

07-05-2015

## **Message: If the Foundations Are Shaken, What Can the Righteous Do?**

**Text: Psalm 11**

### **Introduction**

- A. This July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday weekend we celebrate the founding of our country with its first foundational document, the Declaration of Independence, a document that acknowledges the will of our Creator as supplying the basis for our rights.

***We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights***

- B. When on June 26, 2015, 5 members of our Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) decided that our US Constitution confirmed a right of same sex partners to marry, the decision did not simply serve as a sign of a moral/religious shift in our cultural foundation, but advanced (gave momentum to) and codified such a shift in our civil/governmental foundation as well. I.e., it is a big deal.
- C. Given that political pundits did not expect this ruling as early as June 26, and given that it was announced on a Friday when we pastors were already well into our sermon preparation for June 28, and even though our particular final message from 1 Peter calling us to stand firm in the true grace of God lent itself for us to make application to the SCOTUS decision, it is good for the strengthening, equipping, and confidence building of our body to look again to the wisdom of God's Word for the response God commends to us for our protection, preservation unto our final salvation when Jesus returns.
- D. Psalm 11 is a psalm of confidence given to us through David by God's Holy Spirit for those times when our civil and cultural foundations are crumbling, asking and then answering for us the question ...

**Psalm 11:3 If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?**

### **I. 11:1-3 Civil and cultural foundations once friendly to people of faith are now crumbling.**

- A. Civil and social foundations around David were at times crumbling around him, a person of faith.

Psalm 11:1 For the choir director. *A Psalm* of David. **In the LORD I take refuge**; How can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain;"<sup>2</sup> For, behold, the wicked bend the bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string to shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.<sup>3</sup> **If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?**

1. In Israelite government

King Saul, God's anointed king (messiah), charged to rule on behalf of God as King, turned wicked and murderous against David and those who supported him (E.g., the 85 priests of Nob).

2. In Israelite society

Psalm 11:2 **For, behold, the wicked bend the bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string to shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.**

The first 7.5 years of David's reign there was a civil war in Israel, the house of Saul and the 10 northern tribes against the house of David and the 2 southern tribes. Later David's son Absalom would lead a major insurrection against David, turning him and his followers into refugees.

B. Civil and social foundations in America, once friendly to Christianity, are now crumbling.

1. In our civil government.

a. Examples of governmental friendliness to Christianity.

- (1) Tax exempt status given to churches and non-profits in legislation in 1913, 1915, 1917.
- (2) The motto, "In God We Trust" was first stamped on the 2 cent US coin in 1864. The 84<sup>th</sup> Congress of the US passed a joint resolution making "In God We Trust" our national motto, signed into law on July 30, 1956 by President Eisenhower. It was added to paper money between 1957 and 1966.
- (3) Prayer and Bible reading began the day in public school classrooms.
- (4) Prayer began legislative sessions at various levels of government.
- (5) Christian friendly slogans and depictions on national buildings, including the SCOTUS building.
- (6) In 1996 President Bill Clinton signed into law the Defense of Marriage Act, defining marriage as being between a man and a woman.

b. Examples of the crumbling of Christianity's privileged status.

- (1) 1962 SCOTUS ruled Bible reading and prayer in public schools unconstitutional.
- (2) 1973 SCOTUS ruled that women have a constitutional right to abort their unborn children.
- (3) 1980 SCOTUS ruled 10 Commandments hanging in public schools unconstitutional.
- (4) Resultant prohibition of religious speech and symbols in the public square, including school sponsored events - football games, graduation speeches.
- (5) 2013 SCOTUS strikes down the Defense of Marriage Act. President Obama affirms gay marriage
- (6) Federal judges have been striking down state law, including South Carolina's constitution, defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman. It has been a domino effect.
- (7) Civil suites awarded against Christian business persons for not participating in LGBT weddings.
- (8) Civil servants punished for not affirming or for disaffirming LGBT lifestyle.
- (9) SCOTUS ruling on 6/26/15. Chief Justice Roberts writes in dissent ...

*The majority graciously suggests that religious believers may continue to 'advocate' and 'teach' their views of marriage. The First Amendment guarantees, however, the freedom to 'exercise' religion. Ominously, that is not a word the majority uses.*

*Hard questions arise when people of faith exercise religion in ways that may be seen to conflict with the new right to same-sex marriage—when, for example, a religious college provides married student housing only to opposite-sex married couples, or a religious adoption agency declines to place children with same-sex married couples. Indeed, the Solicitor General candidly acknowledged that the tax exemptions of some religious institutions would be in question if they opposed same-sex marriage.*

*There is little doubt that these and similar questions will soon be before this Court. Unfortunately, people of faith can take no comfort in the treatment they receive from the majority today.*

- (9) White house support of the SCOTUS decision (show White House photo in rainbow colors)

Proverbs 14:34 **Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.**

2. In our society.

- a. May 2015 Gallup poll results show 60% of American currently support same sex marriage, up from 55 % in 2014, and more than double the percentage in 1996 when the Defense of Marriage Act was passed by our Congress. The poll also found that support for same-sex marriage has reached all-time highs among Americans of all political parties: 76% of Democrats, up from 33% in 1996; 64% of Independents, up from 32% in 1996; and 37% of Republicans, up from 16% in 1996.
- b. Episcopalians voted to allow religious weddings for same sex couples on Wednesday, July 1st in Salt Lake City at the denomination's national assembly. The measure passed by an overwhelming margin in the House of Deputies, the voting body of clergy and lay people at the meeting. The day before, the House of Bishops had approved the resolution, 129-26 with five abstaining.
- c. Evangelical Lutheran, Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ are some of the mainline denominations welcoming and affirming LGBT members.
- d. Some of our own children who have grown up at TRB are either uncertain or supportive of LGBT lifestyles.
- e. Mark Oppenheimer, writing in Time magazine the day after the Supreme Court's ruling on gay marriage, celebrated the ruling, and stated ...

*Rather than try to rescue tax-exempt status for organizations that dissent from settled public policy on matters of race or sexuality, we need to take a more radical step. It's time to abolish, or greatly diminish, their tax-exempt statuses. ... In the 1983 Bob Jones University case, the court ruled <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/461/574> that a school could lose tax-exempt status if its policies violated "fundamental national public policy." So far, the Bob Jones reasoning hasn't been extended to other kinds of discrimination, but someday it could be.*

- f. Financial writer Felix Salmon writes ...

*Now that the U.S. government formally recognizes marriage equality as a fundamental right, it really shouldn't skew the tax code so as to give millions of dollars in tax breaks to groups which remain steadfastly bigoted on the subject.*

- g. A polygamous Montana trio has already applied for a wedding license, based on the reasoning of the SCOTUS decision.

**Psalm 11:3 If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?**

**II. Dismissal of wrong options and search for God's option.**

Psalm 11:1 **For the choir director.** A Psalm of David. In the LORD I take refuge; **How can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain,"**<sup>2</sup> For, behold, the wicked bend the bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string to shoot in darkness at the upright in heart.<sup>3</sup> **If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"**

- A. Notice first of all that this psalm is not intended to be God's solution for David only, but for all of His people generation after generation - "For the choir director."
- B. Second, notice that David is aware of 2 options, to take flight or to take refuge in the Lord.

1. Flight would appear to put him out of range of the arrows of the wicked - but to do so would be to abandon his ministry and God-appointed purpose. David rejects the option of taking flight, of abandoning his calling as God's messiah/anointed king, of abandoning his ministry to his generation, of abandoning the leaving a righteous legacy for the generation to come.
2. He is neither dismissive nor phobic (irrationally fearful) of the gravity of the civil and cultural foundations crumbling. Dismissing the option of quitting, withdrawing, flight, he asks the question we need to be asking ourselves today ...

Psalm 11:3 **If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?**

### III. 11:4-7 The basis for renewed faith and confidence in the Lord.

- A. 11:4a Though the wicked appear to triumph, our holy God is on his throne - from which He rules and judges, and in this we can confidently rejoice always.

Psalm 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.

1. Chief Justice Roberts concludes his dissent saying ...

*If you are among the many Americans—of whatever sexual orientation—who favor expanding same-sex marriage, by all means celebrate today's decision. Celebrate the achievement of a desired goal. Celebrate the opportunity for a new expression of commitment to a partner. Celebrate the availability of new benefits. But do not celebrate the Constitution. It had nothing to do with it.*

2. We do not rejoice with many others in the SCOTUS decision, nor do we rejoice in the 5 justices who in the opinion of the remaining 4, are overstepping their constitutional authority and rendering their decision as a matter of their own will, causing our country in this matter to be ruled by an "oligarchy" (rule by a few) rather than by a democracy. But we do rejoice that the foundation of God's throne is righteousness, and that His foundation will never crumble. So in the Lord we continue to rejoice always.

Psalm 89:14 **Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne;** Lovingkindness and truth go before You.

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, **a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.**

Philippians 4:4 **Rejoice in the Lord always;** again I will say, rejoice!

- B. 11:4b,5 The Lord is observing, assaying, everyone for future judgment, and refining His people through these circumstances.

Psalm 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.** <sup>5</sup> **The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, and the one who loves violence His soul hates.**

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, **which comes upon you for your testing,** as though some strange thing were happening to you;

1 Peter 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,<sup>7</sup> so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold

which is perishable, **even though tested by fire**, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

- C. 11:6 The crucified, risen, reigning, returning Lord Jesus Christ will come in the glory of His father with His mighty angels and remove all unrepentant, wicked, unbelieving individuals from the face of the earth. Eternal punishment will be their inheritance.

Psalm 11:6 **Upon the wicked He will rain snares; Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.**

Proverbs 10:24 What the wicked fears will come upon him, but the desire of the righteous will be granted.<sup>25</sup> **When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation.**

Matthew 13:40 "So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.<sup>41</sup> "The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and **they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,<sup>42</sup> and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**<sup>43</sup> "Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

- D. 11:7 The promise of the gospel is that believers will inherit a place in the presence of the Lord's righteous glory forever, as promised by our righteous God. In this we can have confidence.

Psalm 11:7 For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; **The upright will behold His face.**

Revelation 22:3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;<sup>4</sup> **they will see His face**, and His name *will be* on their foreheads.

## Conclusion

- A. We do not rejoice that the bride of Christ, His church, is losing her privileged status in the United States of America as our social and civil foundations crumble. But that is no cause for unrighteous anger or unrighteous fear. Many of our brothers and sisters in many countries of the world enjoy at this moment far less privileges than we. The New Testament church in her first 3 centuries did not enjoy a privileged status in the Roman Empire, either by the government or society in general, but was often persecuted - and this in a Greco-Roman culture where homosexuality was widely practiced (E.g., Alexander the Great, Spartan soldiers).

1 Corinthians 4:11 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are **roughly treated**, and are homeless;<sup>12</sup> and we toil, working with our own hands; when **we are reviled**, we bless; when **we are persecuted**, we endure;<sup>13</sup> when **we are slandered**, we try to conciliate; **we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.**

- B. What we must do is not become withdrawn or mute, but make use of the privileges we still have to represent and bear witness to Christ in a culture whose foundations are crumbling.

1 Timothy 6:18 *Instruct them* to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,<sup>19</sup> storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

- C. Don't be deceived by our White House, by our Supreme Court, by the shift in opinion polls, or by biblically unfaithful pastors and churches to think that God loves what His Word calls sin, and that we can continue in sin and belong to God. That is a crumbling foundation upon which to base one's life.

2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

- D. If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? We don't flee, we don't fear, we don't fight evil with evil. We find refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ, our sure foundation.

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

Psalm 11:1 In the LORD I take refuge;