

The Lord is My Refuge

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Date: 15 August 2021

Preacher: Dr. John Neufeld

[0 : 00] Thank you, Carl. It's always good to connect with you after so many years. And actually, we've been married 43 years, I think, sweetheart, right? But it's only seemed like 36, so I think that's what that was all about.

Yeah, and the interesting thing as well is that all 43 years are in a row. And I just thought I'd throw that in as well. Clearly, I thought it was more funny than you did.

So let's just begin with a word of prayer, and then I'll begin. Heavenly Father, thank you for this opportunity to be with brothers and sisters whom I don't know, but I know they are my brothers and sisters in Christ, and we share an eternal future together.

Thank you that the hope that we have is in the resurrection of our Lord. Thank you, Heavenly Father, that there is one church globally that belongs to you that have been called by the Holy Spirit from darkness into light, and such we are.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, also for your word. And I pray now that as I seek to explain your word accurately, that come Holy Spirit and apply this powerful word to our lives.

[1 : 08] In Jesus' name, amen. Well, you've heard Psalm 11 being read, and, you know, I was called by your pastor and said, you can preach on anything you want to, which is always dangerous. But I thought, you know, it's summertime, and for the many years that I was in pastoral ministry, I often took the time in the summer and just went through some of the psalms.

And I thought I'd pick a psalm that perhaps you may not have heard preached. And it is in the early part of our psalter, and it's in Psalm 11.

I don't know if you know this about the psalms. They're actually arranged into five different books. You might have seen that in your Bible. And Psalm 1 to 41 is usually called Book 1.

And historically, we say that that was probably put together by David, even though he is the author of all but three of those 41 psalms, that he probably arranged it as well, put it together in a hymnal for Israel's worship.

And so I thought I'd take some time in a psalm, perhaps, that you may not know. Now, let me tell you a little bit about the first number of psalms that you actually read.

[2 : 18] And they are, to the most part, what we call songs of lament. And a song of lament is a plaintive cry to God. So, for instance, if you've already got your Bible open, and you may already be looking, let's say, at Psalm 3, verse 1.

Oh, Lord, how many are my foes? That's how it begins. Go to Psalm 5. Give ear to my words, O Lord. Consider my groaning.

And again, it talks about the wicked that are attacking David. And if you go to Psalm 6 and look at verse 3, for instance, My soul is greatly troubled, but you, O Lord, how long?

So, you know, David is saying, God, rouse yourself. I've been waiting so long for your deliverance. And still it seems as if, from David's perspective, God has not acted on his behalf, and the wicked seem to be having their way for a time.

Now, these collection of early songs, to the most part, are those kind of songs of lament. And Psalm 11 will be one of those. And we're going to look at that closely.

[3 : 23] But if you ever take the time to study the early Psalms, you're going to get a sense that the same theme keeps coming up over and over again. And you're going to say, I feel like I've read it before, and now I'm reading it again, and I'm reading it again.

But if you take the time to study it, it will seem like a diamond. And what I mean by that is, if you observe a diamond closely, and you begin to turn it in the light, and you watch the light shine in different prisms, and you see different colors coming out, there'll be different themes.

So David keeps on concentrating on the theme of the destruction of the wicked, and on the impact that has not only on his life, but on his nation. But as we continue to turn these diamonds and look at it from a number of perspectives, the insight goes continually deeper as we continue to read one psalm after another.

So with that in mind, let's go to Psalm 11. I think most of you have it out already, and you've heard Pastor BK already reading it. So Psalm 11, again, as I've said, is another psalm of David.

He's being hotly pursued by his enemies. But in this case, and you can see it already from verse 1, and I'll read it again in just a little while. But in this case, it would seem that the enemies of David have finally gotten the upper hand.

[4 : 41] It's no longer just a battle, but it seems like their victory is overwhelming, and things have turned out a great deal worse than David's friends would have thought.

And they basically say, it's over. The fight is passed. There is nothing left for us to do. It's time to flee as quickly as you can, because they have gained the upper hand.

Now, the question that's often asked, and you can see this in Psalm 11, it just simply says at the beginning, you'll see there's a slight heading, which was also in the original notes. It says, to the choir master.

So obviously, Israel sang this psalm, and then it simply says of David. And unlike other psalms that we see that David has written, some of them contain a heading which tell us exactly when they were written, but this one doesn't.

And when you read it through, you might say, man, I wish there would have been a heading that told us when it was written, because that would have been so very interesting. See, let's say, for instance, that David wrote Psalm 11 when Absalom was rising up.

[5 : 49] And so you've got the nation now embroiled in a civil war. David now is called upon to flee out of Jerusalem. And I've been in Jerusalem many times. And it goes down a steep embankment down into the Kidron Valley and the Mount of Olives on the other side.

So you don't simply scramble up there. It's an arduous journey up on the other side. And you can see him when he's weeping as he goes, and he's leaving Jerusalem.

And is Psalm 11 written on occasion like that? Well, we're not told. Another possibility is that it was written immediately after Saul, King Saul. David is now then a much younger man, not yet king.

And King Saul has, you know, now basically put out a death warrant on David. And David's wife, Michal, Saul's daughter, has put an idol in the bed and told the men that come to kill David, well, he can't come out.

He's sick in bed. And so they eventually find him there. And then she lies and said, he made me say that. And so it would seem that, you know, his wife is also turning against him. And all of his friends or people that he would have trusted in before the nation as a whole was turning against him.

[6 : 59] Is Psalm 11 written against that kind of a background? So all I'm saying is, oh, there are a number of scenarios in David's life when this Psalm might fit, does no good to speculate about when it was written.

Nonetheless, David is told, run for your life. Now, before I begin to reread what we've already read, I'm going to say a couple of words about application.

Because sometimes when we read a Psalm like this, which is clearly about David's experience, that we're liable to say, well, boy, it was tough for him. And I'm sure glad he found hope in God.

And I'm so glad that God delivered him in the end of the day. And we have these marvelous stories about David. And so, you know, we kind of glimpse at it from that perspective. But notice again, it starts to the choir master.

That is, it was anticipated that Israel would sing this song, not just to remember David. Of course, you know that David is a forerunner of the Messiah. And at times, he serves as a type or as an example of the Messiah that's to come.

[8 : 03] But there is something in this that is meant for all of us. See, I believe that Psalm 11 should be carefully studied by all of God's people because it will tell us what we do when the struggles that we encounter in life, whatever opposition is arrayed against us or a number of other things that seem too large for us to handle.

Psalm 11 is supposed to be sung, memorized, committed into our own hearts so that when our enemies are greater than we can imagine, we will know what to do.

That's why this is all about. So let me say this also before I begin to read. And that is, I think it is a mark of the godly that they are a resilient people, that we're tough as nails when things get tough.

That we don't simply cower and give up, crawl in a hole somewhere, pull the manhole over top of ourselves and simply say, I hope the world goes away and we shake in the dark.

I'm going to say that's a picture of someone who has not yet put their trust fully in the Lord. I love the words of the apostle Paul. What shall separate us from the love of Christ?

[9 : 17] Notice what he writes. He says, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or the sword. And then he writes, for it is written, for your sake we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

So Paul understood this. And I'll say a little bit more about how David's experience mirrors Paul's experience as well and ours. Considered as sheep to be slaughtered so that there's no hope.

And yet, writes Paul, I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will separate us from the love of God.

I am rooted into Christ. And this psalm is to teach God's people when we're rooted into Christ and in the hope that he offers, let the hard times come, in the end of the day we will stand because Christ stood.

And that's our future. So that's what Psalm 11 is all about. It's a theme. Those who are considered as sheep to be slaughtered, when all hope of deliverance is gone.

[10 : 24] Boy, what a wonderful story that is. Because we have the greatest deliverance story, don't we? It's called the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It's our deliverance story.

And all hope had failed when the apostles themselves said, It's done. Time to go back to the fishing business. Time to simply get on with our lives. We had hoped so much this man was the Messiah, but it seems not to have been.

When all hope is crushed, then comes the resurrection. And that is the story of our faith. So it's key for us that we understand the mighty power of God.

Let me go a little bit further on this before I get into the psalm. 2 Corinthians chapter 1. Paul writes the Corinthian church. He says that he had so despaired that he had despaired of life itself.

I assume that there was a point in time in Paul's ministry when he felt he just couldn't go on. The criticism, sometimes from well-meaning believers.

[11 : 29] The robbers that awaited him. The various trials that he faced that were a part of his ministry had left him so crushed and in despair. That he simply said, I don't know if I die now.

That would be simply a welcome embrace for me because it's too hard to go on. I wonder if you've ever felt that way. Maybe you feel that way now.

It's just too hard and I don't know if I can. In that case, Psalm 11 is for you. So let's begin to read again. It's easy to divide the psalm into three sections. I'll do the first one, which is verses 1 to 3.

Now, please notice at the beginning.

See, I take refuge in the Lord, but how can you say? Who's you? It's the first question we need to ask. Who is David talking? How can you say? And I think the answer is the you that David is speaking about are some of his closest advisors and friends.

[12 : 48] Who are saying to him, it's now gone too far. All that's left for you is to fly to the mountains. And so you have to see that David and his best friends view things from a very different perspective.

I mean, on one hand, they see things the same. Of course they do. They recognize there's an external objective danger. And there seems to be no earthly way in which he can survive this threat.

But that's where the similarity ends. See, David says, in the Lord I take refuge. You're telling me flee to the mountains. By the way, that's a wonderful Near Eastern way of expressing things.

Fly like a bird to the mountain or to the forest. Nobody will find you there. And I think what that would have meant that his advisors would say, look, you need to not only run, but you need to leave Israel.

You need to find one of those kings that would take you in. And then you'll be safeguarded there. And you'll be able to live out your days in peace.

[13 : 50] And finally, all the people within the nation that want to seek your death won't be able to have at you again. You'll be like a bird in the forest. And finally, you'll be safe.

Yes, you may not be the king anymore, but still you'll have saved your life. I remember years ago, and I was a young guy. I mean, probably just after I had met Carl.

I mean, if you want to know how long ago that was, Carl says in the 1700s it was far beyond that. I don't think the earth's crust had hardened when I first met him. But I do know this. I had gone to Bible college.

And one summer we decided, or it was in the winter, I guess, but we had decided we would go to L.A. and we would see a work of inner city ministry. And I met a woman by the name of Mary Thiessen.

Mary Thiessen was one of the most courageous women I think I will ever remember. She worked in an inner city environment where there were threats against her almost on a daily basis.

- [14 : 50] She had been threatened with death, with rape, and with all manner of assault. And still she went and continued to do ministry, helping young women find their way out of prostitution and a number of other ways of rescuing those who were in deepest distress.
- And I remember having a conversation with her and I said, Mary, I don't understand. How do you go on day after day? And you've done this now for years. And you live with this constant pressure.
- Every time you go to a ministry call, you don't know if you're going to come back. What's going on inside your head? And her answer to me was very simple.
- She said, listen, I know that I am in the center of God's will. And I know that any Christian in the center of God's will is in the safest place imaginable. The person who is out of God's will and who assumes to himself or herself, I'm safe, is really unsafe.
- Because we are outside of the covenant love of God. And there's something about that, that when you embrace fully the first words of this psalm, where David says, in the Lord I take refuge.
- [16 : 01] I know what my friends are saying to me. Take refuge somewhere else. I will take refuge in God's plan for my life and hold myself there. And there in that place, let God deal with me according to the counsel of his will.
- And once his will is done, he will treat me as he sees most fit. And there's something of confidence that's found when we finally take that.
- I love how David says that. Now, of course, his friends are giving him all the wrong advice. We can see that from the very first verse in this psalm. I know you're thinking, is he ever going to get through?
- I will get through, I promise you. And it won't be this afternoon. It'll be very quickly. But please hear, I mean, hear the drama. On the one hand, his friends say, you need to look for safety.
- And David says, I have found the place of safety. I mean, I see Paul the apostle. He has sailed to Caesarea. He has come to bring money to the poor, struggling Jerusalem Christians.
- [17 : 07] And there in Caesarea, that's where the Roman outpost in Israel was. And he's come to that place. And a number of believers meet with him. And along with them comes a prophet by the name of Agabus. You'll remember the story from Acts.
- And Agabus tells the entire company that so will, you know, Paul, you're like this belt. I'm binding. This is how you're going to be bound when you go to Jerusalem.
- You're going to be arrested and bound. That's your future when you go. And then hearing of that, the believers in Caesarea said, Paul, don't go. No, but there's a great word.
- I'm so glad that God spoke here. Nothing bad's going to happen. So if you just stay away. And Paul says, why are you breaking my heart? I'm determined to go, even if it means to be bound.
- Because in the end of the day, again, let me say what Mary Thiessen said to me. She said, listen, when you're inside the will of God and you take your refuge in God, then let come what may for God determines what will happen next.
- [18 : 07] So that's what we have. They're saying, flee like a bird to the mountain. Now, let's continue to read because you'll see it says, behold, the wicked bend the bow. See that in verse 2? Now, you've got to hear this poetic language, and they fiddle the arrow into the string.
- So it's a battlefield scenario. And you can imagine that the great challenge when you're lining up in the ancient world to battlefield, that the archers, they're going to strike a great deal of people before you ever get the first, you know, clash of battle.

The archers will. Now, while the archers are looking for their bow, or whether they're fiddling for their arrow, or they're getting a sense of the wind direction, or anything else that happens, the people on the other side still have a chance because they can rush, and perhaps the archers may not be ready.

But once the arrow is fitted, the bow is bent, you're going to do no rushing now because all they have to do is let go of the arrow.

See, every advantage is on their side. That's what is happening here. There's nothing for David to do. He has no response to this. Everything is already ready there, ready to fire into his heart.

[19 : 22] And that's when we come to verse 3 because we're going to stop here and ask the question, if the foundations are destroyed, says David, what can the righteous do? So we have to ask ourselves, what's he talking about here?

What are the foundations that are in mind? Now, let me say two things. Now, it's possible if David wrote this psalm before he was the king, and yet you'll remember the prophet Samuel had told David he would be the next king, and David already had an inkling of the role that God had for him to play in the redemption of God's people.

Now, if at that point in time he decides, I'm going to flee from Israel, make my home with one of the foreign kings, and live out the rest of my days there, if that happens, then God's plan for eventually bringing the Messiah into the world, well, at least from a human perspective, don't look like they're going to happen.

But if David wrote this psalm when he was already king, you've got to imagine how significant that moment is. Let's say the king deserts his throne. Let's say anarchy ensues.

Civil war then gives birth. Human life is cheap. Law and order is done. And what we have is the foundations of the entire society begin to shake and fall apart, and human life becomes cheap.

[20 : 42] And David says to himself, if I go now, the foundations of this entire nation are going to be shaken, and if they're shaken, what will the righteous do?

What will the weak and the suffering do? What will those people who have no one other than the king to speak on their behalf, what will they do in such a time?

If I flee as my friends tell me to flee right now, how many people will suffer? Now, if you want an example of that, you want to think about Jesus as he was being tempted by Satan.

What happens if Jesus submits to the temptation to the plan of redemption? Let me bring this really home for all of us. I've on more than one occasion spent a great deal of time with men who have committed adultery.

But I've also spent time with men who were in the process of being tempted. And one of the ways in which I always respond is this. If you succumb to this temptation, please understand it's not just you.

[21 : 48] And it's not just your wife. But it's also your children and the hope they have of a stable union in which they can grow up, learn about Christ, and understand what the love of God actually looks like by looking at dad.

If you submit now to this temptation, what will happen to the foundations of those little lives that are around you? What then occurs? You see, this is the thing.

When we sin, it's not just we that are somehow involved in this, but there are so many others as well. Or if I succumb to the temptation to become a coward and no longer stand for the gospel, what then happens to the foundations?

You see, that's the issue. I'm going to say something about the church of Jesus Christ in this country. And I'm on the radio on 100 stations every single day because I believe very much that the Word of God needs to be in the marketplace, preached constantly so that people can hear and so that the Word of God becomes a part of the conversation of Canadians.

See, I dream of a day when it's impossible to live in this country without having to decide what to do with Jesus. That's what I dream about. And if God's people no longer are courageous in declaring the gospel, if the pressure against us is too strong, or if we're so afraid of what others might say, or what it means to be politically incorrect and canceled in this culture, as your pastor has said earlier, if that's what we're afraid of, and we flee to the mountains or the hills or the forest and say, let's just crawl into a hole, let's stop the fight because the archers have the bow out already and they're ready to fire.

[23 : 41] If at that point in time we simply say, yes, let's flee, what will the righteous do when the foundations are shaken? It comes then down to this, that God's people are called upon to stand.

So having said that, let me now go to the latter part of the psalm, and I can go through this very quickly. These are David's words. When you're at the place of breaking, this is his word to you and I.

If it seems to you that you've already been defeated and you can't think of any other reason to continue to stand with Christ, let me put it this way. I'm going to give you a number of reasons.

Reason number one, the Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. You can stand because God is in his holy temple.

Do you like the book of Revelation? I love that book. Revelation chapter 2 and 3, as you might know, is the message of Jesus to seven churches in Asia Minor.

[24 : 41] And each church is facing pressure because if my understanding of the book of Revelation is right, that it was written either in the late 80s or in the 90s, the pressure against churches are now at a place that they have not felt before because it seems to be the entire Roman Empire and the might of the imperial emperor himself may be arrayed against all of the church and they are shaking.

So after the message to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, surprise and surprise, after Revelation 3, I don't know if you know this, comes Revelation 4. I know that's shocking, but that's what comes next.

And isn't it interesting that in Revelation chapter 4, what's the scene? It's the throne room of heaven. John is taken up in the throne room of heaven and you've got to understand what that means as he communicates that to the seven churches.

He is in the throne room of heaven. They've been so worried about the throne room of Caesar in Rome and the imperial might that is gathered there. How does that even stand?

How do you even compare that to what we find before the throne of glory? Our God is enthroned in his temple where might and glory emanate from his throne.

[26 : 03] You know, when you are at a place where you feel like running and I can't take it anymore and the pressure is too hard for me to stand, would you repeat with David the words of Psalm 11 verse 4? It says, The Lord is in his holy temple.

Maybe you need to repeat it a thousand times. Say it again, say it again, say it again. The Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven.

The second thing that we learn here is that, and it's found here right after it says, The Lord's throne is in heaven. The latter part of verse 4, His eyes see. His eyelids test the children of man.

So I'll get to the testing in a little bit, but let's stop for a mile and just simply say, God is the God who sees. Do you think there's anything that you're going through that does not interest him?

Do you think? Have you ever had something in your life that's so interesting to you that everything else just gone and you got that one object in your mind?

[27 : 04] Okay, let me go back to when you first started, you know, dating the man or the woman that would be your husband or wife, you know? And after that, there was nothing else in the world. There was just her.

Still is for me. I just let you know, you know. 43 years later. However, let me say something about that. When we give full attention to it, we don't take our minds off it.

We gaze at it intensely. There's nothing that doesn't capture God's full attention. Everything interests him. And your case, being one of God's children, his full focus is on you.

He's watching with intensity. Don't you ever say, nobody cares about you. That may be true, but you have a God who does, whose interest is on you.

So you might say, you know, nobody cares, but God does. God knows. You know, I used to serve with a marvelous pastor who's a colleague, and he used to say when, especially when people were criticizing him, and I would say, you doing okay?

[28 : 11] He says, God knows. He'd always, I could see his hand go off like that. He's passed away now, but his hand would always go up. See, God knows. See, it was always his first response. God knows. God sees.

His ears listen. He is watching with intensity. So that's the second thing. The Lord is in his holy temple. He watches. Now watch the next part. This is very interesting.

See, his eyelids test the children of man. Now watch verse five. The Lord tests the righteous. You get that. But here's the contrast.

His soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. So you got him testing the right. I would have written this differently. I gotta tell you, I just would have. I would have said, the Lord loves the righteous.

But it doesn't. It says the Lord tests the righteous. So whenever you find the scripture reading differently than you think it should read, you need to stop because it should arrest your attention and you should say, what am I reading here?

[29 : 11] So on the one hand, God is ready to wreak vengeance on the wicked. And we get that. I mean, look at verse six. He's gonna rain coals on the wicked, fire and sulfur and a scorching wind.

Well, you know what that language is all about. It's taken from Sodom and Gomorrah. It's taken from the book of Genesis. David is quoting this directly. Do you remember the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? He says, how did God treat the wicked there?

Remember, he said two angels in there. Place was so wicked that the people of Sodom didn't even realize they were angels. And seeing that there were strangers in town, thought, let's rape these guys immediately.

And we find out from reading the text that there were not 10 righteous people in the entire city. In the end of the day, we get an explanation of how God judges the wicked.

And he does. He hauls them into judgment. That's what verse six is all about. So we have God with his promise to judge the wicked. But look at again at verse four.

[30 : 08] I'm sorry, verse five. The Lord, on the other hand, tests the righteous. James makes it very clear in the book of James that when we are tempted, we should never say, I am being tempted by God.

For God never tempts us with wickedness. God is good, and in him there is no evil or unrighteousness. There is no darkness in God.

So God continues to deal with us according to his righteousness, but he tests us. If you read the book of Hebrews, you'll remember that Hebrews tells us that whenever we go through hardship, just like David is going through here, that God is doing that to discipline us and to shape our character.

I love to say this to people. Listen. Nothing happens to a believer that has not been ordained of God. Whatever happens in your life, moment by moment, event by event, whether it's the greatest thing in the world or the hardest thing you've ever faced, it's been so ordained by God that in so ordaining it, God glorifies himself and he has prepared for you the best possible eternity.

He wants to maximize your joy. He'd never let you go through what you go through were he not interested in your long-term good. That's the promise from God.

[31 : 40] That's how he tests you. He continues to discipline you through hardship so that your character is built. I mean, you can find all sorts of plants that grow up in a day and wither the next day, but the mighty oak or the great trees that are in some of our forests, they get put together with wind whipping up against them and creates this strength and majesty and God is doing that in you.

See, that's the next thing that we say. Look, you know, when the wicked seem to have their way in my life or when hardship is too hard for me to handle and I throw up my hands and say, I just quit, let me run away, then hear the word of God.

God is saying, I have ordained this moment because I have your interest in mind. Then the final thing, for the Lord is righteous, he loves righteous deeds.

I just love that. You know, whenever you're in obedience to the Lord, whenever you submit your own will to him, I know we all sin, I get that, I get that, but there's something wonderful that happens when we hear the command of God and bend the knee and say, Lord, I submit, I will do what you call me to do and in David's case, he knew what God had called him to do.

Don't you run away. You continue to defend the people that God has put you in trust over. You stand there, you take it because God is testing you but you don't run away and then when David doesn't run away, even when his friends tell him to run away, listen to what David is saying.

[33 : 09] Whenever I stand there and say God is my refuge and I'm not going to be intimidated, that righteous act is loved by God. God says, well done, good and faithful servant and the upright shall behold his face.

I love the idea of standing before God in glory and two things are going to happen. I want to hear all my sins recounted because I want to know how great is the mercy that saved me through the cross of Jesus.

I want to glorify God for all of eternity and say, man Lord, I didn't know I was a lot more sinful than you had ever imagined. That I had ever imagined. No, God had imagined it.

I had not imagined it. On the other hand, and here's the beauty of this, every time we bend the knee and say, Lord, I will submit even though it's hard to do so, whenever we do that, hear the word of the Lord.

That act is loved by your God. The eyes of the Lord are upon you. And the angels are rejoicing. And it will not be forgotten, not in this world, nor in the one to come.

[34 : 16] Heavenly Father, for these, my brothers and sisters here in Squamish who are called upon to be servants of Jesus Christ, who love your name, Father, strengthen them through all trials.

Father, I pray strengthen Pastor BK, strengthen the elders, and strengthen this entire congregation, build unity, and build courage to continue to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in this city that so desperately needs to hear.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. So, amen.