

The Triumph of Faith over Fear

Text: Psalm 11:1-7

Introduction:

1. The Author of the Psalm: The preface to the Psalm reveals that David was the author of this Psalm. The occasion is not stated but it was evidently written at a time in David's life when he was under threat from the enemy. Some have suggested it was during the time when his life was threatened by King Saul while others during the Absalom revolt. My thought is that perhaps it was written later during his actual reign as king. Whatever the case may be, the Psalm is rich in instruction for the believer who is being assailed by the arrows of the enemy. Spurgeon calls it the "song of the steadfast".
2. The Structure of the Psalm: The Psalm divides neatly into two sections.
 - Vs. 1-3 – David describes the testing he was enduring from the enemy.
 - Vs. 4-7 – David affirms his faith and trust in God.
3. We will divide the under two headings for our expository study, following the two main divisions.

I. THE TEST OF DAVID'S FAITH (VS. 1-3)

In the opening verses of the Psalm, David describes the assaults of the enemy against his faith in God. He was faced with:

A. The Doubts of the Enemy (Vs. 1)

In this verse, David deals with the taunt that had been levelled at him to try and cause him to lose faith in God and act foolishly. He was presented with a choice – **faith or flight?**

1. The aim of the doubts – "how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?" The aim of the doubt was to:
 - a. Discourage the soul – "how say ye to my **soul**". We need to remember that the darts of the devil are so often aimed at our hearts, to cause us to doubt and lose our rest in the Lord.
 - b. Divert the saint – "Flee as a bird". The doubt was calculated to stimulate fear that would lead to a hasty course of action. Fear is a big weapon the devil uses to divert God's people out of the centre of God's will. Running from the scene of battle seems the easiest course of action to the fearful heart but that is not usually God's way.¹
 - i. Prov. 28:1 "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion."
 - ii. Prov. 19:2 "Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good; and **he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.**"
 - iii. Illustration: Nehemiah 6:10-13 – Shemaiah tries to get Nehemiah to panic and meet him in the temple. Nehemiah was not a priest and was therefore not authorized to enter the temple proper. The ploy was to try and get Nehemiah to act upon an

¹ Note: It is sometimes God's will for His people to flee (Matt. 10:23). David fled from Saul and Joseph was instructed by the angel to flee with Mary and Christ into Egypt to escape Herod. The key thing is to be moved by the Lord as you look to Him in faith in a given situation, not by fear stirred up by doubts from the devil. You need to determine where the instruction to flee is coming from! Is it coming from the Lord or from the devil?

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emotional impulse rather than being governed by objective truth. This would give them occasion to 'reproach' him. 'reproach' means "to expose by stripping, defame." Nehemiah knew the recommended course of action was not from God as it required him to violate the Word of God. Only the priests were authorized to enter the holy place in the temple (Num. 3:10). Uzziah is an example of a king who violated this and was judged by God (2 Chr. 26:16-21)

2. The answer to the doubts – "In the LORD put I my trust"
 - a. The Psalm opens with a bold affirmation of the Psalmist's faith in His God in the face of the suggestions of the enemy. Why should he flee when his trust was in Jehovah God? Faith in God is the best weapon against doubt.
 - b. Psalm 27:1-3 **A Psalm of David.** "The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this *will I be confident.*"

B. The Darts of the Enemy (Vs. 2)

David goes on to explain the character of the enemy but now under the figure of an archer ready to shoot with his arrows.

1. The Enemy's Tactics (Vs. 2a)

The enemy uses:

- a. Surprise – the wicked is pictured as having their bow bent and arrow ready on the string to fire at a moment's notice at the righteous. We are reminded of the preparedness of the enemy to strike at any moment. It also reminds us of how malicious and evil our enemy is. The devil is determined to destroy you if he can! The devil has the string on his bow pulled back and the arrow pointed at your life and he **WILL** fire at you when he thinks he has a chance of destroying you. That is why you can't afford to put down the shield of faith!
 - i. Eph. 6:16 "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."
 - ii. The devil's darts are fierce and fiery. "In the N.T. times the tips of arrows would often be wrapped in pieces of cloth that had been soaked in pitch. The pitch burned fiercely, and on impact it would spatter burning bits for several feet, igniting anything flammable it touched." (Macarthur) These arrows had the potential to not only pierce the enemy's body but also to burn him and set things ablaze (e.g., the enemies' clothing, camp or homes). They were probably one of the most formidable offensive weapons of Paul's day. These darts are the temptations the devil hurls against us, the 'wiles' mentioned in Eph. 6:11.
- b. Subtlety – the enemy seeks to fire his darts 'privily' meaning "secretly, clandestinely". In fact, the word 'privily' comes from the Hebrew word 'darkness'. "The word picture is descriptive of the secrecy of the attack." (Ross) The word is translated as 'darkness' seven times in the

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Old Testament and once as 'obscurity'. The serpent comes with stealth to strike! He is a master at guerrilla warfare.

- i. 2 Cor. 2:11 "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his **devices**." The word 'devices' means "schemes, strategies, tricks".
 - ii. 2 Cor. 11:3 "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his **subtilty**, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."
2. The Enemy's Target (Vs. 2b)
- a. The enemy's arrows are pointed at "the upright in heart". If you are saved and living a sanctified, separated life, you are on the devil's hit list!
 - b. Think about it. The devil is not going to aim his darts at those who are already on his side of the battle (although as a murderer, he will ultimately destroy their lives also). He is also not too concerned about the powerless, compromised believer. The backslider does not present much threat to Satan's kingdom but the Spirit empowered believer does.
 - c. The same applies to churches. The devil will work to ensure the churches that are preaching damnable heresies and errors will be well looked after but he will aim his cannons at a church that is shining forth the light of the Gospel and standing for the whole counsel of God.

C. The Destructiveness of the Enemy (Vs. 3)

The figure changes from that of an archer to that of a building. David knew that the enemy would seek to destroy the foundations and if this was allowed to happen, it would have a devastating effect on the righteous. Without a foundation, a building will quickly crumble, hence why the devil puts a lot of effort into undermining the foundations of our faith. Consider at least two vital foundations you must have in place in your Christian life which the devil relentlessly attacks:

1. The foundation of the Saviour (the Living Word). "For other **foundation** can no man lay than that is laid, which is **Jesus Christ**." (1 Cor. 3:11)
 - a. Christ needs to be the foundation for your life. Are you saved?
 - b. Christ needs to be the foundation for your home.
 - c. Christ is the only foundation for the church.
 - d. Satan relentlessly attacks the Person of Christ as He is the only way of salvation. False christs, false doctrines and ideas about Christ etc...are all the work of the enemy to attack the foundation of our faith.
2. The foundation of the Scriptures (the written Word). Matthew 7:24-27
"Therefore whosoever **heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them**, I will liken him unto a wise man, **which built his house upon a rock**: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was **founded upon a rock**. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." Notice that is not just the hearer of God's Word who is founded upon the rock but the one who **both** hears and applies the Word. Why would you build your life on the shifting sands of the world's philosophies when you can build your

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life on the infallible, indestructible, unshakable, unmoveable, unchangeable rock of God's Divine truth?!

- a. Build your personal life on the foundation of God's truth.
- b. Build your marriage on the foundation of God's truth. Do you know why so many marriages are failing in our day? Because they aren't being built on the rock of God's truth. You don't need an Instagram marriage or a Hollywood marriage, you need a Bible based marriage. Without it you simply won't make it or at best even if you stay together, you will miss out on so many of God's blessings.
- c. Build your home on the foundation of God's truth. The wisdom of this world is "foolishness with God" (1 Cor. 3:19). The world has NO advise worth heeding on matters such as the roles for husband and wife and the raising of children. Turn off the world's foolishness and get your guidance from God's Book! If you read books on parenting make sure you discern whether the author is sharing a personal opinion or a truth from God's Word.
- d. From the beginning of time, Satan's attacks against the Word of God have been relentless. The first recorded words of Satan in the Bible are "Yea, hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1). Sadly, so much of the professing church has allowed Satan to blow away the foundation from under their feet through things such as:
 - i. Liberalism with its denial of the supernatural.
 - ii. Rationalism with its elevation of "science falsely so called" over the authority of the Genesis account of creation.
 - iii. Textual Criticism with its sceptical, rationalistic and unbelieving approach to the inspiration and preservation of the Holy Scriptures.
 - iv. Perversions of the Scriptures through modern translations based on a minority of corrupt Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that leave you with a butchered Bible with multiple deletions of words, phrases and even whole verses.

II. THE TRIUMPH OF DAVID'S FAITH (VS. 4-7)

The victory for David over the doubts, darts and potential destructiveness of the enemy was to focus in faith upon His God. He encouraged his heart in several key truths about His God which gave him both perspective and power to deal with the enemy's attacks. He was encouraged by:

A. Where God Reigns (Vs. 4a)

David commences this section by focusing attention on God's high and lofty position.

1. The Presence of God in His Temple – "The LORD is in his holy temple".
 - a. This is a reference to the heavenly temple. Notice that is described as 'holy', meaning it is set apart, unique, distinct and totally pure compared to any earthly temple.
 - b. As born again, blood washed believers, we have right of entry in prayer into that very place by the blood of Christ (Heb. 4:16; 10:19). Why then should we fear the enemy when have access directly to the all-powerful God who is exalted above all in the heavens.
2. The Position of God on His Throne – "the LORD's throne is in heaven".

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- a. God is on the throne! Why should we flee in the face of opposition?
God is the Supreme and Sovereign Ruler of the universe.
- b. Isaiah 6:1 "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, **high and lifted up**, and his train filled the temple."
- c. Daniel 4:17 "...to the intent that the living may know **that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men**, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."

B. What God Hates (Vs. 4b-6)

These verses speak plainly about the certainty of God's judgment upon the wicked. While it often appears the world and the devil have the upper hand, they will one day face the righteous wrath of Almighty God. Consider three truths about the wrath of God revealed in these verses:

1. The Omniscience of God's Wrath (Vs. 4b)

God's judgment will be according to His perfect knowledge of all things. The Psalmist uses human terms (anthropomorphisms)² to describe God's close examination of mankind.

- a. The seeing eyes of God – "his eyes behold". Nothing escapes the eyes of Almighty God in heaven. He knows all things. Hebrews 4:13 "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."
- b. The searching eyes of God – "his eyelids try, the children of men".
 - i. The word 'try' means to "examine, investigate" and conveys the idea of testing something. (Ross)
 - ii. The reference to the 'eyelids' examining the sinner is striking. C.H. Spurgeon explains it well, "he (God) narrowly inspects their actions, words and thoughts. As men, when intently and narrowly inspecting some very minute object, almost close their eyelids to exclude every other object, so will the Lord look all men through and through. God sees each man as much and as perfectly as if there were no other creature in the universe. He sees us always; he never removes his eye from us; he sees us entirely, reading the recesses of the soul as readily as the glancing of the eye."

2. The Objects of God's Wrath (Vs. 5)

a. The righteous are objects of God's refining (Vs. 5a)

- i. The word 'trieth' can also mean to test or prove (i.e., the testing of metals). It is the same word used by Job in Job 23:10 "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath **tried me**, I shall come forth as gold." So, the righteous are the objects of God's perfecting and refining work but they are not under the judgment and wrath of God.
- ii. This forms a contrast with how God deals with the unrepentant.

b. The ungodly are objects of God's wrath (Vs. 5b)

God's hatred of unrighteousness is stated in the strongest terms. God is not indifferent to man's sin and rebellion. God hates:

² Comes from the compound Greek word made up of 'anthropos' (human) and 'morphe' (form). It is the "assignment of human attributes to nonhuman things. Biblical anthropomorphisms are used primarily in reference to God, who is neither visible (John 1:18) nor human (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29) ...The use of human terminology to talk about God is necessary when we, in our limitations, wish to express truths about the Deity who by his very nature cannot be described or known." (Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology)

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- i. The wicked – we know from other Scriptures that God loves the sinner (e.g., John 3:16) so what does this reference to Him hating the wicked man? On a basic level it means that God hates wickedness (i.e., God loves the sinner but hates the sin). But there is something more specific in view, namely, that if a sinner remains hardened in an unrepentant state, he will be under the righteous anger of a Holy God. Because God hates sin with Holy, righteous hatred, the sinner who will not repent and receive God's offer of forgiveness becomes an object of God's wrath rather than mercy. What a sobering thought. The Holy Hatred of Almighty God against sin! If you are a believer, how can you love the sins that God hates?!
 - ii. Those who love violence – “him that loveth violence his soul hateth”. The lust for violence is one of the prominent characteristics of the depravity of man. While the sin nature is expressed in a multitude of ways, it seems that violence and immorality tend to be the two major expressions of sinful men.
 1. Think of the world of Noah's day prior to the flood. Think of Sodom and Gomorrah. Think of Roman society during the first few centuries after Christ with the Roman games where Christians were torn to pieces by wild beasts for the entertainment of Rome's citizens.
 2. Notice that the verse covers more than the committers of violence. It also covers those who love it. You may not be a doer of violent acts but are you a lover of violent material?
 - Violent movies and TV shows (i.e., horror movies, crime shows, Superheroes such as spiderman, batman, Dr. Strange etc.). The violence displayed on screens today in the name of entertainment gets worse and worse each year as people get conditioned to ever increasing depths of brutality and cruelty.
 - Violent video games such as grand theft auto, call of duty, halo, world of warcraft and the list goes on. In fact, if you google lists of the world's most popular video games, you will find that the majority in the typical top 10 rankings are video games with violent, dark and even occultic themes.
 - Violent books such as murder mysteries and thrillers that appeal to the depraved nature and encourage a fascination with the unholy.
 - Note: There is a place to study history (e.g., world wars) but that is different to encouraging a lust for violence as entertainment.
3. The Outpouring of God's Wrath (Vs. 6)

God will rain down upon the wicked:

 - a. Snares – God's judgment is inescapable. The wicked may feel they are in control and out of God's reach but they will soon find themselves in “the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31).
 - b. Fire and brimstone – God's judgment is a fiery torment. The phrase reminds us of the judgment of God on Sodom and Gomorrah but the

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Psalmist is looking forward to God's judgment in the future (note the word 'shall'). "The words look beyond David's time to the ultimate Divine judgment of the wicked at the end of the age." (Ross) The fiery judgment of hell awaits all those who refuse to repent and receive God's gift of salvation. The fire of God's wrath is an:

- i. Undiluted Fire – "this shall be the portion of their cup". The cup of wrath is full! Revelation 14:10 "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out **without mixture** into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." The phrase "without mixture" means full strength; it means the wrath of God will not be tempered with any mercy and grace.
- ii. Unbearable Fire - Luke 16:19-24 "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in **torments**, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am **tormented in this flame.**" Matthew 13:41-42 "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: **there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.**"
- iii. Unquenchable Fire - Mark 9:43-48 "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into **the fire that never shall be quenched**: (44) Where their worm dieth not, and **the fire is not quenched**. (45) And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, **into the fire that never shall be quenched**: (46) **Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched**. (47) And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: (48) **Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.**" Notice that Christ emphasises the fact the fires of hell are unquenchable **5 times** in these verses.
- iv. Unending Fire – Matthew 25:46 "And these shall go away into **everlasting punishment**: but the righteous into life eternal." 2 Thess. 1:8-9 "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with **everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"

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- c. A horrible tempest – God's judgment is likened to a fierce storm. "Some expositors think that in the term "horrible tempest" there is in the Hebrew an allusion to that burning, suffocating wind, which blows across the Arabian deserts. One calls it "a burning storm" and another "wrathwind". What a tempest will that be which shall overwhelm the despisers of God!" (Spurgeon) What a picture! The burning winds of God's wrath against sin. Barnes writes, "As a furious blast of wind sweeps away houses and trees, spreading wide desolation, so will the wicked be swept away by the manifestation of the wrath of God."

C. Who God Loves (Vs. 7)

The Psalmist drew further comfort from the fact of his God's love for the righteous and righteousness.

1. God loves righteousness (Vs. 7a)
 - a. The reason for God's love of righteousness is plainly revealed – "the **righteous LORD** loveth righteousness". Because God is a God who is completely Righteous and perfectly Holy, He loves righteousness and hates unrighteousness.
 - b. Matthew 5:6 "Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after **righteousness**: for they shall be filled."
 - c. 1 Peter 1:14-16 "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."
2. God loves the righteous (upright) (Vs. 7b)
 - a. David could choose faith over fear, even in the face of the threats of the enemy, knowing that as one of God's children, he was under the watch care of Almighty God. The countenance refers to the face and speaks of the tender and loving care the Heavenly Father has for His children. As they walk uprightly, He blesses them abundantly! (Ps. 84:11).
 - b. "Whom wicked men privily shoot at (Vs. 2), God looks with pleasure upon them, and takes delight in them, and takes care of them, protects and defends them, and at last saves them; and which, with all that goes before, was an encouragement to David to trust in the Lord;" (John Gill)

Conclusion:

1. Are you living in fear as a Christian? You can choose faith over fear because of Who your God is!
2. Are you saved or lost? Are you under God's favour as one of His born again, blood washed children or are you unrepentant and therefore under His wrath?