

Refuge is In the LORD

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Fundamentalists are stupid.

That was the basic meaning of an article that popped up online last week. It didn't come right out and say that. It referenced a study that supposedly used MRI scans to prove that fundamentalists don't make as much use of a certain part of their brain that relates to critical thinking.

Supposed studies like that are rampant in today's world. How should we react to them? One option is to get angry. Another option is to give up on our faith. Before we jump to extremes though we could maybe do the very thing that study suggests that we can't do. We can use critical thinking to analyze such claims. Doing so will often expose biases and inconsistencies in such studies.

There are many voices in the world today that are trying to convince us to give up on putting our trust in the LORD. Our psalm today is a reminder that we are far better off placing our trust and confidence in the LORD.

Psalm 11:1-2 In the LORD I put my trust; How can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain "? 2 For look! The

wicked bend their bow, They make ready their arrow on the string, That they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart.

A popular method of hunting quail is to flush them out of hiding, often with the use of a trained dog. The birds startled by the dog "escape" to the skies, but the hunter is waiting with his gun to shoot them down. The quail would be better off staying in the grass.

This is the picture the psalmist uses for his own life. David is facing some danger. We don't know what. Possibly some foreign army surrounded him. Possibly he is talking about when his son Absalom led a rebellion against him. In the face of this danger, he is tempted to flee. This advice is possible coming from his advisors or from some internal voice.

David counters this temptation with the reminder that it is safer to stay and trust in the LORD. If I flee, I will be like one of those quail. If I flee the wicked are waiting with bows to shoot me. The LORD is David's refuge and hiding place, he will put his trust in him.

Although David may have been facing a real physical threat, nevertheless the verse applies equally to us as we face an intellectual, or emotional besieging of our faith. Should we panic and take flight in the face of danger or doubt? Or should we put our trust in the Lord and his word. The Lord is our rock and refuge if we flee from him, we are easy prey for the hunters.

Psalm 46:1-2 God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

Throughout our lives and in many ways. We are being told that it is foolish to put our trust in the Lord. Those of us who put our trust in the Lord are being told time and time again, that it is a false hope. We are encouraged to leave the mountain of the Lord, but if we do we become easy prey.

When Sennacherib king of Assyria surrounded the walls of Jerusalem he sent his heralds to mock Yahweh. "Will you point your trust in Yahweh?" they shouted to the Judeans, "None of the gods of any of the other nations saved those people. Yahweh will not save you." The Lord, however, proved that he was a refuge for his people. The Assyrian army that night was destroyed by the angel of the LORD.

King Nebuchadnezzar insisted that Yahweh could not save Shadrach, Meshack, and Abed-Nego from his hands. The three men passed through the fire unsinged. The Lord was a safe refuge.

Polycarp was told to burn incense to the Roman Emperor or be burned to death. It is reported that at his death, he said, "I have served the Lord 86 years, and he has never failed me." Rather

than flee from the mountain of the Lord at the sign of danger he continued to put his trust in the Lord.

Our safety is found in the Lord who is our rock and our refuge.

3 If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?

This at first seems to be a totally unrelated thought, but it follows the same point nicely. The thought here is, why should a flee from the Lord at the sight of danger? The Lord is my foundation and my refuge. If he proves untrustworthy, if he is destroyed, then there is nothing left. In other words, if I cannot take refuge in the Lord there is no place left to flee to.

Some of you may recognize this verse from Answers in Genesis lectures. Ken Ham loves to use this verse as a reminder not to throw away the book of Genesis. The book of Genesis is the foundation of scripture, if that is destroyed how can you trust anything in God's word. He is quite right to do so. The book of Genesis like all of God's word is our foundation, if we abandon it at the sight of danger where will we seek refuge?

The Lord is the foundation of our life; without him we have no refuge.

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

The wicked stand with their bows ready to take aim at the righteous, however the Lord stands above them watching to see what they will do. We don't need to panic and fly into the air where we are easy targets. Instead, we take everything to the Lord in prayer and trust in him.

Don't Panic. This was written on the cover of the *hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy*. Which is a fictional book inside another fictional book of the same title. It's good advice but it is advice that God gives us in his word long before the publication of the fictional book.

Philippians 4:6 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Similarly in our gospel reading today, Jesus urges us to come to him with all worry and all concern. Before we flee the mountain at the sign of danger, bring our troubles to him in prayer.

Isaiah 30:15-18 15 For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." But you would not, 16 And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses "-- Therefore you shall flee! And, "We will ride on swift horses"-- Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift! 17 One thousand shall flee at the threat of one, At the threat of five you shall flee, Till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain And as a banner on a hill. 18 Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you;

The Israelites insist on fleeing rather than remaining where they are. They are too afraid and don't trust in the Lord. But the response of the Lord in verse 18 is that he will wait for them to return.

The Lord doesn't give up on them or us but waits for our return. Here we see the grace of Jesus Christ at work. Even though they fled from the presence of the Lord, the Lord waits for them to recognize their error and return. When they do, he delights to forgive them and have mercy on them, just as the father embraces the prodigal son. We see the same thing in the last verse of our Psalm

His countenance beholds the upright.

The upright are those who return in repentance to the Lord. They are "counted as righteous" because Jesus has died for their sins. They are hidden under the Lord's wing. When we flee

from the Lord, we put ourselves in grave danger. When we return to him, we are kept safe in his hands.

The desire to flee comes from a fearful heart, on the other hand a heart that is confident in YAHWEH does not need to flee. Such a heart is at peace no matter the danger. If we abandon the refuge of the LORD we have nowhere else to go, if we take everything to him in prayer we have peace beneath his wings. Amen