowing God
- No harm can be so secretly plotted, no wicked plan so deceitfully hidden, but it lies open before His eyes, and He sees through it
- David had nothing to fear; he had a protector in heaven; and that he might appeal to Him for defense
- When the advice of fear comes upon us, we can only arrive at the answer of faith by spending time with the Lord; the answer of faith assures our hearts when we pray



The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7

- When Stephen was being stoned to death, he looked to the heavens and saw Jesus standing at the right side of the throne of God
- The door of heaven is never closed to the believers
- God, the protector of the righteous, is always in the heavens; His throne is always accessible; and to it the persecuted may come, and may always be safe
- *His eyes behold*, He sees everything in all parts of the universe, and therefore He knows all the purposes of the wicked, and all the wants of the righteous



The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7

- *His eyelids test the sons of men*, He searches into their very hearts
- He thoroughly discerns all men, and all that is in men, their most inward and secret actions
- *The LORD tests the righteous*, Again, David answered the question, *If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?*
- David answered, The righteous can know that the Lord is testing them, and because a loving God is testing them, they can know they will not be forsaken
- The righteous can know the Lord is in control



The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7

- *tests*, It is not for the purpose of destroying them, or punishing them, but it is to show the truth of their attachment to Him
- This verse reflects the feeling of the persecuted and afflicted author of the psalm; he understood the reason why these calamities were suffered to come upon him as a trial of his faith
- It was his duty to remain and bear these troubles, and not to attempt to escape from them by flight
- Whatever success the wicked, and he that delights in doing malice, may have for the present, it is certain God hates his conduct, and, unless he repent, He will severely punish him for abusing his power to oppression and violent dealing



The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7

- Divine punishment follows Divine displeasure - not always speedy, but sure
- This gave David confidence in the midst of the advice of fear
- After all, if the ungodly persecute the righteous, how much more will the righteous God persecute the ungodly?
- The wicked may think themselves very secure, because they are so crafty, and strong
- But how can they defend themselves against God, who has numerous ways to destroy them, when they least think of it; and can as unexpectedly overthrow all their power



The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7

- *rain coals*, The punishment would come plentifully, swiftly, and suddenly, violently and unavoidably, as rain commonly falls from heaven
- *Fire and brimstone*, This may give the image of ultimate, eternal judgment
- Others interpreted as an allusion to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and other places by these means
- What did David have to fear from men destined for hell?
- *portion of their cup*, That is, this shall be what they shall drink
- Will be measured out to them in proportion to their sins, and which God, in righteous judgment, has appointed for them; and which they shall all drink of



The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7

- The *cup* has been mentioned here so that we do not assume that the punishment of the wicked will happen without measure of reason
- The image of the *cup* as a container of judgment reminds us of Jesus' prayer in the garden: *O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will* (Matthew 26:39)
- The cup Jesus dreaded was the cup that contained the wrath of God against sin, wrath that we deserved, but Jesus drank for us
- *For the Lord is righteous*, The character of God is the ground of the judgement which has been described



The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7

- This is why God punishes the wicked so dreadfully
- It is because, being righteous, essentially righteous, Himself, He cannot but love righteousness, which is His own image stamped on the faithful
- He; therefore, must proportionably hate wickedness
- David knew that as he walked righteously, he would *keep* [himself] *in the love of God* (Jude 1:21)
- God's love extends everywhere
- Nothing can separate us from God's love, and He loved us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8)



The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7

- But we can deny ourselves the benefits of God's love
- *His countenance beholds the upright*, He does not turn away from the upright – from those who were said to be under assault from the wicked earlier in this psalm
- He will keep an eye on the faithful
- When David considers the greatness of God, the care of God, it all outweighs the danger; he trusted God
- And so why fear the wicked?
- His friends may or may not have meant well, but David would not receive their advice of fear



The Voice Urging Faith 11:4-7

- Instead, he would answer with faith
- Why be shaken by reports that they're out to get you?
- Are you fearing evil men?
- Are you afraid that some day they'll rise up and even take your life?
- Are you feeling like the very foundations around us are crumbling?
- Do not fear
- Be like King David and *Let Your Trust in the Lord Remove Your Fear of Evil*



Discussion

- What do loving friends tell us to do many times, when we are going through a trial? Should we take their advice?
- Do you think King David would have been sinning if he had followed their advice, and ran away? Why or why not?
- Do you think there is a difference between running away in faith in God and running away in faith in our own control? Why or why not?



Discussion

- Why do you think David chose to answer them in this way? Does anything stand out to you about his answer?
- Why is it important that we realize that God has ultimate control over everything? How does that affect our day-to-day lives?
- When do you find yourself most tempted to “take control” of your own life? Are you struggling with that now? What actions can we take to trust in God’s plan and sovereignty? What do you think it practically means for us to meet with God “in His temple”?