

Stay and Fight

Psalm 11 (KJV)

1 In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? **2** For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. **3** If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? **4** The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. **5** The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. **6** Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. **7** For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

A Man Who Was Determined to Stay and Fight

On June 26, 1949, there was a funeral in Tel Aviv, Israel, like none that world had ever seen or known before. The newspapers reported there were tens of thousands of people present in and around the Great Synagogue on that day. In the main hall of the synagogue a glass box that was five feet long held thirty porcelain urns. The newspapers reported that inside of these thirty urns were the ashes of an estimated 200,000 Jews who had been murdered in the Holocaust.

The box was loaded onto a police vehicle that would travel through the city streets. The pace was very slow, because it had to make its way through the thousands of mourners who cried out "Mama! Papa!" as the procession made its way to the cemetery. Some were so overcome by grief and horrific memories that they fainted. The procession wound its way through Jerusalem until it came to the ancient cemetery of Sanhedria, where some of the graves were two-thousand years old.

The man who was responsible for the event was Simon Wiesenthal. In 1949, he was 41 years old and he would be a man who would never forget the atrocities of the Holocaust nor would he let the world forget. But there was a huge challenge he faced in all of it. Many of the Holocaust survivors and those who were related to them wanted the whole matter to be shrouded in silence because of the

anxiety, embarrassment, and guilt that they shared because of their involvement in it.

For Wiesenthal, the event was very emotional. In fact, he wrote, “As I followed the box of ashes, I remembered my family members, my friends, and companions, and all those who paid with their lives for the one single sin—being born Jewish. I looked at the box, and I saw my mother’s face the way it looked the last time I saw her on that fateful day when I left home in the morning for forced labor outside the ghetto and I did not know that I would not see her when I returned in the evening, nor ever again.” He would lose a total of 89 relatives in the Holocaust.

When Wiesenthal undertook the plans for the event it was just the tip of the iceberg for what he had in mind. He wanted a huge structure to be built in honor of those who had died. He wanted it to be an exact replica of the Mauthausen camp that had incarcerated and then killed untold numbers of Jews in the Holocaust. But there was even something more that was driving him and that was the capture and imprisonment of the remaining Nazis still alive who had been involved in the Holocaust.

He became a tireless warrior against evil and a key figure in human rights events that would push him to world-wide recognition before he passed away in 2005 at the age of 96. He was a man who sparked the imagination of the Jews toward the capture of the killers. In the early days, he basically was a one man show and many refused to help him. However, he gave speeches that troubled their conscience, stirred their soul, and inspired a sense of justice in them. Initially as a lone Jew, he took it on himself to make sure that even the last of the Nazis would not die free or at least free of anxiety because he, Jew Wiesenthal, would not rest until they were captured. He had endured Mauthausen and when he was released he had been a walking skeleton weighing 97 pounds. When he died, there were 300,000 records in hundreds of files that were stored in a small apartment that he and his wife lived in. He worked almost his entire life from that small apartment surrounded by high piles of old newspapers and yellowing index cards that contained handwritten notes.

He lived in a time before the internet and his main source of information came through newspapers from all over the world. He would scour the legal sections for

property transactions, obituaries that had the descendants of the deceased, and other news items that gave him the information he needed to trace down the Nazis. On one wall in the apartment was a huge map of Europe that had names of the hundreds of Nazi death and concentration camps some of which Wiesenthal had been in. Those cities were keys also to opening the door for justice. He would get municipal population registries, historical documents, and even telephone books to gather information about the families of the Nazis.

He looked at the Holocaust as a crime against humanity, not just one race and he was relentless to pursue justice. Through his work, a little more than 1,100 Nazis would be found and punished for their part in the Holocaust. The most notable among these were Adolf Eichmann, the SS director for Hitler. He also had a part in the capture of Karl Silberbauer who arrested the Dutch teenager, Anne Frank, and sent her to Bergen-Belsen where she died.

However, there is a side to this story that not many know and that is how that Wiesenthal had to contend with those who would silence and muzzle him. The Chancellor of Austria, Bruno Kriesky, tried to silence him by character assassination in the media. In June 1982, a bomb was placed by his front door to kill him. But through all this one thing that he said stands out, "The most important thing I have done is to fight against forgetting and to keep remembrance alive. It is important to let people know that our enemies are not forgotten."

To a certain degree that is what Psalm 11 is all about... It is about staying and fighting!

Psalm 11

Some think that this Psalm refers to David when he was running from Saul, or when he was fleeing from his son, Absalom. However, we have to scrutinize what is being said in verse one. He notes that his refuge is in the Lord and therefore how can others say, or even within himself, say, "Run to the mountain!"

Therefore, it is good that we cannot pinpoint the exact timing of this psalm, because it makes for excellent application for all our lives.

Over the years, I have regularly put David's life into three categories:

The Country Years

The Cave Years

The Court Years

There has been overall very little elaboration on that because it is self-explanatory. But we can give some further consideration to these divisions in his life.

The Country Years—The formative years where he learned how to worship and love God. The country years made him a saint.

The Cave Years—The fugitive years where he was chased from end of the country to the other end by Saul's bloodhounds. He learned warfare in the caves and how to lead men and be a soldier.

The Court Years—The fateful years where he never knew whether he would still have a head on his shoulders. This was not only the times in Saul's day, but even after he became the king of Israel. But he would learn wisdom and how to limit himself in the courts. It was here that he learned to be a sage.

When we read what David has written in Psalm 11, we can all relate, because there are times in life when a crisis may settle in on us so that we have a tendency to want to run away and hide from our responsibilities. Sometimes, the greatest lesson you can learn from life is that you must stay and fight.

What we find in this psalm is the sense of confidence that will prevail. Those around David are filled with panic, but David is filled with peace, because he knows the Lord is a refuge. This psalm can be grouped with the other psalms of confidence (Psalms 4, 16, 23, 27, 62, 125, and 131).

We will always find it true that there are two voices in our walk of faith—one that pushes fear and wants us to flee and one that speaks faith and wants us to remain firm.

The Security of the Saint

Psalm 11:1-3 (KJV)

1 In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? **2** For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. **3** If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

The Lord is a refuge and a defense that no mountain can even begin to compare to. That is what David's emphasis is here. Instead of it being so much a song it is more a meditation on God's presence. It gives the idea of a fugitive who is fleeing from enemies and longs to find the presence of the Lord who is a place of refuge.

The writer of Hebrews verified this refuge that we have in the Lord when he wrote:

Hebrews 6:18 (KJV) That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

There were six cities of refuge that were provided by God for anyone who accidentally killed another man. He could flee to those cities (Num. 35:11-14; Josh. 20; Deut. 19) and avoid the fury and anger of the avenger.

The Lord Jesus Christ serves as our refuge. There aren't any alternatives out there which might cause us to think otherwise. Jesus Christ is the answer for every difficulty that a saint will face in their life. These cities of refuge had characteristics about them that resemble our own hope and path to the Lord.

A sanctuary for distressed souls.

A place that is easy to approach.

A place that is on the hills and mountains so all can see.

A place that was never more than a half a day's travel away.

When wrath called for death, a man was safe in this city.

Those are the benefits that were provided to that man.

Despite our knowledge of the Lord being a refuge, there are times when we do not clearly grasp it. David was saying, “I am trusting in the Lord, I have put my confidence in him, I have sought His refuge in this crisis, but I am contending with the temptation to want to run away from the problem.”

That is a temptation that all men must deal with. We tend to want to run and hide from a crisis that demands our responsibilities. It is a very powerful temptation because of the circumstances we find ourselves in.

Wicked enemies are already in place to attack. Running would at last put him beyond the reach of his enemies.

There are a host of situations that make us want to fear and flee, but we have to put our trust in the Lord:

When the diagnosis is cancer... you must stay and fight.

When the weight of suffering is dragging you down... you must stay and fight.

When spiritual growth does not seem to be going forward... you must stay and fight.

When our emotions are so negative and faithless... you must stay and fight.

When our responsibilities seem bigger than we are... you must stay and fight.

We sometimes have to learn that the greatest thing that separates success and failure in our walk with the Lord is grit. Grit and determination helps us to stay and fight and once you get beyond the battle, the Lord will bless you with a powerful sense of accomplishment.

Notice what David is presenting in these first three verses... He notes the refuge of the Lord despite the wicked who shoot at him like snipers from dark places and he also notes that when the foundations are falling, he still can believe in the Lord.

Most scholars believe that David was having some reference to the social and moral foundations that were crumbling around him. The Hebrew root word here indicates the “settled order of things” having a reference to the laws that govern society. If law and order or justice and truth fail in society what are we to do?

We can see that today, but the great issue is not that they are faltering, but what are the good saints of God to do?

In Leadership Journal, several years ago, Lynn Anderson described what happened to the Pilgrims five years after they came to America. They landed on the shores of America with great vision and determination and it showed in their actions at the start. The first year, they built and established a town. The second year, they elected a town council. In their third year, the town council proposed to build a road five miles into the wilderness for westward expansion. In the fourth year, the people criticized the proposal as a waste of public funds. They could not see the big picture. Lynn Anderson pointed out that they had once been able to see across oceans, but now they could not look five miles into the wilderness. (Adapted from Thinking for a Change, John Maxwell, pp. 65-66.)

We cannot afford to worry that the foundations are collapsing! There are no political answers for spiritual problems and therefore the only thing the true church can do is to be righteous! The big picture to see is that there are people who are lost and need the direction of a Savior. The big picture is that the church must be advancing the cause of Jesus Christ no matter what!

The Strength of The Lord

Psalm 11:4-7 (KJV)

4 The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. **5** The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. **6** Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. **7** For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

In the first half of Psalm 11, we have seen the security and refuge that comes to a saint. Now we look at the strength of the Lord.

One of the places that His strength comes from is His holiness. Remember that David is writing before the Temple has been built. The Temple would not be built until after his death by his son, Solomon. But now David is presenting the thought that the Lord literally dwells in holiness.

One of the great areas of the Lord's strength is the fact of his holiness. In fact, we can go so far as to say that the strength of his holiness is what brings security to the church.

His holiness moves us to fear sin.

His holiness causes us to value that which is godly and righteous.

His holiness ushers in the glory of God.

His holiness has a drawing power toward God.

His holiness confirms power in our prayers.

His holiness provides a motivation toward sincerity with God and with man.

His holiness is an absolute treasure for all who are Spirit-filled.

Kim Haney writes in her book *Guarding the Channels of the Supernatural*:

To be able to fellowship with the presence of God in the way that we do, to feel the Divine touch of the Master's Hand upon our lives, to have a refuge, a fortress, to experience the power and demonstration of God Himself manifesting in our midst is worth more than any amount of money.

As this world gets darker and more evil, the gift of His presence is becoming more precious to His people. Whether you know it or not, we possess something others do not. Every Sunday in church we have many visitors from various beliefs that do not embrace or understand this revelation, and the comments are always the same, "I've never felt anything like this before. I could not stop crying. There is nothing like this."

Is it because you and I are more spiritual? Is it because we have a nice building filled with friendly people? No. It's the power that takes place when you connect the apostle's doctrine with holiness. You cannot have one without the other because it won't work. Like the cold air meeting the hot air, when the two connect it causes a powerful surge of lightning and electricity. Doctrine and holiness go hand in hand to 'create' the power encounter. (p.7)

Wherever the presence of the Lord is... there will be the powerful work of holiness moving in our hearts and it will have a great impact of those who are worshippers and those who are in need of salvation.

The Lord needs to be in a holy temple, a holy heart, a holy vessel, holy hands, holy minds, and holy saints. It provides strength to us in ways that we cannot even perceive.

There is another matter that goes along with holiness and that is the way the Lord tries or tests the righteous (v. 5). If you notice the contrast in this verse it can be quite eye-opening to you.

Psalm 11:5 (KJV) The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

There is a testing process that goes on in the life of every child of God, but those that are wicked, the Lord leaves them to their own devices. The Lord starts working with testing in our lives by various means:

He will allow us to see the character traits and the habits of our lives that are not righteous.

He will allow trials and troubles to come to our path.

He will allow trying temptations to settle into our lives.

The whole matter of the challenges to the righteous is so that we are literally turned into saints of the Lord. Keep your faith in knowing that the Lord has every one of our trials in His hands. Adversity, persecution, set-backs, delays, suffering, and even promotion and prosperity are weighty tools the Lord has in His control.

Don't be alarmed when the Lord works toward testing your soul, because it has to take place for spiritual maturity to come to pass.

Here is another aspect that we have lost in our Americanized theology and it comes out in Psalm 11:5... The Lord will test the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence, David clearly sets forth that God hates these people. Although there may not be any immediate judgment, the day will come when he will deal sharply with it.

There is no way to honestly remove the doctrine of eternal judgment from the pages of Scripture. Just as the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24;

Deut. 29:23; Ezek. 38:22), the same measure will take place in the future for the wicked who ignore his call to salvation.

The “tempest” in Psalm 11:6 contains for us the picture of a scorching desert wind that parches and withers everything in its path in a matter of hours (Isa. 21:1; 40:7-8; Jer. 4:11).

One more phrase in that verse deserves our attention also. David says the judgment is “the portion of their cup.” To the Hebrews, they would know exactly what this was about. The head of the household generally gave each family member a cup to drink with every family meal. David notes the Lord is going to give a cupful of His wrath to those who have offended His holiness, His justice, and His righteousness.

There were some of the prophets who also picked up on this tone in their preaching that was intended to turn the nation toward God:

Isaiah 51:17 (KJV) Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out.

Isaiah 51:22 (KJV) Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again:

Ezekiel 23:31-33 (KJV)

31 Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thine hand. **32** Thus saith the Lord God; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much. **33** Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria.

We must live our lives in a God-honoring and God-exalting way so that the testimony of our lives speaks and preaches to those who observe us.

But this psalm doesn't end with the wrath of God, it ends with the blessings that comes to the righteous.

Psalm 11:7 (KJV) For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

For those who love righteousness, there are benefits of the Lord that literally uphold us when we aren't even aware of it. It is the age-old story about the footprints in the sand, there are times when we will look back and see only one set of footprints in the sand and we will realize that it was then the Lord was carrying us through the hard times.

The Lord loves those who do righteous acts—Isa. 33:15-16

The Lord sustains us in adversity.

The Lord delivers us from the enemies who may attack us.

The Lord touches us with close communion.

The Lord moves us toward that world which is to come.

Stay and Fight!

How Blessed!

Psalm 11 points out the securities that a saint of God has because of the strength the Lord provides for us!

May we ever be dependent on God, but also may we understand the absolute necessity and responsibility of staying and fighting and not fleeing to the mountains. Instead of running, may we understand that necessity of our responsibilities to do and seek the will of God.