



bits from bob....

God's Secure Foundations Will Never Be Destroyed **March 29, 2021**

[Note: In 2021, as in 2020, the pandemic will probably mean lower Easter attendance at churches. Analyzing the experience of the church over two consecutive Easter Sundays presents a good opportunity to evaluate our expectations, past results, and God's foundations of faith. This article challenges the church and Christians to think carefully about the foundations upon which we build.]

Historically, on Easter Sundays, most Christian churches have their biggest attendance of the year. No Sunday of the church year surpasses Easter in total attendance. Surveys show that more Christians are in church on Easter than any other Sunday of the year. Not only do most of the members show up on the same day (quite rare these days!), multitudes of visitors fill the church buildings! Since churches tend to soar or crash based on numbers, spirits and hopes are often buoyed by the larger crowds. The hope is that the interest shown will be a harbinger of good things to come. The sad truth is that few churches are able to build on the Easter experience. In most years, post-Easter church resembles pre-Easter church. Why is it so hard to maintain Easter momentum?

I suggest that Psalm 11 is a good beginning place as we seek understanding. Understanding Psalm 11 is a mystery for many. Are we, or are we not, supposed to "flee as a bird to God's mountain?" What was David's message to Israel? How are we to understand the words of 11:3: "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" If the question is read as a rhetorical question, the answer appears to be "nothing." The righteous are powerless. Is that the correct meaning, the correct application? The verse will be misunderstood apart if disconnected from its context. When life's circumstances make our faith apprehensive, Psalm 11 gives assurance of God's secure and firm foundations.

Let's work through this short psalm--seven verses.

1a -- the theme statement, Psalm 11 is encouragement and affirmation of supreme trust in God's righteousness. David affirms his dependence on and confidence in God, and urges others to find refuge in God.

1b -- When one take refuge in God, why would one give the counsel of verses 1-3?

The counsel to flee is not valid. Refuge in God does not depend on absence from this world—it is not necessary to flee like a bird to the secure places.

2 -- Despite the evil intentions of the wicked, security and refuge are possible in a troubled, threatening world, even when the forces around us, bent on assaulting the upright in heart, seek to overwhelm us.

3 -- When all that is tied down is coming loose, one may ask with good reason, "What can the righteous do?" When the evil in our world surges and we can no longer depend upon a moral world order, what shall we do? When evil overcomes good, where shall we turn? Some would counsel flight; many would counsel non-resistance. When evil seems to have the upper hand, when it appears that evil will triumph and that overcoming evil with good is no longer an option, what shall we do? The alternative reading, "What is the Righteous One doing?" reflects the truth that it is easy it is to question God in difficult days.

4-7 -- David's answer, his reply to the fearful, is that God is still God. God is in control. God is sovereign. Life looks different when God is our foundation. The foundations are not being destroyed! Here is David's answer. Never fear—God is in his holy temple; God is on the throne. The challenge before the church is to remember and proclaim that God is on the throne! David's solution is not to declare that "God is good" in the midst of trouble and death. "God is good" works best when we get what we want. David's solution is to recognize that God is in control--always. God sees, God tests, God examines, God will act. God is righteous, God loves justice.

Back to the church and Easter. Success down at the church house is never defined by numbers. Success is defined by God. The church must build faith on God's foundations. The world will do its best to destroy the foundations. The church that fails to build on God's foundation will struggle. Christians whose faith depends on evidences of God's goodness will eventually struggle. The call of Psalm 11 is to see more clearly the nature of God, and his work and presence in this world. Preaching the Good News is most effective if the hearers are desperately aware of the bad news and the need for help.