

Psalm 11

“Not of Those Who Shrink Back”

October 1st, 2023

1. Intro

- a. On October 6, in the year 1536, William Tyndale was sentenced to death by the church and political leaders in England
 - i. Tyndale, a priest in the Roman Catholic church, was strangled to death, and then his body was burned at the stake
 - ii. Why was such a brutal sentence given to this priest?
 1. Because he had the audacity to want to translate the Bible into English, so the common people of England could have free access to the Word of God
 - a. That’s a hard one for us to wrap our heads around, isn’t it?
 - iii. Tyndale loved the church of his day
 1. He also loved the study of languages
 - a. He was fluent in over 6 languages, including Greek and Hebrew
 2. All of the Bibles that were authorized by the Church in those days were written in Latin, but at some point in his service as a priest, Tyndale was able to get a Greek translation of the New Testament
 - a. As he studied the Bible in its original language, it was as if he was reading it for the very first time
 - b. He read for himself of the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, one of the hallmarks of the Reformation already begun in Germany by Martin Luther
 - iv. And as he realized the depth and the breadth and the wonders of the Gospel, he knew that he MUST translate the Scriptures into English, so all could read this Good News for themselves
 1. Tyndale requested permission to begin the translation, but the Bishop of London strongly rejected his request, and declared any efforts to do so as an illegal act against the church
 - a. He escaped to Germany, where he resolutely set out to accomplish the task that he believed had been given to him by God
 - b. For the next eight years, Tyndale would be on the run from the church
 - i. But while he was on the run, he completed his translations
 - ii. And over 6000 copies of his English New Testament were smuggled into England
- b. In 1534, Tyndale was betrayed by a friend, and he was captured in Brussels
 - i. He would spend two years in prison, before he was finally executed
 1. Tyndale’s last words before he was strangled to death were, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes”
 - a. Three years later, this prayer was answered when Henry the Eighth required that every church in England make a copy of the English Bible available to their congregations
 - b. And nearly 500 years later, you have an English Bible in front of you, in your homes, and even on your phones
 - ii. All because MANY men and women like William Tyndale refused to shrink back in the face of persecution
 1. It is fitting that, at the start of Reformation Month, we are looking at Psalm 11, a Psalm in which David also was faced with the challenge to shrink back in the face of opposition
 - a. Let’s look at this Psalm together...
- c. *To the choirmaster. Of David. ¹In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, “Flee like a bird to your mountain, ²for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart; ³if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?” ⁴The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD’s throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man. ⁵The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. ⁶Let him rain coals on the*

wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. ⁷For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.

- d. There are some different ideas about when in David's life this Psalm was written
 - i. But the predominant view is that he probably wrote it when he was still in the courts of King Saul
 1. If you remember your Old Testament history, you'll know that the Lord had given David special favor in the eyes of King Saul
 2. Not only did David rid the Kingdom of Israel of one of their greatest enemies in Goliath, but David also served Saul personally by playing music for the King, to calm him down when he would drift into fits of madness and insanity
 - a. But this favor was an inconsistent favor, wasn't it?
 - i. For Saul would also often try to kill David, right there in the midst of his courts
 3. And it is believed that it was during one of these episodes that someone came to David and said to him, "You need to get out of here... you need to flee like a bird to the mountains!!"
 - a. I pray that we would learn MUCH from David's response
 - e. Our main points for this sermon are simple... they are:
 - i. Point #1, Why the Christian SHOULD flee, and
 - ii. Point #2, Why the Christian DOES NOT flee
2. First, why the Christian SHOULD flee
- a. We see in this Psalm that there are two reasons given for WHY we SHOULD flee...
 - i. Because, as we see in verse 2, the wicked have bent their bows, and their arrows are fitted to shoot the upright in heart, and...
 - ii. As we see in verse 3, Because the foundations have been destroyed
 - b. So first, the Christian SHOULD flee because the wicked have bent their bows
 1. I would argue that, except for a few seasons in which they have enjoyed political power, the people of God have ALWAYS been a persecuted people
 - i. Think about the history of the Jewish people
 1. They began their existence as a large people group, not in the prosperity of the Promised Land, but as slaves in Egypt
 2. Once they finally made it to the Promised Land, they were in constant war against the Philistines and other nations
 - a. There was a brief respite under King David and King Solomon
 - b. But it wasn't long before the Kingdom of Israel fell into Civil War
 3. Shortly thereafter, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by Assyria
 4. And after that, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was exiled in Babylon, and then in Persia
 5. When Alexander the Great expanded the Greek Civilization throughout Europe and Asia, one of the kings who followed after him, Antiochus Epiphanes, waged an all-out war against the Jews in Jerusalem
 6. And then when the Romans came into power, the Jewish people had to live for many years in the tension of being an occupied nation
 7. This tension erupted in the year 70 AD, when Jerusalem was sacked by Roman soldiers, and the Temple was destroyed
 8. The Jews would soon be dispersed throughout the world, as slaves and outcasts
 9. And then of course there were the awful atrocities of the Holocaust under Hitler
 10. And the current unease of the nation-state of Israel in the Middle East today
 - a. The original people of God, the Jews, have ALWAYS been a persecuted people
 - i. Or, in the words of David, the bow has ALWAYS been bent against them
 - b. But it's not just the Jews who have experienced this. Is it?
 - ii. The Church has also faced the arrows of her enemies, virtually from day one of our existence
 1. We've seen persecution from the hand of the Jews
 2. And persecution from the hand of the Roman Empire
 3. The church enjoyed a long season of ease and luxury during the Middle Ages

- a. But sadly, this season was ALSO marked by increased corruption and an increased departure from the Scriptures
 - 4. And as we saw in the introduction with William Tyndale, we've seen the persecution of the Protestants and the Puritans and the Reformers as they fought to bring the church back under the rule of God's Word
 - 5. And today, even though we live in relative comfort and ease here in the US, churches all over the world – in places like China, and the Middle East, and parts of Africa – are facing severe persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ
 - a. The bow is bent against the Church, the people of God
 - b. And the arrow has been fitted against the upright in heart
 - i. From an earthly perspective, with all of this against us, we SHOULD heed the words of the unidentified person in Psalm 11, as they shout at us, "Flee like a bird to the mountains..."
 - ii. But that isn't the only reason we should flee...
- c. The second reason we should flee, according to verse 3 of Psalm 11, is because the foundations have been destroyed
 - 1. Every two years, Ligonier Ministries conducts a nationwide survey to try to gauge the condition of the church in America
 - 2. Listen to some of these statistics from their most recent survey, the "State of Theology" survey in 2022
 - 3. In this survey, they presented the people they contacted with certain statements, and then the people would say whether they agree or disagree with the statement
 - a. One of these statements was, "God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam"
 - i. In 2020, 42% of Christians in the US agreed with this statement
 - ii. 42% of CHRISTIANS basically believed that all roads lead to heaven
 - iii. In 2022, that number jumped up to 56%... 56%
 - b. Another statement they gave was, "Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God"
 - i. In 2020, 30% of Christians agreed with this thought, that Jesus was NOT God
 - ii. In 2022, that number went up to 43%... almost HALF of Christians think that Jesus is NOT God
 - c. A third statement, "The Bible contains helpful accounts of ancient myths, but is not literally true"
 - i. In 2020, thankfully the number of Christians who agreed with this statement was only 15%
 - ii. But in 2022, that number jumped up to 26%... over 1/4 of all Christians think the Bible is just a book of helpful myths
 - d. Another statement, "Gender identity is a matter of choice"
 - i. In 2020, the number of Christians who agreed with that was 22%
 - ii. In 2022, that number rose to 37%
 - 1. Over a third of evangelical Christians no longer believe that God has a say in whether someone wants to be a man or a woman
 - e. Along those same lines, another statement was, "The Bible's condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn't apply today"
 - i. In 2020, only 11% agreed with that statement
 - ii. In 2022, that number rose to 28%... 28% of CHRISTIANS believe that the Bible has NOTHING relevant to say regarding the topic of homosexuality
 - ii. When you see statistics such as these, there is only one logical conclusion that you can come to:
 - 1. The foundations of the Church here in the US are being destroyed
 - a. At a RAPID pace
 - 2. And again, looking at things like this from an earthly perspective just makes us want to pack up and head for the hills, doesn't it?
 - a. Isn't that the sentiment that we ALL have expressed, maybe more than once?

- i. I just want to get away from all this insanity, buy a hundred acres out in the woods, and never have to deal with this mess again
 - ii. I just want to flee like a bird to the mountains
 - 3. If we're willing to be completely honest with ourselves, we've ALL had thoughts like that, haven't we?
 - iii. Thankfully, however, David provides for us the RIGHT response in light of these circumstances, which leads us to our second main point...
- 3. Why the Christian DOES NOT flee
 - a. David gives us four reasons why we DO NOT flee...
 - i. In verse 4, because the Lord is in His holy temple
 - ii. Also in verse 4, because the Lord tests the children of man
 - iii. In verse 5, because the Lord hates the wicked
 - iv. And in verse 7, because the Lord is righteous and He loves righteous deeds
 - b. Reason number one for why the Christian DOES NOT flee is THE most important reason: Because the Lord is in His holy temple
 - i. David isn't talking about the Temple in Jerusalem in this verse – that Temple hadn't even been built yet
 - 1. No, David was talking about God's Temple in heaven, the place of His throne, the place from which ALL of His sovereign rule flows out of
 - ii. We get glimpses of this Temple throughout the Scriptures, don't we?
 - iii. Listen to what Isaiah says about the Temple in Isaiah 6:1-5,
 - 1. *¹In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ²Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" ⁴And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"*
 - a. The Lord our God is in His temple, high and lifted up
 - b. And the Seraphim around the throne call out to one another in constant worship, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; THE WHOLE EARTH is full of His glory!!"
 - 2. Friends, when David says that the Lord is in His holy Temple, he is saying that God rules over EVERYTHING
 - a. He reigns from His throne, but the WHOLE EARTH is full of His glory!
 - iv. In Habakkuk 2:18-20, we read this...
 - 1. *¹⁸What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it, a metal image, a teacher of lies? For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols! ¹⁹Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake; to a silent stone, Arise! Can this teach? Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in it. ²⁰But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.*
 - a. The idols of this world are NOTHING
 - b. The people who worship the gods of money or power or secularism or self-sufficiency – all of these people are NOTHING
 - i. For they worship gods with no power whatsoever
 - 2. But the Lord is in His holy Temple... therefore, let all the earth BE SILENT before Him
 - a. Let them be silent about the bows that are bent against us
 - b. Let them be silent about our foundations being destroyed
 - i. The Lord is IN HIS TEMPLE
 - v. And in Revelation 15:5-8, we read this,
 - 1. *⁵After this I looked, and the Temple of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, ⁶and out of the Temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. ⁷And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven*

angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever,⁸ and the Temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the Temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

- a. Can you feel the weight of the glory that emanates out of the Temple of God, Christian?
- b. Can you get a sense of His power? His might? His authority?
- vi. Yes, the bows of the wicked are bent against us – they always have been
- vii. And yes, the foundations of our faith are seemingly being destroyed before our very eyes
 1. But the Lord is in His holy Temple
 - a. Let the earth be SILENT before Him!
- c. The second reason why we DO NOT FLEE is because, as David reminds us in verse 4, the Lord tests the children of man
 - i. Or, to use David's words, "His eyes see, His eyelids test the children of man"
 1. That's an interesting way to phrase it, isn't it?
 - a. What does David mean when he says that God's EYELIDS test the children of man?
 - b. I think Spurgeon is helpful here in his commentary on this verse, when he writes,
 - i. "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. My friends, if you are truly IN CHRIST JESUS, and Christ Jesus is truly IN YOU, then this intense gaze of the Lord is an exceedingly GOOD thing
 - a. For, when He looks upon you, as if there were no other creature in the universe, He DOES NOT see your many sins and faults and failures
 - i. He sees His very own righteousness!!
 - b. This is the incredible message of the Gospel that Paul affirms for us in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
 - i. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
 - c. Do you see, Christian?
 - i. If you are in Christ, you are a NEW creation
 - ii. And Christ not only took on our sin, but he ALSO put on us the very righteousness of God
 1. So when God squints His eyes and gazes intently at you to test your heart, He sees what you were always meant to be – a creature made in His very own image!!
 - ii. Knowing THAT truth, what in the world can man do to threaten us?!?
 1. If Christ himself has taken on our sin, and the very righteousness of God has been PERMANENTLY wrapped around us, what can separate us from the love of God?
 - a. According to Paul in Romans 8:38-39
 - i. "... 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 creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!"
 - b. So let the world bend their bows

- c. Let them fit their arrows against us
- d. Let them mock and jeer about our failing foundations
 - i. There is NOTHING they can do to separate us from our Father!
- iii. But there is another side this part of the argument, isn't there?
 - 1. What about those who ARE NOT in Christ?
 - a. Well, for those who ARE NOT in Christ, the gaze of the Lord, as he tests the deep recesses of their hearts, is an absolutely terrifying reality
 - i. For, when he looks upon them, He does NOT see the righteousness of His Son
 - ii. He does NOT see them as new creations
 - 1. He sees them as exactly what they are... children of wrath, following the prince of the power of the air, and DEAD in their trespasses and sins
 - 2. Which leads us into our third reason why we DO NOT flee when faced with opposition...
- d. Because the Lord HATES the wicked
 - i. The Lord is not indecisive in His thoughts about what is right and wrong
 - ii. He never grows weary of punishing the wicked
 - 1. For those of us who are parents, we've all most likely reached a point in our own lives where we've given in to the demands of our little kids
 - a. Maybe we had a long day at work
 - b. Maybe we just didn't want to deal with an argument in the grocery store
 - c. Maybe we just got tired of saying "NO!" for the fifteenth time
 - i. Whatever the reason, we've most likely had moments where we just didn't have the energy to punish our kids for their wrong behavior
 - 2. But this is NEVER the case with God
 - a. He NEVER grows weary of punishing the wicked
 - i. We're not talking about the loving discipline God gives to His children here
 - ii. We're talking about the punishment of the wicked
 - 1. The punishment of the unrepentant sinner
 - iii. And David writes that God HATES the wicked
 - 1. Paul tells us in Romans 1:28-32 what this hatred looks like – it looks like God giving them over to their sin
 - 2. We looked at this verse a couple of weeks ago, but it is worth looking at again...
 - a. *²⁸And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.*
 - i. This is what it looks like when God hates the wicked – He leaves them to do exactly what they want to do
 - ii. This is a terrifying place to be
 - b. Even Jesus said in Matthew 10:28,
 - i. *²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*
 - c. As David writes in verse 6, the Lord will,
 - i. *⁶rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.*
 - 3. My friend, if you have not TRULY submitted your life to Jesus Christ, then I pray that the weight of God's judgment would rest HEAVILY upon your soul

- a. I pray that you would see that your ONLY hope to escape His wrath against your sin is to run to Jesus
- b. I pray that you would repent of your sin, and that you would confess him to be your Lord and your Savior
 - i. And the promise of the Scriptures is that he is FAITHFUL to forgive
 - ii. May this be the day when YOU become a NEW creation in Christ!
- iv. So the Christian does not flee the bow of the wicked, for we know that God HATES the wicked, and He will bring their sins to a full account
- e. And finally, the Christian DOES NOT flee, because as David says in verse 7, the Lord is righteous and He loves righteous deeds
 - i. We'll finish this morning by looking at Hebrews 10:32-39
 - 1. *³²But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. ³⁷For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; ³⁸but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." ³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.*
 - ii. Christian, the righteous shall live by faith
 - 1. We live by faith that God is in His holy Temple, and the whole earth is full of His glory
 - 2. We live by faith that when He tests the hearts of His children, He doesn't see our sin, but instead he sees His very own righteousness imputed to us through His Son
 - 3. We live by faith that the Lord hates the wicked, and that vengeance upon them is His concern, not ours
 - 4. And we live by faith because that is what the righteous do
 - a. For we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls
 - iii. Nearly five hundred years ago, William Tyndale chose to live by faith
 - 1. When the bows of the Church in Rome, and the arrows of the very King of England, were set against him, Tyndale instead chose to fear God
 - a. In the face of massive opposition, William Tyndale DID NOT shrink back
 - i. And as a result, you have a Bible written in English, a language you can fully understand, sitting before you
 - iv. Christians, do not throw away your confidence
 - 1. Endure for just a little longer
 - 2. For Christ IS coming back!
 - a. And as David closes Psalm 11, "*the upright shall behold his face!!*"

4. Time of prayer and confession

a. 1 Corinthians 11:27-32

- i. *²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.*

5. The Lord's Supper

a. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

- i. ²³For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.