

Psalms 11:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?

Analysis

In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? This psalm opens with David's bold declaration of trust in the face of urgent counsel to flee. The Hebrew construction places "In the LORD" (baYahweh, בַּיהוָה) in emphatic position—trust is not merely in God generically, but specifically in Yahweh, Israel's covenant-keeping God who has proven faithful throughout redemptive history.

"Put I my trust" (chasiti, חֲסִיתִי) uses the Hebrew chasah, meaning to seek refuge, take shelter, flee for protection. This word appears throughout Psalms describing believers finding safety in God (Psalm 2:12, 7:1, 16:1). The perfect tense indicates completed action with ongoing effect: "I have placed my trust and continue trusting." This isn't momentary confidence but settled conviction.

"How say ye to my soul" expresses David's bewilderment at counselors urging flight. Well-meaning advisors—perhaps during Saul's persecution or Absalom's rebellion—counsel escape. Their advice seems practical, but David recognizes it fundamentally contradicts trust in God. "Flee as a bird to your mountain" paints the picture of a small bird instinctively fleeing to mountain crags for safety. The image suggests panic-driven self-preservation rather than confident faith in divine protection.

The verse establishes the psalm's central tension: human wisdom advocating self-preservation versus faith that trusts God's protection. David's rhetorical question

isn't genuine inquiry but firm rejection. For believers, similar tensions arise constantly—when circumstances scream "flee," faith responds "trust." The question isn't whether dangers are real but whether God is sufficient.

Historical Context

Psalm 11's historical setting remains debated, though the superscription attributes it to David. The language of fleeing to mountains and foundations being destroyed suggests a time of severe threat—perhaps Saul's persecution (1 Samuel 19-26) when David lived as a fugitive, or Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 15-18) when David fled Jerusalem. In either case, David faced mortal danger with counselors urging escape.

Ancient Israel's geography made mountains natural refuges. The Judean wilderness contained countless caves and strongholds where fugitives could hide. David knew these places intimately from his shepherd days and fugitive years. En Gedi, Adullam's cave, the wilderness of Ziph—all provided temporary safety. Yet the psalm rejects this refuge in favor of trusting God.

The tension between human wisdom and faith appears throughout David's life. When facing Goliath, Israel's warriors counseled retreat; David trusted God (1 Samuel 17). When Saul hunted him, advisors suggested killing Saul when opportunity arose; David refused, trusting God's timing (1 Samuel 24, 26). When Absalom rebelled, military strategy might have suggested immediate counterattack; David waited for God's deliverance.

For the early church facing persecution, this psalm provided powerful encouragement. When Roman authorities demanded Christians flee or recant, many chose David's response: "In the Lord put I my trust." Martyrs throughout history have echoed this verse, refusing to flee when flight would mean abandoning faith. The psalm doesn't condemn prudent withdrawal (Jesus counseled fleeing persecution, Matthew 10:23), but rejects panic-driven abandonment of trust in God.

Psalms 25:2 (Faith): O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

1 Samuel 23:14 (Parallel theme): And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.

Luke 13:31 (Parallel theme): The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.

Psalms 16:1 (Faith): Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

2 Chronicles 16:8 (References Lord): Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.

Psalms 9:10 (Faith): And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Psalms 7:1 (Faith): O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:

Psalms 31:14 (Faith): But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God.

Proverbs 6:5 (Parallel theme): Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.