

## **“WHEN THE FOUNDATIONS ARE DESTROYED.”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

**June 14, 2020, 10:30 AM**

**Scripture Texts: Psalm 11:1-7**

### **Introduction.**

This last week I met with a dozen other pastors from Lynden churches and the mayor of Lynden. Three things stood out to me from that meeting. First, how all the churches represented there are united and on the same page as far as submitting to the civil authorities and following the restrictions. Second, how every church is feeling the tug of polarization as members of every church are divided on the issues, some pushing to reopen, some exercising more caution. Third, the biggest issues in all the churches is over wearing face masks or not.

Someone told me a week or so ago that certain churches in town are open, so why aren't we? Well it turns out they are open according to the restrictions of Phase Two which is 50 people inside or 100 people outside, or unlimited if you stay in your cars. This is easier to implement for smaller churches and harder for larger churches.

I asked you to pray for our elders because God has laid on them the responsibility of decisions about worship. These are weighty matters, not taken lightly.

Our elders are giving serious consideration to beginning a limited reopening on July 5. Details have to be worked out, it won't just be back to normal, it will be different. Pray for the elders for wisdom and God's leading. And pray that our county might be able to move into Phase 3 by then and churches have more freedom and flexibility.

The elders have another meeting scheduled for July 26 to work out the details. Pray that God's Spirit will work through us to reach His will, not ours. Pray for our flock, that we will seek His will together, that God will guard our hearts from division, strife, bitterness, anger, selfishness. May God leads us forward in wisdom, humility and honor toward one another and our leaders.

May God have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and lift this judgement from our land.

When I think about 2020, my mind starts to swirl. Just think of all the new words in our vocabulary, words we didn't know or use in 2019. Social distancing, new normal, flattening the curve, 6 feet apart, face masks, covid-19, coronavirus, epidemiologist, CDC, aerosol, reopening.

Think of the news headlines just in 2020. Australian fires, African locust, worldwide coronavirus pandemic, economic collapse, murder hornets, racial injustice, riots and violence, autonomous zones. Truth is stranger than fiction.

When I think about 2020 the phrase that keeps coming to my mind is, “When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?” So I decided to turn to that Psalm this morning.

### **Psalm 11:1-3, background, context.**

This Psalm is not so much a prayer since it is not addressed to God. It is more of a statement of faith, of confidence in God. It is an answer to the question, “When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

Something bad has happened in David’s life, something beyond his control. Life is spinning, spiraling. Wicked men are out to destroy him. This may be during the time when King Saul was so jealous of David he tried to kill him (see I Samuel 18). When the most powerful man in the land is out to kill you, what can you do?

He receives some advice. Run for it, head for the hills, move to Idaho. The advice is well-meaning no doubt, take refuge somewhere. The threat is real and it is serious, even life-threatening. The bow is bent, death is imminent.

They are urging David to take matters into his own hands. *Flee like a helpless bird*. This advice suggests a sense of desperation. This is a call to save yourself by whatever means you can, hoping for some safety, some security.

Every generation has had its run for the hills moments or years. Does anyone remember Y2K? For about two years that was great travail and handwringing over an impending computer failure that would cause the world to end on January 1, 2000. The doom and gloom were everywhere. I knew a person who committed suicide over the fear of it.

Every generation has had to face their fears and what they put their trust in.

### ***Psalm 11:3, foundations.***

We all understand the word foundation. We all understand the necessity of a good foundation in order for a building to stand. Without it a building will collapse into a pile of ruins. No building is stronger than its foundation.

Jesus’ parable of a house built on rock and one build on sand is well understood by all of us.

We are talking about the most important matters here, not the roof or the walls. When foundations are neglected or ignored or undermined bad things happen.

What are the foundations in a culture or society?

The foundation stones, the building blocks, the fundamental principles of a society or nation, law, order, justice, peace, respect for authority and submission to authority.

When these crumble, when right becomes wrong and wrong becomes right, when good and evil are reversed, when injustice prevails, the foundations are being destroyed. Every night on the news we are getting first hand lessons in civics.

So if the worst happens, what can be done? Can the righteous make any difference when all seems aligned against them and the carnal world holds too much sway?

This Psalm shows two options. David's friends have given one option.

They said run and hide in the hills. They are assuming God is impotent to help. Their position is one of despair.

David is being push to yield to temptations, to the desires of the flesh. He is being tested and tried. God has placed him in a time of spiritual conflict, the kind that tries men's souls.

But what is wrong with his friend's advice? What are they saying? Their advice is unbelief, lack of faith in God. They are saying take refuge in something other than God. Follow fear rather than faith.

This is how it is with those who have other means and resources to trust in. We are all tempted to trust in money, savings, jobs, health and health care, governments. Some trust in gold, some in horses and chariots.

What is the other option?

### **Psalm 11:4-7, The Lord is in His holy temple.**

David answers the cynicism of the skeptic, of the pessimist and the practical atheist. David looks upward rather than outward. Rather than look to himself or to man, he looks to God.

He rejects acting out of fear and acts according to faith.

The events are real, the crisis is big, the threat is serious. But there is something else more real, bigger and more to be remembered than everything else.

*First*, there is a God in heaven, He is there and He is not silent, we know where He is and how to find Him and make our appeal to Him.

*Second*, this God who is in heaven, rules and governs the world, He is not absent. Heaven is not just God's residence, it is also His throne from which He actively rules and overrules.

All earthly things are dwarfed by the Lord who is in His holy temple. The earth is His mere footstool (Isaiah 66:1). It is as nothing to Him, just something to rest His feet on.

**Third**, God knows all things and sees all things. He orders and controls every ruler, leader, law maker, judge, expert, journalist, every action and every outcome. God is not just a spectator.

If God dwells in heaven, and if God reigns over His universe and rules all things from there, then it is necessarily true that nothing is hidden from Him, that He knows all the affairs of men, and one day all will give an account to Him and He will render His judgment on them.

God misses nothing, nothing gets by Him. And God never says, “Well, I didn’t see that coming.”

Why are churches closed? Is it the Devil’s work? Perhaps, but know this, he had to get permission from God to do it, and that being the case, he is a pawn in God’s hand for a greater and good purpose.

We can take comfort in God’s knowledge of everything and His sovereign control over all of it, how He leads the heart of a king or president or governor like a stream of water.

Let me pause here to acknowledge something. Most all Christians acknowledge that God is powerful, that the providence of God governs our world. But when something bad happens, something that totally disturbs and disrupts our lives, some tragedy, some crisis, some great confusion, all of a sudden our foundation of faith in the providence of God is shaken, we lose our bearings, we become uncertain of the truths that used to be certain.

There are few who remain firm in the faith without doubt through the fiercest storms. There are few who when called by faith to walk on water, are able to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus and not on the waves.

**Fourth**, God in His wisdom and good pleasure sees fit from time to time to afflict His children, to test us and try us and see if there be any sinful way in us.

God loves righteousness and leads us in the paths of righteousness, and that path is a hard path, one full of trials and tests. He exposes our hearts that we might repent of our besetting sins, and that we might grow in humility and grace and faith.

**II Corinthians 1:8-9** For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

**I Peter 1:6-7** ... you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

God refines us as gold, He prunes us as a fruit bearing tree, He tests us to make us strong. Trials give new life to prayer, trials humble us, trials bring us to Jesus.

When we seek to avoid all suffering, we also seek to avoid its true blessing.

Has this season that God is bringing us through been spiritually profitable in your life? How has it changed you? Are you less selfish, less impatient, less angry, less distracted by unimportant things, more mindful of God and His wisdom and will?

Has there been spiritual fruit in your life and in your family life? Are you doing things different? If not, why not? Are you resisting the hand of God in your life? How are you different from the pagans who are just trying to keep doing their own thing? Are we more aware of our own sin now or just the sins of everyone else? What are you praying and asking for?

What will it take for us to humble ourselves before a holy and righteous God who can clearly destroy us in a heartbeat? Where is the fear of the Lord in our midst?

*Fifth*, the righteous and the wicked will always show what they are made of, they will always bear fruit, one good, one bad.

David knows there is a day of judgment, a day when all will be vindicated. The righteous can put their confidence in the righteous judge. There will be a reckoning.

The foundation for the righteous is the righteousness of God, who He is and what He loves. He is the righteous one's refuge.

### **Implications and application.**

We must take this Psalm to heart, to first and foremost put our faith, hope, trust and confidence in Him alone and in no one and nothing else. He must depend on Him to bless, provide, lead and show us His will. We must seek our joy and happiness in Him and in His will alone.

We are in the midst of a cultural revolution, truth and foundations are being thrown aside. Our post-modern world is increasingly becoming foundationless.

When truth is tossed aside, when justice is trampled underfoot, when faith and faithfulness are discredited, when fear rules the day, what can the righteous do?

Notice wicked and evil men can do anything they want, anything they desire to do. The righteous on the other hand, can only do what be lawfully done and in accordance to the Word of God. We may not do evil in order that good may come out of it (Romans 3:8).

We all are called to do our small part in repairing foundations and rebuilding walls, whether in our nation or state or city or church or home and family. We are all called on to do that work somewhere.

What should the righteous do?

Take refuge in God and nowhere else. By faith see him enthroned in the heavens.  
Trust God in the crisis, and trust God in your own experience of suffering in the crisis.  
Humble yourself under His mighty hand.  
Take God at His Word.  
Take the long view, the eternal perspective.  
Ground your hope in Jesus your Savior, in His redemption and forgiveness.  
Repent, take your sin seriously.  
Get your righteousness from Jesus, that is your only hope in the coming judgment of God.  
Take worship seriously, it is how we honor a holy and righteous God who is for us.  
It is in worship that we see the face of God, that we come into intimacy with God.  
(Tomorrows devotion).

Charles Spurgeon answered the question simply and well. What can we do?  
We can suffer joyfully, hope cheerfully, wait patiently, pray earnestly, believe confidently, and triumph finally.

### ***Fathers and foundations.***

Since I will not be here next Sunday on Father's Day, allow me just a few reflections on what father's ought to do.

Fathers, you are one of the foundations Satan is trying to destroy. Since all fatherhood comes from the Father, if Satan can destroy fathers, he can drive God out of our homes and churches.

Fathers, we have the privilege of embodying a dim reflection of God's fatherliness. Our children learn something about God from us, either what He is like or what He isn't like.

Don't give in to despair when things are bad. Give in to prayer and then apply what God's Word calls you to do.

Build up your family, speak words of truth and life.

Lay down your life for your family, sacrifice for others.

Take on responsibility for your family, step up, do what needs to be done.

Figure out what is most needed in your home, what is lacking and how you can fill the gap.

Make the Word of God central in your home.

Make worship the priority of your home, the way you begin each week.

Have a real relationship with God, talk to Him, listen to Him.

Honor Him in your conversation, in your words at home.

Love Jesus and love His church in a way those in your home see it and know it.

No home, no family, no church, no nation is stronger than its foundations.

No church or nation is stronger than its families.

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

Take refuge in the Lord who is in heaven and who is on His throne.