

**What Can the Righteous Do?
Psalm 11**

Dr. Steve Horn

July 2, 2017

Text Introduction: As all of us know we celebrate our independence as a nation on Tuesday, July 4. We almost celebrated our independence on today, July 2.

John Adams believed July 2 would be the day of our celebration. On July 2, 1776, delegates at the Second Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia officially approved a motion for independence from Britain. The next day, John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail with this prediction:

The second day of July, 1776, will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more.

Why, then, do we celebrate July 4? Because that's the date when Congress approved the final text of the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was actually signed on August 2, nearly a month later.¹

The date notwithstanding, Adams has an important phrase in the letter to his wife. Hear again: "It (The date) ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty."

There is a movement in some Christian circles to suggest that there be a separation between celebration of God and country. I disagree. I believe in a balanced approach as suggested by Adams. We give thanksgiving to God for all things. We give thanksgiving to God for our country, for living in this country. We go to texts that help us live rightly in our country—like the one before us today—Psalm 11.

Text: I have taken refuge in the LORD.

How can you say to me,

"Escape to the mountain like a bird!

² For look, the wicked string the bow;
they put the arrow on the bowstring
to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart.

³ When the foundations are destroyed,
what can the righteous do?"

¹ (From Jim Denison's Pastor's Letter, June 29, 2017)

⁴The LORD is in His holy temple;
the LORD's throne is in heaven.
His eyes watch; He examines everyone.
⁵The LORD examines the righteous and the wicked.
He hates the lover of violence.
⁶He will rain burning coals and sulfur on the wicked;
a scorching wind will be their portion.
⁷For the LORD is righteous; He loves righteous deeds.
The upright will see His face.

Introduction: David saw in his lifetime, through the reign of King Saul, the crumbling of the foundations of the nation of Israel. But David had also been eyewitness to the miraculous provision of God. David had witnessed God, when David put his hope in Him, fall the great giant Goliath. David knew the protection of the Lord when Saul sought to kill David.

This dichotomy between faith in God and the reality of the world around him serves as the backdrop to Psalm 11. Indeed, we get a window to the soul of David in Psalm 11.

Who is Asking the Question "What Can the Righteous Do": The interpretation of this Psalm hinges upon the question in verse 3 and who is asking the question. A close reading of this Psalm reveals that this is not David's question. This is the question of the naysayers around him. David is certain of his answer. There is much the righteous can do even though the foundations crumble around us.

Refuse to Panic

The naysayers want the righteous to run and hide. The naysayers want the righteous to admit defeat. The naysayers want the righteous to declare that their trust in the Lord and His Word has been for naught, but David's Psalm reminds us that those who have taken refuge in the Lord are never defeated.

Believers in God are to be of all people, people of peace and not panic. We have put our hope in the Lord. We believe that He has conquered death, Satan, evil, and the grave. We are to, as declared in Colossians 3:15, "Let the peace of the Messiah...rule in our hearts."

At 8:17 on the evening of March 3, 1943, bomb-raid sirens went off in London, England. Workers and shoppers stopped and looked to the skies. Buses came to an immediate halt. People raced for cover. One of the places that they sought protection was the Bethnal Green Underground Station. Reportedly, in the rush to enter the underground protection area, someone slipped causing mass chaos. The end result was 173 people were crushed to their death. Such is the destruction when a lack of peace is evident in our lives. The irony of the story about the air raid in London is that no bombs were dropped that day. Further irony to that story is that the largest single number of casualties due to an air raid in London was 68.² More people died as a result of the panic than of any actual bombing. The lesson from these events is that panic can cause worse destruction than actual difficult events. That's why we must let the peace of God rule in our hearts!

Remain in Prayer

² Max Lucado, *Fearless*, 175 and 176 and Wikipedia.

Now, you already knew this, so let's be guided by the text to see some reasons why we are to remain in prayer. This is what the righteous do.

Why?

- God is in the right position to see everything.
- God is in the right position to judge everything.

We cannot see everything. Because we cannot see everything, we cannot correctly judge. But, we trust that God sees and judges. The unrighteous do not get away forever with their deeds. In this, we place our trust in God.

Practice Righteousness

Finally, the righteous are always to practice righteousness. I do not expect the unrighteous to practice righteousness, but I have the greatest expectation that the righteous will practice righteousness. And we ought to have the expectation that the righteous practice righteousness all the time. We ought to have this expectation for ourselves. We are called to be salt and light. We are called to love our enemies. We are called to love those who disagree with us. We are to remember that we are citizens first of all of the Kingdom of God before we are citizens of a nation.

John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, said: "We must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us."

Does America need America's Christians to be more sold out for Jesus? Two hundred years ago, a scientist named Georg Christoph Lichtenberg stated, "I cannot say whether things will get better if we change; what I can say is that they must change if they are to get better."

As we celebrate our country's independence, let's declare our dependence on God. As we rejoice in our freedom, let's use our freedom to submit to the perfect will of our Father. As we give thanks for America, let's decide to serve America by serving Jesus.

Lichtenberg advised us, "Never undertake anything for which you wouldn't have the courage to ask the blessing of heaven." Let's make his wisdom our commitment today, for the good of America and the glory of God.³

³ Denison.