

January 10, 2016  
Sunday Evening Service  
Series: Psalms  
Community Baptist Church  
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Greer, SC 29650  
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*To Ponder . . .*

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from Psalm 11.

1. Does God really hate wickedness?
2. Does God hate people who do wickedness, or does He just feel unfavorable toward them?
3. How do we reconcile the fact that God is love if He hates evildoers?
4. How significant is it that God loves you who are pursuing righteousness through His grace?
5. Do you find security in the fact that God is fully aware of all things and will judge wickedness?

### **THE LORD IS OUR REFUGE** **Psalm 11**

The second chapter, point 1, of the Westminster Confession of Faith declares among other things, “There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions.” Scholars call this the *impassibility* of God. Some interpret it to mean that the Confession teaches that God feels no emotion. We know that such a conclusion conflicts with many Bible texts. Others conclude that the statement in the Confession means that no person or thing is able to force God to experience emotions, good or bad, contrary to His will.

The Bible clearly reveals that God experiences emotions. Whether those emotions are only according to His will or imposed by people is for you to debate. One of the most obvious conflicts in this truth is that the Bible teaches that God is love and shows love. Is there anyone who doubts that? Verse seven in our text states that the LORD loves righteous deeds. But verse five states that the LORD’s soul *hates the wicked and the one who loves violence*. Herein does the conflict lie. How can God show love and at the same time show hate? Or even more difficult is the apparent contradiction that God loves and hates the same person.

This is the paradox of Psalm eleven. David expressed the kind of fear or frustration we all experience from time to time when it looks like our world is falling apart or that evil is triumphing or, more precisely, that wicked people are about to triumph over ME! How do we respond to events or thoughts like that? Do we try to fly away like a bird to the mountain? Many of our peers do that very thing through unrealistic imaginations, video games, or through drugs or alcohol. The problem is that these folks have to return to reality and the problem is still there.

David proposed a better solution. Remember that your LORD is still on His throne in heaven. He is still in charge of all matters, even the smallest matters of life. He still knows when little birds all over the world fall out of their nests, even if they all fall out at the same time. He still loves people who seek righteousness and still hates people who do evil. He still delivers and secures the people He has made good and He still pours out wrath against the evildoers. David concluded that such truth is enough to comfort his agitated soul. That same truth is sufficient to calm our upheavals.

### **Sometimes Life Looks Bleak (vv.1-3).**

What if the foundations are destroyed? It might seem like that is exactly what is going to happen when the wicked people attack the upright. David seemed to see this kind of thing and declared, *For behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart (v.2)*.

Who are these wicked people the psalmist mentioned? Generally the word speaks of the person who is intent on doing what is harmful, useless, or malicious to others. But who is to say any

particular action is harmful? Do the many kinds of people throughout the world have the same opinion of what constitutes wickedness? We appeal to the principles or truths of the Bible to draw our conclusions. And yet at the same time, it is possible that the wicked person's deeds can be identified and shunned through common sense. The wicked person, therefore, is the person who disrupts normal social relationships. They are criminals or fomenters of anarchy, lawlessness. Or in David's case, this would be a personal enemy who was breaking laws or doing something unethical (like lying) in order to harm David.

This word would have been a fair description of Saul who became jealous of David, imagined things about David that were not true, lied about David, and sought to kill David. It is very possible that this is the kind of situation David was thinking about when he wrote this Psalm.

There are wicked people in every age and every culture. They reject the truth and righteousness of God which leaves them pawns of Satan. Therefore, they are sure that sin is righteous, evil is good, and being so deluded they will lie, slander, or even arrest people who desire to stop their pernicious ways. Wicked people spin truth so that the news comes out all mixed up. The waters are so muddied by wicked people that a leader could stand before the nation and tell them that he is going to take away all the freedoms promised by the Constitution and the wicked people will interpret that as, "The leader has promised to help all live a better life." These people preach loud and long that abortion, sexual perversion, irresponsibility, lack of commitment in marriage, teen rebellion, and use of mind-altering drugs and drinks are not only acceptable but good for people.

LOOK! They are already on the attack. That was David's response as he perceived that *they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot*. It is not that the wicked might attack some day or that they might be laying plans. They are in the process right now. And as the concerned and thinking person shouts, "Look! They are coming after us" all the people in favor of wickedness say, "Oh, it's not that bad."

But someone needs to shout the warning because the wicked are beginning their attack in the dark. David said that they *shoot in the dark*. This was his way of calling them underhanded and deceitful. We know what this deception looks like. The wicked enemy might claim to be kind, mild-mannered, good neighbors. But the alert,

righteous person, for example, can point out that mild-mannered good people really should not embrace a religion and a "Bible" that demands the death of all people who disagree with them.

Indeed, the target of the deceptive, wicked people is the *upright in heart*. This description is the antithesis of *wicked*. The upright in heart is the person whose intellect, will, and emotions are focused on what is good, what is pleasing, straightforward, and correct when measured with God's standard. These are people who know God, love God, know God's Word, and attempt to live out the principles of God's Word. Evil people hate people like that. In their attack, the evil people are actually cutting off their noses to spite their faces. History has proven time and again that societies that end up with wicked leaders are short-lived.

That might be what David had in mind when he wrote that wickedness would love to destroy the foundations. He wrote, *If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? (v.3)*. While they promise peace and safety, they are destroying the very fabric of the society. Sound societies are built on God's principles. A popular argument today is that America was not founded as a Christian nation and was not established on Bible principles. It is clear from the testimony and writings of our founding fathers that most of them were not devout Christians. However, it is also clear that nearly all of the fathers who penned the founding documents and led the colonies to form a coalition of independent states feared God, respected the Bible, and pursued general principles of righteousness. Their conclusions flowed from the fathers who landed at Plymouth Rock – men and women who knew God, loved God, knew the Bible, and established Plymouth Colony on Bible principles.

Wicked people do all in their power to make those inconvenient truths disappear. This is a fitting place to quote Malcolm Muggeridge again. These words are transcribed from a speech given in 1985. "So the final conclusion would surely be that whereas other civilizations have been brought down by attacks of barbarians from without, ours had the unique distinction of training its own destroyers at its own educational institutions, and then providing them with facilities for propagating their destructive ideology far and wide, all at the public expense. Thus did Western Man decide to abolish himself, creating his own boredom out of his own affluence, his own vulnerability out of his own strength, his own impotence out of his own erotomania,

himself blowing the trumpet that brought the walls of his own city tumbling down, and having convinced himself that he was too numerous, labored with pill and scalpel and syringe to make himself fewer. Until at last, having educated himself into imbecility, and polluted and drugged himself into stupefaction, he heeled over – a weary, battered old brontosaurus – and became extinct.”

What are we to do in times of such destruction? Some might conclude the best thing is to run. But I can't run away and hide can I? David said, “No.” *In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, “Flee like a bird to your mountain” (v.1).* But it is rather easy for us to become distraught enough to listen to bad advice. We might even conclude with Solomon, “*So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:17).* Or we can heed the advice of those who say “Flee to your mountain little bird.” We can very practically withdraw, fail to exercise our responsibility to make a better society and become isolationists.

Instead of running, we need to keep on doing our civic responsibility, and, while we do, make our major focus the LORD. Conclude with David that in the LORD I take refuge. The simple name Yahweh makes all the difference. The self-existing, all powerful God is waiting for us to come to Him. He invites us into His word to learn of Him. He invites us to come into His throne room through our prayer closets. In that sense, the life of fellowship with God is like entering Narnia through the wardrobe in “Spareoom.”

In God's presence we find refuge. This is the picture of going apart, leaving the conflict to find shelter and safety. People who own tornado shelters in the Midwest know what this is like. We go to God because we trust Him to protect us and uplift us. Why? What do we know about God? Why can we have such confidence in Him when the foundations appear to be crumbling around us?

### **Always the Lord Is in His Holy Temple (vv.4-7).**

God sits on His throne with all authority (v.4). Because God is sitting on His throne, our Creator and Sustainer is completely separated from sin. David understood that *The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven (v.4a).* God sits on His throne. He is in His palace. The Hebrew word is generally translated

as palace. A king's palace is where we would expect to find Him. His palace is an expression of His majesty, and no palace built by human hands has ever approached the majestic proclamation as God's palace in heaven.

In His place of majesty God sits on His throne. The throne is the king's place of honor. More than that, the picture of the throne (as this is here) indicates authority and power. The Creator sits in His place of majesty with all the power possible in the universe at His disposal. God's throne and palace are in heaven. That requires that God is aloof from sin. As such, He cannot be tempted with sin and He never tempts anyone to sin. He is completely removed from the power of sin. He will not dwell with or associate with that which He hates.

And yet at the same time God is omnipresent. His presence is obvious everywhere. There is no place where God's Spirit does not penetrate. David marveled in Psalm 139, *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,” even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you (Psalm 139:7-12).*

God is present everywhere but does not cooperate with sin. Conversely, God delights to walk in fellowship with His people who desire to do right. Hanani the prophet reminded wicked King Asa, *For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him (2 Chronicles 16:9).*

The Creator and Sustainer has the authority to act according to what He sees. He is so powerful because *his eyes see, his eyelids test, the children of man (v.4b).* Nothing escapes God's eye. David also wrote that *The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds (Psalm 33:13-15).*

What God sees He puts to the test. He tries all actions, thoughts, and attitudes of all people all the time. He proves what we are made of, He proves the condition of our hearts, He reveals the truth about

the real us. We can fool people around us by keeping up a facade. But God knows our character. He fully knows the condition of our hearts. Based on what He sees and knows, God is always refining us. He tests us to prove essential qualities and especially integrity. What does this omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent God discover in you, in me, in our nation as a whole?

In the last couple of verses of this Psalm, David uncovered what this Omnipotent Ruler is like (vv.5-7). The text bluntly states that our great and majestic God tests good people and hates bad people. *The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence (v.5).*

Notice His attitude toward the righteous. God is always testing, refining His children. This is the same word found in verse four. It is not that God is ignorant like we are and needs to discover what makes us tick. God already knows what we are, but He puts us through testing and the refining process to help us see what we really are.

This is love in action. Solomon concluded, *For the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights (Proverbs 3:12).* Genuine love desires the best for the recipient of love and consciously determines to do what brings about the best even if it requires sacrifice. Because God loves us, He desires for us to be like Himself. That process requires that God put us to the test regularly throughout life so that we can discover the flaws and deficiencies that need to be removed or improved.

God's attitude toward the wicked is quite different than how He acts toward the righteous. *His soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.* If love is the desire for the recipient to achieve the very best, hate must be the opposite. Hate is the desire that wrong, evil, violence will not succeed. God strongly desires for evil people not to succeed in their evil. Therefore, it is right to conclude that God hates everything that falls short of His glory and especially that which is opposed to His glory. God warned Israel not to worship the idols He hates (Deut. 16:22). God pointed out that the Canaanite, who lived in the Promised Land, did what He hates (Deut. 12:31).

It is also logical then that God hates the people who do what He hates. David concluded that *The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers (Psalm 5:5).* Solomon pointed out that *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that*

*shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers (Proverbs 6:16-19).* God confessed through Malachi, *But Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert (Malachi 1:3).*

God can even hate His own people when they do wicked deeds. At the height of their rebellion against Him, God said to the Israelites, *"Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them" (Isaiah 1:14).* God said, *"My heritage has become to me like a lion in the forest; she has lifted up her voice against me; therefore I hate her" (Jeremiah 12:8).* God warned, *"Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal; there I began to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of my house. I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels" (Hosea 9:15).*

The idea that God hates sin and the wicked people who do it is shocking news to modern Americans who have been taught that God is love. We have heard all our lives that God is love. He Himself said so. John wrote under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, *God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him (1John 4:16b).* Jesus has gone on record affirming that God loves the world. He told Nicodemus *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).*

So how can God, who is love, hate wicked people at the same time? Solomon concluded that the two ideas seem to be contradictory. *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses (Proverbs 10:12).* What about Jesus' teaching that requires us to love our enemies? *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:43-45).*

Human wisdom concludes that love and hate are polar opposites and, therefore, they cannot coexist. Contrary to that conclusion, Scripture teaches that love and hate are contemporaneous, co-existing traits of God. "That's impossible" you say. Maybe not. Consider this hypothetical situation. You love your daughter immensely. By that

we mean not just that you dote on her and give her everything she wants. Rather, you love her sincerely by desiring that she achieve the very best, which is to become like God her Creator. So you teach her, train her, discipline her so that she grows into a fine, beautiful young woman who loves the Lord. No one doubts that you have love.

But how do you feel toward the wicked, evil, violent man who raped your daughter when she was 16? Oh, that's different. Do you not honestly hate the man? If hate is the opposite of love, you desire that his wicked, evil, violent actions will not succeed. You so strongly hate his work that you do everything in your power to put the man behind bars. Is that the end of the matter? Do you spend the rest of your life hating him? No. You also love him because you truly do desire that he will confess his sin against God, your daughter, and yourself. You desire that he will repent of sin and by faith receive Christ as his Savior. If he does, the man will be becoming more like God. That is the best thing. So you do have love and hate residing in your soul simultaneously. So does God.

Because God hates wickedness which is opposed to His righteousness, He judges wicked people. David prayed, *Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup (v.6)*. Let's not try to soft-peddle this request. The prayer is for painful judgment against wicked people. Because the psalmist hates what God hates, he desires for God to put a stop to the violent wickedness.

He, and we, can pray this with confidence because God has promised to do it. God warned His own people regarding false gods or idols, *"You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me . . ."* (Deuteronomy 5:9). When God pours out that promised judgment against sin, there is no doubt about what takes place. In the very next verse Moses promised that God *repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face (Deuteronomy 7:10)*.

That God keeps His promises even in judgment is encouraging. Moses sang: *"Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to him, all gods, for he avenges the blood of his children and takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him and cleanses his people's land"* (Deuteronomy 32:43). These were the words of the

man who had witnessed God's judgment on the wicked Egyptians. Moses had witnessed God's judgment on the wickedness of His own people. He knew what God could and would do.

In David's prayer, the requested instrument of judgment is natural causes. *Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup (v.6)*. On one hand, these are pictures of utter destruction. On the other hand, these are natural catastrophes that have happened and continue to happen. Yes, but would God actually approve of such judgment? Through the prophet Amos, God answered that question with a resounding "Yes."

*Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet? Does a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Does a young lion cry out from his den, if he has taken nothing? Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth, when there is no trap for it? Does a snare spring up from the ground, when it has taken nothing? Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it?" (Amos 3:1-6)*.

When God judges through natural disasters, some people criticize Him. Some people call it a coincidence. Some people blame it on Mother Nature. In this day, many people capitalize on natural disaster to promote their political hobbyhorse called climate change. God can use earthquakes, tornadoes, fires, droughts, floods, blizzards, hurricanes, mud slides, or volcanoes any time He chooses to judge people He hates.

Why does God respond like that to wicked evildoers? Because He is right and loves what is right. *For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face" (v.7)*. God truly is right all the time. He sets the boundaries for "right." Whatever God thinks, concludes, and does falls within those boundaries of "right." God truly loves all thoughts, attitudes, and actions that fall within His boundaries of "right." God truly loves the people who do think and do the things that fall within the boundaries of "right." Most of the people in the world do not desire for God's righteousness to sweep through the world and control the world. Most people would

consider such a thing very restrictive, the application of too many rules. Therefore, most people actually do hate God.

Because the world is full of people who hate God and His standard of righteousness, people who desire for God to succeed and desire to be conformed to God's righteousness are often in the world's cross hairs. We do not need to fear. We do not need to flee. We need to take refuge in God and His promises because we know that He loves us. We know that God desires for us to achieve the very best which is to become like His righteousness. Do not fear. Trust God.