

Introduction

There are times when the worst advice or influence comes from those who are closest to us rather than from an outright enemy. While it may be well-intentioned, such is actually revealing their own personal lack of faith by which they are assessing the situation which they in turn attempt to employ in their influence over us. There seems to be an aspect of human nature that finds comfort in numbers, to pull others down to the same perception of despair. This can most often be seen when the odds so overwhelmingly appear to be in favor of the opposition that even those normally on the same side will offer that it is time to be realistic about an inevitable defeat. It is times such as this when it is not an outright enemy who can do us the most harm, but those who are supposed to be on our side who, because they are personally failing their own test of faith, think everyone else should fail it with them.

Read verses 1-3

For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

¹In the LORD I take refuge;
How can you say to my soul,
“Flee as a bird to your
mountain;
²For, behold, the wicked bend
the bow,
They make ready their arrow
upon the string
To shoot in darkness at the
upright in heart.
³If the foundations are
destroyed,
What can the righteous do?”

Q: Why aren't the pronouns capitalized in the opening verses?

A: This is not the voice of God, but the voice of man.

Q: How does David first preface the voice of man?

A: He begins with a statement of faith, “*In the LORD I take refuge*”.

Q: How is this a stark contrast to what others are telling him?

A: Based on the intensity of the current situation, they are advising, “*Flee as a bird to your mountain*”—that is, to run away to his safe place, but David instead opens with this statement of faith, “*In the LORD I take refuge*”.

Q: What is clear to the advice-givers?

A: That the “*upright*” are about to be attacked secretly, the meaning of readying an arrow to be fired “*in darkness*”.

Q: How serious do the observers consider the possible consequences of this attack?

A: They seem to believe it has the potential to destroy the very foundations of society around them, something from which there will be no hope of recovery.

Application: Those fixated on the **worldly** situation alone often intone that **wickedness** is so strong and flourishing that the **righteous** cannot stem the tide. Their only advice is to **withdraw**.

⁴The LORD is in His holy temple;
the LORD's throne is in
heaven;
His eyes behold, His eyelids test
the sons of men.
⁵The LORD tests the righteous
and the wicked,
And the one who loves violence
His soul hates.
⁶Upon the wicked He will rain
snares;
Fire and brimstone and burning
wind will be the portion of
their cup.
⁷For the LORD is righteous, He
loves righteousness;
The upright will behold His face.

Read verses 4-7

Q: Why is David's greater point in responding to their despair to state in v.4, "The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD's throne is in heaven"?

A: It is a reminder that God is sovereign over all, therefore He is in control of all. God is omnipotent.

Q: What is the follow-up meaning of God's eyes and eyelids?

A: This is a poetic way of describing the fact that God sees everything and is well aware of what is taking place. God is omniscient.

Q: In v.5, how does David place the entire situation into the proper context for everyone involved?

A: "The LORD tests the righteous **and** the wicked". That which is taking place is not strictly an earthly struggle between opposing parties, but a spiritual test. God is omnipresent.

Q: How is this described as an overall contrast of God's viewpoint?

A: Whereas "He loves righteousness" (v.7), "the one who loves violence His soul hates". (v.5) The test is measured against the standard of obedience to God's Word in the course of everyone's behavior.

Q: What are the ultimately contrasting results which will inevitably be experienced?

A: "Upon the wicked He will rain snares" and "fire and brimstone", but "The upright will behold His face". The wicked will not go unpunished in this life, and both will experience the ultimate eternal consequences. God sees the ultimate result.

Q: Who, exactly, was the original target and who will "behold His face"? Why is this significant?

A: "The upright". (v.2 & 7) The underlying Hebrew root word conveys the meaning "to make a way straight". In other words, someone who is consciously making the effort to put God's Word into practice so as to be able to recognize the true path provided by God.

Application: Those fixated on God's **Word** and **ways** alone see the circumstances for what they truly are. Their only advice is to trust **God** and continue **forward** through it all.

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