

Gospel and Fear in Times of Trouble

Outline (Psalm 11)

1. The Language of Fear (Ps 11: 1-3)
2. The Language of Faith (Ps 11: 4-7)
 - (i) The LORD is on His heavenly throne (11:4b) — He is in control
 - (ii) The LORD is in His holy Temple (11:4a) — He is available
 - (iii) The LORD observes everyone (11:4c) — He examines our hearts

1. The Language of Fear (Ps 11:1-3): *In the LORD, I take refuge. How then can you say to me: “Flee like a bird to your mountain.”² For look, the wicked bend their bows; they set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart.³ When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?”*

11:1-2: This psalm of David was probably written when he was king. But we need to find out what dangers David was facing. Like all rulers, he certainly faced the constant threat of assassination. In India, we saw the assassination of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. In the USA, they saw the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln and John Kennedy. Undoubtedly, David faced constant threats from unknown wicked people (11:2).

11:3: But David faced a more challenging threat — the foundations of society were being destroyed (11:3). There is no justice and no law and order in the land. Violence and corruption increased; people did not keep promises, and good behaviour was rarely seen. Such a situation greatly discourages the righteous (***what can the righteous do?***). It tempts them to withdraw, not open their mouth, not make a stand etc. It is the prevailing condition in most countries worldwide, and India.

In 2020, the problem worldwide was more dangerous because of the Covid pandemic. The covid germs are invisible. They strike without warning. They kill people by the thousands. Thousands more lost their jobs. Schools and colleges had to shut down. Youths were getting desperate; families were locked in their homes, resulting in fights, depression, and fear of the future.

In David's situation, his advisors told him to flee like a bird to the mountains — go, run away (11:1). That's **the language of fear**.

Note: Sometimes, God tells us to temporarily withdraw from a dangerous situation. The angel told Joseph to escape to Egypt with Mary and the baby Jesus because King Herod wanted to kill the baby Jesus. (If Herod killed Jesus as a child, it would have destroyed God's plan of salvation). However, they returned when Herod died. That's **the language of wise caution** and not fear. In this Covid pandemic, we must wear a mask, keep social distance, wash hands and get vaccinated. Caution does not give up your calling, but fear does. In David's case, his advisors told him to flee and run away; what could he do? — that's fear!

David spoke **the language of faith**. He asked his advisors why he should flee. Fleeing from his responsibilities as king would undoubtedly add to the problems and confusion in Israel. In difficult situations, the right thing to do is to seek refuge in the LORD (11:1). Such a response would glorify the LORD and demonstrate love for His people. David shows us what it means to take refuge in the LORD by speaking the language of faith to his mind and heart in 11:4. Notice the enormous difference between the

language of fear in 11:3, expressed by David's advisors and the language of faith in 11:4, spoken by David.

2. The Language of Faith (Ps 11:4-7): *The Lord is in his holy temple and on his heavenly throne. He observes everyone on earth; his eyes examine them.⁵ The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked, those who love violence, he hates with a passion. ⁶ On the wicked, he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot. ⁷ For the Lord is righteous; he loves justice; the upright will see his face.*

David shows us what it means to take refuge in the LORD by speaking the language of faith to his mind and heart in 11:4. There are three things David says:

i. The LORD is on His heavenly throne (Ps 11:4b). He is in control: God is always ruling the world from His heavenly throne, and He always has a plan for His glory and the good of those He chose to be His people.

Isa 14:24, 26-27 The Lord Almighty has sworn, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will happen. ...²⁶ This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. ²⁷ For the Lord Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?"

Isa 46:10 I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

The problem is that we human beings think we are in control of the world. And when we can't control the situation, we feel the world is out of control. And we worry, get depressed, and become fearful of the future. Then **we must speak the language of faith to our minds** — that God is on His heavenly throne and has everything under His control. We must quieten our minds and start trusting that God will turn out everything for His glory and our good. However, **the language of faith requires humility** to say we are not in charge, but God is. It is especially true for strong leaders like Pharaoh. He couldn't humble himself, which led to a disaster for the Egyptians.

Consider the story of Joseph in Gen 37-50. Joseph had one problem after another in his life. But he summed up his troubles by saying to his brothers in Gen 50:20 *You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, saving many lives.*

Consider the story of Jesus & His apostles in the four gospels. His apostles had such high hopes that Jesus was the Messiah, mighty in word and deed and would redeem Israel (Luke 24:19-20). But when they saw Him crucified on the cross, their hopes were dashed, and their world fell apart (They did not expect Him to rise from the dead at the time of His death and burial). Yet God was in charge all along. Through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, God did the most extraordinary deed in all history. God defeated the three enemies of God and man — sin, Satan and death and redeemed humanity. The apostles eventually grasped it. They said:

Acts 4:27-28 Indeed, Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

ii. The LORD is in His holy temple (Ps 11:4a) — He is available. The throne of God is infinitely high above and remote. But the temple was here on earth in Israel, where the Israelites could have fellowship with God and be comforted in their hearts. Though David could not understand the reason for all his troubles, he could say to his heart, *"Cast your cares on the LORD, and He will sustain you"*. (Ps 55:22).

Notice, throughout Ps 11, David calls God by the name Yahweh (translated in English as "LORD") — the

God who made a covenant with the people of Israel. Even though the Israelites were God's people with the covenant, they could not get close to God and see His glory, or they would die. Not even Moses could (Exodus 33:18-20). In the temple, God's presence dwelt behind the veil in the Holy of Holies (or the Most Holy Place). The veil was 4 inches thick, according to the Jewish historian Josephus. It represented a barrier between the Holy God and sinful people. Only the High Priest could enter that space behind the veil with the blood of a sacrificial lamb, only once a year on the Day of Atonement. The LORD was available to His people in the temple through a complex system of cleansing laws, animal sacrifice, and a designated priesthood. He answered their prayers and comforted them so they could cast their cares on Him (Ps 55:22).

Then Jesus comes in John 2:12-22 and clears the temple of buying and selling. The Jewish leaders ask Him for a sign to prove His authority to do this. Jesus answered, *"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days," but the temple He had spoken of was His body* (John 2:19, 21).

When Jesus died on the cross, the thick veil in the temple was torn apart from top to bottom. The way for fellowship with God was open to human beings irrespective of gender and race. **This is the gospel—the good news.** Jesus lived a sinless life that we should have lived but didn't. Then out of love, He died, paying the punishment for sins that we should have paid so that we shouldn't. Jesus' sinless life is credited to our account as if we had lived that life. When God looks at the record of our life, He does not see our sins but sees only the sinless life of Jesus, so God rewards us accordingly.

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus meant in John 2:19, 21: I am the temple of God. I am the High Priest who brings My blood of sacrifice for your sins. So that the barrier (veil) between God and man is torn apart, you can go right into the Most Holy Place to have deep intimacy with Me, your LORD and God. You can seek My face. It is the New Covenant in My blood.

Now you have peace and comfort in your mind (11:4b — *the LORD is on His heavenly throne*) and confidence in your heart that you can seek the presence of God (11:4a — *the LORD is in His holy temple*). With this, you can face your fears with faith that the Almighty God is with you and always willing and able to help you.

Heb 4:16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

iii. He observes everyone on earth (Ps 11:4-7) — He examines our hearts. Whether we face international disasters (like the Covid pandemic), national disasters (like earthquakes, floods and famine) or personal disasters of various types, the general principle to bear is to ask what God is saying to us. And the general answer is that there will be a day when God will judge the world. That day will surely come when He will seriously punish the wicked and abundantly bless the righteous (11:5-7). But God does not want anyone to perish but to repent and believe in the gospel. And for this purpose, God calls us to pray for everyone.

2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.

1 Tim 2:1-5 I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³ This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,

But even when God does something internationally, He also does something personally in us. God does some things in our hearts during trouble that can:

- **Make us better:** When we face trouble, we can become better or bitter. God, of course, wants His

children to become better.

- **Enlarge our hearts;** we become less judgemental of other people's shortcomings. We become more understanding and comforting when others go through a hard time.
- **Wake us up** to get our lives in order and our priorities pleasing God.
- **Remove some strong ungodly views in our life.** The prophet Jonah had racial prejudice against the Ninevites and refused to preach to them. He landed in the whale's belly. Then he repented and went to Nineveh.
- **Discipline us.** *Heb 12:7-11 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? ⁸ If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. ⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! ¹⁰ They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

But God's ultimate desire in all our troubles is to help us find our meaning in life, our joy in life, our security in life — in Him alone. So don't fear. Instead, speak the language of faith to your mind and heart like David, and fear will flee.