

# What Can You Do?

by Jim Cymbala

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*When facing overwhelming circumstances, we can trust in God's sovereignty and power, and have faith in His goodness and love.*

**Duration:** 26:44

**Scripture:** Psalm 11:4-6, Psalm 27:1, Psalm 37:3-4, Psalm 37:7, Psalm 56:3-4, Matthew 6:33, Romans 10:11

**Topics:** "Discouragement"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the fear and uncertainty that many people feel in the current world, particularly in relation to issues such as terrorism and moral decay. He emphasizes the importance of not succumbing to hate and anger, but instead maintaining love and faith in difficult times. The speaker references a passage from the Bible where Jesus predicts that in the last days, the love of many will grow cold due to the difficult and lawless nature of the world. He encourages listeners to trust in the Lord and not in human institutions, as the Word of God is openly mocked in society today.

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## Transcript

The name of this message is what can you do? You know, you see that throughout life, situations come where people look at each other and go like this, hey, what can you do? What can you do? What can you do? And there are overwhelming circumstances sometimes that cause us to, instead of having faith, we fall into fear and we want to just run away or how do I get out of this? That is part of the vicissitudes of life, the ups and downs, the bottom falls out, things go sideways and you sometimes think what in the world can you do? Or what can someone do? The Psalms are occasionally focused on that kind of situation and we're reading one today that is very special to me and I think it fits the times we live in. I saw on the news the director of the FBI, Mr. Comey, talking about not only the investigation in San Bernardino but what's going on around this country, sleeper cells and all the rest. And if you're not careful and you listen to enough news, you want to be like a bird and just fly away.

How many know what I'm talking about? Well, David, who this Psalm is ascribed to, Psalm 11, had several situations like that in his life. What I want to do is apply it personally, first to David, then to the times we live in and then get back to you and me and see what this scripture is telling us to do when circumstances arise and you feel like going what are you gonna do? What are you gonna do? Hey, what are you gonna do? Because it doesn't seem like there's an answer or a strategy or safety or security for yourself or your children. So let's look at the Psalm, Psalm 11.

In the Lord, I take refuge. How then can you say to me, and then the quote picks up here. In the Lord, I take refuge.

How then can you say, who's the you? Somebody, some friend of David it seems. This Psalm is attributed to David. Most of the experts say he did write it.

So David says, someone is filling his ear with this. How can you say to me, flee like a bird to your mountain. For look, the wicked bend their bows.

They set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart. Not only shooting, shooting from the shadows where you can't see them. Could come at any time.

When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do? That word foundations could also mean pillars that hold up the building. So just stopping here for a second, let's see what the situation might have been and what David is going through. Most of the experts say this is probably when David was on the rise, hadn't become king yet, but had slain Goliath and now was the name that was being bandied about in all Israel as the champion of the nation.

David, mighty David. Young, a Psalmist, a musician, but just the toast of the town. Everybody loved David.

The men and the women, he was their hero. But he lived in the court of King Saul and bad things were happening there. First of all, behind the scenes, there was jealousy against David.

Nobody likes some young upstart guy who's gonna rattle the cage and rock the boat. There's people behind saying, how can we take him down? You know, when God blesses you, there will always be people who want to take you down. That just goes with the turf.

And the more God blesses you, the more God favors you, or the more you are a Christian and you let your light shine, there will be people who say, I want to denigrate that person, I want to insult them, I want to humiliate them, I want to bring them down. That's just a fact of life. So that's happening to David.

And people are then, to do that, telling lies. Maybe that's what the shooting of the arrows from the dark is alluding to. People are talking among themselves, who does he think he is? He's not really loyal.

Who is that guy? He was just lucky when he killed Goliath. And why is everybody talking about him? And you know what, he wants King Saul's throne. He's after the top job and you can't trust this guy.

And David is helpless because these arrows are coming. You know how rumors are and slander is. The person who starts the slander, they never identify themselves.

It's like on blogs and on the internet. People can say the most vicious, horrible things and there's no way to find out who's even doing it. Not only that, King Saul is going sideways.

The king who was anointed by God to become the first king of Israel, he is not only deteriorating and degenerating morally, he will end up now consulting witches instead of God. So you have David's situation. He's true to God.

He's true to King Saul. He's the most loyal guy Saul has. But Saul doesn't know that because everyone's lying about David.

Everyone's putting David down. This is written to remind us that these things happen in real life. And just because you love God doesn't mean people aren't doing horrible things against you.

How many understand exactly what I'm talking about? Lift your hands so I know that we're all together. So don't throw your hands up in there and say, what am I gonna do? Why is that happening? I thought God is with me. When God is with you, there are gonna be people against you.

But they're not gonna overwhelm you. That verse doesn't mean there won't be people against you. It means if God is for me, who can be against me? It means who can be victorious against me if God is for me? So the Bible tells us that David is in the soup.

He's between a rock and a hard place because people are lying about him and people are slandering him. And Saul is going crazy with jealousy. He's jealous of David.

Isn't that amazing? David's the most loyal person he has, and yet he's beginning to detest David and tries to kill David and is jealous about David. Just how life works out, it's amazing. This is the truest person.

You know, sometimes we get like that in our own lives. The person who's most right for us and is best for us and speaks the truth to us, sometimes in our minds we just go crazy and we turn against the very person who is our best friend. That happens.

So the Bible tells us that David is just, you know, he's in that situation. And here's a strange thing. David starts this psalm by saying, God is my refuge.

I'm trusting God. Why do you then say to me, some friends, some people, they're whispering in his ear, and this is gonna happen from people and also from demonic sources who whisper to us, hey, you better get out of here. You better give up.

Run to the mountains. Fly away like a bird. What are you gonna do? Saul's going crazy.

People who should appreciate you are lying about you. They're slandering you. They have the power.

You have no power to do anything about it. You're sunk, David. You better get out of here before they kill you.

Fly to the mountains like a bird. Run away. This is possibly where that phrase is, you know, head for the hills.

Just get out. Give up. You've been serving God.

You've been trusting God. Where has it gotten you? People are lying. They're slandering.

And the king is going crazy in front of you and yet you're still loyal to him. You gotta get out of here. Just give up.

Quit. What can the righteous do? What can you do when you're right in heart and the very foundations around you are crumbling? What are you gonna rest on, David? You can't rest on the king. You can't rest on the advisors.

You can't rest on the leaders. So what are you gonna do? You're stuck. David's saying, why do you say that to me? I'm not gonna run away because I trust in the Lord.

I know you're trusting in the Lord but look at the situation you're in. It's hopeless. What are you gonna do, David? David, be reasonable.

What are you gonna do? Everything is against you. You best get out while the getting is good. Just get out.

And these are whispers that come to us not only personally but it comes to us just now in the times that we live. What are you gonna do? Just think what's going on around us. I'm not gonna go into a complete review of world affairs here but it's crazy out there.

Am I right or wrong? It's not just the World Trade Center that someone wants to take down. They can just go into a place of work, a hospital, any place and just open fire. And they don't care if they die.

You know, most defense mechanisms and police strategies are based on the fact that whoever perpetrates a crime wants to get away with it but now we're living in a day where they don't wanna get away with it. They don't wanna escape. They wanna die.

And that complicates matters tremendously. Who would think this could ever happen, right? The foundations are crumbling. Just think what's happening in our country.

Just think in the last 50 years what's happened. Over the last 200 years, the moral foundations where people said this is right, this is wrong, that's wrong, this is right and some adherence, some respect for the word of God. There's not only no respect for the word of God, the word of God is openly mocked now.

In our government, from top to bottom. In the media, from top to bottom. By the Democrats, by the Republicans, by everybody.

If you're a Christian and you're putting your trust in the arm of flesh, lots of luck. You gotta trust in the Lord if you're gonna trust in anybody. Do I get an amen for that? Come on, let's put our hands together and say amen to that.

So those voices come and say what are you gonna do? What are you gonna do? Every day you don't know if you'll live. How about your children? What kind of world is this for my grandchildren? It's not gonna get better. Everyone's saying it's gonna get worse.

Nobody is saying it's gonna get better. No one, no one anywhere is saying, no, we got this thing under control. And the people saying we have this under control, they're probably deceiving the population for whatever political reason.

So what are you gonna do? What should the godly person do? What does the Christian do now? What kind of stance do we take in life? One of the stances that is not to be taken besides fear is a thing of hate and anger. Jesus said in one of the Gospels, in the last days things will get so difficult and lawless that the love of most of his own people will grow cold. Listen again.

Jesus said the days are gonna become so difficult, violence, threats, tension, pressure, that the love of most of his own people are gonna dry up. They're gonna get cold. So instead of loving people in Christ's name, instead of blessing our enemies, instead of praying for people who even mean to hurt us, we can easily slip in to an angry, hateful mentality and we circle the wagons and make it us against them and we become a horrible advertisement for Christianity.

Are you following what I'm saying? These are hard days to be a Christian. It's hard days to be alive, but it's hard days to be a Christian because the temptations are not viable. Either run away and say, what can you do? And let me just get out of here.

But where are you gonna go? Where are you gonna go? Or just saying, you know what? Those dirty dogs, I can't take this. And the next thing you know, you're operating out of anger and bitterness and resentment. Neither one is the answer.

So what is the answer? I leave with you what David found. Here's what David tells us. When he says, why do you tell me run away? I'm trusting in the Lord.

Why are you telling me run away? I'm not giving up, I'm not quitting. I'm not gonna live in fear. I'm not gonna live in anxiety.

I'm not gonna get bitter. I'm not gonna hate King Saul. I'm not gonna get all riled up.

This is not the Christian attitude that we're to have today. So look at what the answer is. The Lord is in his holy temple.

The Lord is on his heavenly throne. He observes everyone on earth. His eyes examine them.

The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked, those who love violence, he hates with a passion. On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur. A scorching wind will be their lot.

Here's the answer that David found. David says, don't tell me to run away. And I'm telling you now, those of you who hear voices in your heart or get it in your mind through reading dire reports and prognostications about what's gonna happen on the earth, you can't run away and you can't quit and say no, I'm not gonna serve the Lord because I just, I can't take it anymore.

I can't take it anymore is not an attitude that a Christian should have. How many say amen? You can't have that and you can't be fearful and you can't be afraid for your children or your grandchildren. So David says this, the Lord is on his throne.

God is ruling over this whole mess that I'm in. Yeah, Saul's going sideways, people are lying about me, they're shooting arrows at me, but I'm not gonna be afraid. I'm putting my trust in the Lord because somehow in a way I totally don't understand, God is in control, he's sitting on a throne.

And what David is saying, why should I run when God is sitting on his throne? When God is sitting on his throne and ruling the universe, I'm not gonna run anywhere, I'm gonna put my trust in him. Can we say amen to that? Come on, let's say it strongly, amen to that. So the Bible tells us that God is ruling over the universe and he's watching what goes on.

So let's just take this first thought in here and meditate on it. God is ruling over this universe. Why he permits certain things, why he lets certain things go on, none of us understand the mind of God.

Jesus predicted there would be difficult days, but one thing we know, no one's going one foot further than God allows them to go. God, listen, listen, and God is in control of not just the universe, he's in control of your life. And I wanna declare something to you.

Are you Christians? How many of you are Christians, say amen. You will not die one minute before God wants to take you home. Can we say amen to that? You're not gonna die one minute.

I don't care about ISIS, I don't care about ISIL, I don't care about any of those forces that are operating now, street crime and all these other things. Good police officers, bad police officers, and all these other things. No one is going to die one second before God has planned for you and I to go home.

We are, look at me, you are immortal until Jesus calls you home. Nobody can die. You know, they said about Douglas MacArthur in World War II, Douglas MacArthur, the great military general, and seemingly a huge egotist at the same time, but a military strategist of the first order, that he would expose himself at times because he had such a feeling of destiny that God had raised him up, that he had been raised up for such a moment as the war there in the Pacific against Japan, and he would sometimes expose himself where something could have happened, fire could have come his way, and they would grab him and try to pull him down, and he would be just there with his pipe out and his old cap on his head, and they would say, General MacArthur, get down, get down.

He said, listen, they haven't created a bullet yet that has my name on it. I'm gonna live until this thing is over because I'm gonna see victory come. Well, that attitude might sound braggadocious.

This is the attitude we Christians have to have. I am immortal. That's what John Wesley said.

I am immortal until God calls me home, and guess what? When he calls you home, you're going. No, no, no, I'm gonna lock myself in a room. You're still going.

How many say amen with me? How many are happy? We're immortal until the Lord calls us home. God is on the throne. God is on the throne.

So we take precautions. We do what safety dictates and all of that, but we don't walk around fearful. What's gonna happen to me? My children and my grandchildren will serve the Lord, and they are gonna live out a full life because nobody can stop God, and God sits on the throne.

Notice he sits. He's ruling over this mess. Nothing will go beyond his control.

The ecologists will not determine how the earth ends. God will determine how the earth ends. The military leaders, President Obama, President Bush, the UN, none of them will have the final word.

David is telling us here, God sits on the throne. Now you might ask me as I close, if that's true, then why in the world is God so inactive right now? There seems to be a divine inertia where God isn't doing anything. Things are getting just from bad to worse, but notice what David says.

God sits on the throne. He's ruling, and now he's examining everybody. He's watching everyone.

The second phrase there in the Hebrew is he squints his eyes as if you would do it to look at something very carefully. God is examining everything, and that includes us. He's examining nations.

He will have the last word on ISIS. He will deal with ISIS when the time comes. He will deal with the United States when the time comes.

He will deal with everybody when the time comes. So just because he's not working doesn't mean we don't trust him. He is working, but we can't understand his ways.

His ways are past finding out. His thoughts are not our thoughts, but we put our trust in him because we know he loves us. He's gonna care for us.

He's gonna take care of us. How many know that he's gonna take care of you? Come on, lift your hand. He's gonna take care of you.

If God gave us his son Jesus to die for us when we didn't know him, he won't take care of us now? So you have to read the newspapers when you need to read the newspaper, and then you need to look away from that. You can't live in anxiety. No panic attacks.

Stop with panic attacks. God is on the throne. What in the world are you having a panic attack? God is on the throne.

He promised us peace, not panic. He's not the prince of panic. He's the prince of peace.

He said that you can live and be secure though 10,000 rise up against you, though you're surrounded by terrible circumstances. God says you're never to panic. You're to have peace.

You're to rest in the fact that he's on the throne, and he's beholding the actions of people. Notice the hint using sulfur and the suddenness of what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. That was used all through scripture about the suddenness that when God acts, he will act decisively, and he will act finally.

And I would be wrong, I would be a bad minister if I didn't tell you that part of the scripture too, that God waits now. He wants the gospel to be spread. He wants us to do this Christmas show.

He wants you to invite people to it so that people who don't know Jesus can hear about it. But when he looks and says enough is enough, he will act decisively like he did with Sodom and Gomorrah. They were rebellious.

They were audacious in their sin, the Sodomites, and the people who lived in Gomorrah. And God waited and waited, and then when he got his people into a place of safety, he then brought judgment on people who just were brazen, like the world is today. It's not just that the world is evil, it's that they're brazen, and they're actually shaking their fist at God.

I meet people every week who are shaking their fist at God and saying, I'll live any way I want. I don't care what your word says. Stop me if you can.

And God doesn't do a thing. But wait, he has patience. He has mercy.

But when that line comes and no one knows where that line is, he will act. He will take us home to be with him. Aren't you looking forward to going home to be with him? Some people want to go back to Jamaica.

Some want to go to Trinidad. Some want to go to Miami Beach. I want to go home.

How many want to go home and be with the Lord forever and ever and ever? So until then, until then, don't say to me, don't whisper to me, run to the hills, fly away. I'm gonna quit, I'm gonna give up. I'm gonna let it all hang out.

What's the sense of serving God? Look how crazy it is. These are all temptations from the devil, and if you're going through any of them now, God wants you to understand these scriptures. Don't do that, don't

run away.

Trust in the Lord. Oh, I got a great verse for you, Romans 10, verse 11. As scripture says, anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.

You will never be disappointed if you trust in the Lord. Today is a day that is calling for faith. You can't go by feelings, you can't go by what you see, you can't go by what you hear.

You gotta put your faith in God, and say the same God that gave me the Savior, Jesus Christ, he sits on a throne, he rules, he reigns. He will have the final word, and I am immortal until he calls me home. He's immortal.

Don't be afraid to fly on an airplane. Don't be afraid of anything. God did not give us a spirit of fear.

Listen to me, look at me. God did not give us a spirit of fear. You can't be walking around and don't listen to these doomsayer preachers, and this is going on, and the devil's doing this.

I don't care what the devil's doing, I wanna know what God is doing. He's gonna take care of his people. Let's put our hands together and say amen.

My goodness, and we're gonna love everybody. We're gonna love Muslims, we're gonna love Christians, we're gonna love black, we're gonna love white, we're gonna love everybody, because God is love. We're not gonna give in to base or instincts.

How many are with me? Amen. Now listen to me. If you're surrounded by personal circumstances today that make you hear voices that say quit, run away, panic, give up, I've heard them all my life.

Look at me, I've heard them all my life, especially since I've been in the ministry. I've heard this 1,000 times. From people, you gotta quit, you'll never happen, you'll never get that money in, you'll never build a church in downtown Brooklyn, you'll never do this, you'll never do that, and then all kinds of pressure.

Run away, run away, they'll never find you. But at least you'll escape humiliation. God's not gonna come through, he's not gonna help you.

I've heard that all my life, that's why I feel so strongly about this. That's what the devil does, he puts stuff in your head. Run away, give up, quit, fly like a bird.

You're not gonna run anywhere. We're gonna stand. How many are gonna stand with me here? We're gonna stand for Jesus.

We're gonna stand and trust God, because the person who puts their trust in God will never be ashamed. Listen, the person who trusts in God will never be ashamed. One translation has it, he who puts their trust in the Lord will never be disappointed.

You lean on people, you'll be disappointed. You lean on the politics and the politicians, you'll be disappointed. But you put your trust in the Lord, you will never be disappointed.

We choose today to trust you, God. Not gonna run away, not gonna give up, not gonna faint, because you're gonna give us strength. Jesus, you are our protection, you are our safety.

We confess with our mouths that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We're not gonna die, we're gonna live until you call us home, and when you call us home, we're gonna go home, and we're gonna be with you, but not one second sooner. The arm of flesh cannot overcome your plan for our lives.

We are not leaves being blown around in the wind. We are sons and daughters of the living God. And like any father would take care of his children, you're gonna take care of us.

And all things will work together for good. Everything will work together for good. Everything happening in the world will work together for good, according to your purpose, Lord.

We don't understand your ways, your thoughts are not our thoughts, but we put our trust in you today. We love you, Jesus. We praise you, Jesus.

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