

“WHAT CAN THE RIGHTEOUS DO?”

Psa.11:3

Ed Dye

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The historical background of Psalm 11 is needed in properly developing our topic based on Psa.11:3: “What Can The Righteous Do?”
 - a. A summary by Charles Simeon gives an excellent summary of this Psalm in the following statements:

“The Psalms are a rich repository of experimental knowledge. David, at the different periods of his life, was placed in almost every situation in which a believer, whether rich or poor, can be placed; in these heavenly compositions he delineates all the workings of the heart. He introduces, too, the sentiments and conduct of the various persons who were accessory either to his troubles or his joys; and thus sets before us a compendium of all that is passing in the hearts of men throughout the world. When he penned this Psalm he was under persecution from Saul, who sought his life, and hunted him ‘as a partridge upon the mountains.’ His timid friends were alarmed for his safety, and recommended him to flee to some mountain where he had a hiding-place, and thus to conceal himself from the rage of Saul. But David, being strong in faith, spurned the idea of resorting to any such pusillanimous expedients, and determined confidently to repose his trust in God.”
 - b. Therefore, this Psalm was probably written during the days when King Saul was seeking David’s life, 1Sam.18-25.
 - c. At first, David, “for fear of Saul,” fled to Achish the king of Gath, where he “feigned” madness, 1Sam.21:10-14.
 - d. Departing from there he “escaped to the cave Adullam,” 1Sam.22:1,2.
 - e. To protect his family he takes them down to the king of Moab, where they remained while David was in the cave Adullam, 1Sam.22:3,4.
 - f. This Psalm reflects the renewed faith and trust in the Lord that David had after the prophet Gad came to him at Adullam telling him to return to the land of Judah, saying: “abide not in the hold (cave),” 1Sam.22:5.
 - g. It is then that David’s faith and trust in the Lord is renewed, in spite of the continued fear of his men expressed in 1Sam.23:1-3,

when and where they continued to urge him to “flee as a bird to your mountain,” in order to escape death at the hand of Saul, as indicated in Psa.11:1.

2. Based on this, we offer the following analysis of Psa.11.
 - a. David’s men urged him not only to flee, but also to remain in the hold (cave) Adullam, raising the question of V.3: “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”
 - (1) Their reasons are good ones.
 - (2) The wicked out-number and are lying in wait for us, V.2.
 - (3) The very foundations of justice and faith are destroyed, V.3.
 - b. David, in the strength of his renewed faith (trust) in the Lord, rejects their advice. Why? Vv.1,4.
 - (1) He has put his trust in the Lord, V.1.
 - (2) The Lord is still to be trusted, to be served, and to be worshipped because of:
 - (a) Where he sits and reigns, V.4a.
 - (b) What he sees, V.4b (sees their deeds, knows their hearts)
 - (c) What he does, and what he will do, Vv.5-7. Cf. 1Pet.1:3-9; 3:12; Heb.13:5,6.
3. This leads us to the question of Psa.11:3, “...what can the righteous do? And to the very purpose of our lesson.
 - a. Remember: This is the question of David’s men, who, having given in to fear and despair, and having urged him to flee and to “abide in cave Adullam”.
 - (1) It’s a rhetorical question. They think they know what the obvious answer is, “nothing, but run and hide, and stay hidden!”
 - (2) However, David knew, and we should know, that is not the answer.
 - (3) It is never the answer in the face of our spiritual enemies.
 - (4) Even when the enemy of all righteousness seems to be “carrying the day,” it is time to place, and to keep our trust placed, in the Lord.
 - b. In times when we are faced with circumstances that cause discouragement and even despair:
 - (1) Do not fall victim to listening to “friends” like those of David.
 - (2) Do not quit or run and hide. Cf. Gal.6:9; 2Th.3:13.

- (3) Be like David was.
4. Consider some things the righteous can do, must do, in order to “stand born of God,” and maintain hope of eternal life, “if the foundations be destroyed.”

II. DISCUSSION

A. WE MUST CONTINUE TO REVERENTLY SEEK AFTER GOD AND WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.

1. Because, as the Psalm says: “The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven,” V.4.
 - a. He is. It is. Has always been. Will always be! Cf. Hab.2:20; Heb.11:6.
 - b. Why, then, is it, when there is persecution against the church, “trouble” in the church, or hardship, that some professed Christians will quit serving the Lord?
 - c. The admonition to “forsake not the assembling of yourselves together” is made in the context of suffering persecutions, Heb.10:23,32-34.
 - d. God is near all at all times and will be found of those who seek him, Ac.17:27,28; Heb.4:14-16.; 6:19,20; 10:35,36.
2. Here are some things we need to remember about our assembling together.
 - a. According to Mt.18:20, where we are gathered in the name of Jesus, he comes into our midst.
 - b. According to 1Cor.5:3, where we are gathered together for worship and service, the spirit of the apostles is with us.
 - c. According to Heb.12:22-24, when we are gathered together we are in the anteroom of heaven.
 - d. The gatherings of the church is not only the occasion for our worship of God, for the work of the local church; it is also the natural occasion for us to pray one with another and one for the other, Ac.12:5; Jas.5:16.
 - e. In the assembly is where we would expect to find those who care the most for us and our spiritual well-being; those who will seek to comfort and strengthen us, Ac.2:44-47.
 - f. In the assembly we have fellowship one with one another and with the Lord, Ac.2:42; Gal.2:9; 1Jno.1:1-3.

B. WE MUST TAKE UP HIS CROSS DAILY AND DILLIGENTLY FOLLOW HIM RATHER THEN GIVE OURSELVES TO THE WRETCHEDNESS OF LUKEWARMNESS.

1. Mt.16:24-27; Lk.6:46; Rev.3:14-19.
2. “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness,” Psa.11:7.
 - a. God’s help is promised to those who are righteous, 1Pet.3:12; Heb.13:5,6; Jas.4:6-10.
 - b. We are justified or made righteous by faith in Christ, Rom.3:19-28; Gal.2:16.
 - c. Being made righteous we are to yield to or submit ourselves to righteousness, Rom.6:1,2,12-18,20-22; 1Cor.15:34; 1Pet.2:24; 1Jno.2:1,2; 1Jno.3:7.
3. Sometimes in trials and hardship the righteous envy the wicked and give up the Lord.
 - a. This is the brother or sister who gives us saying, “What’s the use!” Cf. Psa.11:3; Gal.6:9.
 - b. This is the great and common temptation of men, even the Lord’s professed servants. See Psa.73:1-3,12-14,17-24.
 - c. There have always been those who were so tempted, 2Tim.4:10.
4. We need to know the fate of those that return to a life of sin and are overcome therein. Cf. 2Pet.2:20-22.

C. WE CAN AND MUST CONTINUE TO EMPHASIZE THE SPIRITUAL ABOVE THE MATERIAL, LOOK TO THE WORLD TO COME, RATHER THAN THE ONE THAT NOW IS.

1. With David in Psa.11, with his renewed faith and trust, it was: “The Lord ...the Lord’s...the Lord...the righteous Lord...,” Vv.4-7.
 - a. David put the emphasis were it belonged – on the Lord, his kingdom and his purpose.
 - b. Cf. Mt.6:33 which tells us we must do the same in this day.
 - c. The problem to often today is that we are concerned about the wrong things – putting the emphasis on “things,” – earthly things; material things; physical things; things that pertain only to this life.
 - d. Our pre-eminent concerns should be:
 - (1) The worship and reverence of God.
 - (2) The extension of the kingdom of heaven.
 - (3) Our own standing before God.

- (4) The lost condition of the people of the world.
 - (5) The coming judgment.
 - (6) Sowing to the spirit rather than the flesh, Gal.6:7,8; Rom.8:12,13.
2. How will we achieve this?
 - a. We must stop ascertaining commitment on the basis of cost to self and start ascertaining it on the basis of the amount of service to God and others which is achievable, Mt.6:24; 25:31-46.
 - b. We must stop measuring success in relation to numbers and start measuring it in relation to souls, our own and others, Mt.16:26; Cf. 1Cor.9:19-22; Rom.10:1-3; 9:1-3.
 - c. We must determine what is expedient by the criteria of truth and not determine truth by a criteria of “What is expedient?” Jude 3. To be expedient, it must first be lawful.
 3. Failure to do this is to assist in the further destruction of the foundations.
 - a. Satan, of course, wants the church to be more concerned about their suffering than about **WHY** they are suffering!
 - b. This is the same temptation he offered the Lord, “All these things will I give thee,” Mt.4:9.
 - c. It has been well said, “There is no crown without the cross!”

III. CONCLUSION

1. What can the righteous do?
 - a. They can continue to reverently seek after God and worship him in spirit and in truth.
 - b. They can take up his cross daily and diligently follow him, rather than give themselves to the wretchedness of lukewarmness.
 - c. They can continue to emphasize the spiritual, rather than the material, look to the world to come, rather than the one that now is.
2. Why should the righteous do this?
 - a. The Lord is to be trusted, 11:1. Cf. 2Pet.3:9.
 - b. The Lord is in his holy temple, 11:4a.
 - c. The Lord’s throne is in heaven, 11:4b.
 - d. His eyes behold the children of men! 11:4c.
 - e. He trieth the righteous, 11:5a.
 - f. His soul hateth the wicked and him that loveth violence, 11:5b.

- g. He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest on the wicked, 11:6. Cf. Rev.21:8.
- h. The Lord's countenance (face) beholds (perceives, contemplates, has a vision of the upright; he takes notice of them), 11:4c,7b. Cf. 17:2.
 - (1) "Face" identifies the person and reflects the attitude and sentiments of the person. As such, face can be a substitute for the self or the feelings of the self.
 - (2) "Behold". Used metaphorically of God's awareness of either evil or good actions among men.