

"Perspective"
Psalm 2
8/16/92
Dr. Jerry Nelson
www.soundliving.org
(Salvation)

Psalm 2

"Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.

"Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters."

The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,

"I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."

I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father.

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.

Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Perspective is very helpful. As a boy I loved to play in the woods on our farm. Our woods, when connected to the woods of other farms, were quite large - large enough for a boy to get lost. Whenever I would get disoriented I would climb to the top of a high hill or up a tree. From that new vantage point and with that new perspective I could see where I was and find my way out.

I find that a map does the same thing for me when I'm lost in a city. (You men of course understand that I'm not actually lost, I'm just temporarily disoriented). But the map gives me a different perspective and in my mind's eye I can see how to get where I need to go.

It is not uncommon in life to lose perspective and feel lost. No, not lost as in the woods or in the city but lost as in feeling life is pointless or it has gotten out of control;

you're so inundated with the immediate, the pressures and troubles of the present that you don't know where you're headed.

There are people here whose marriages are falling apart and others who are afraid theirs are about to. There are people here who have no idea when or even if they'll ever have a job. There are people here who are discouraged because of illness. And then there are others here who are just "humming along" through life without a care but when we stop and think about it - we have no idea where we're going or why. It is in those times that we need a different perspective ;we need to somehow step back or get up high and get a new perspective.

That's what the Bible does - it gives us a bird's eye view or more accurately a "God's eye view" of the past, the present and the future. It puts life in proper perspective.

I have said to you before that one of the reasons why I love Sundays so much is that it is one day a week that I am forced to stop and take stock of my life. The songs we sing, the Scripture we read and hear preached, and even the testimonies we hear help put life in proper perspective. They make me think about **how** I'm living and **why** I'm living. They make me think about what is truly important in life.

I want you to look with me today at a Psalm that does that; it is Psalm 2. The Psalms, as most of you know, are the songs of the people of ancient Israel. There are 150 Psalms. They are like 150 national anthems. Each one was important to that nation. And like most of the songs today these songs carry a message. The lyrics of the song tell a story or make a point. Songs on the radio today tell us about some love lost, gained or desired or they preach social issues to us through their words.

One of great differences between today's message songs and these Psalms is that these are God's authoritative word to us - God superintended the writing of these songs so that their message is the message he wants us to hear and respond to.

Psalm 2 is such a song- a song with a message. Some of the hymns we sang a moment ago had three or four stanzas. Well this song has four stanzas. And each stanza has three sentences - for example the first three verses of Psalm 2 are the first three sentences of the psalm and they make up the first stanza. The next three sentences (verses 4-6) make up the next stanza and so on. Four stanzas - combined they give a very clear perspective on life - a God's-eye perspective.

Just before we look at that perspective I want you to notice something else the psalmist does. By noting this we may better understand the message of the song. The songwriter transports us in words to four different scenes: In stanza one we are looking at and listening to people who are in rebellion against the king. They are conspiring and plotting as to how they can rid themselves of the king's authority in their lives.

In stanza two, beginning at verse 4, we are looking at and listening to God on his throne in heaven.

In stanza three (beginning at verse 7) we hear the king himself speaking of his right to be ruler.

And then in stanza four (beginning at verse 10) we hear the songwriter drawing conclusions about what we have just seen and heard.

Go with me again to the first of these scenes - stanza one.

"Why do the nations conspire and the people plot in vain? The kings of the earth take

their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His anointed one. Let us break their chains they say, and throw off their fetters."

If you had read this stanza in the time of King Solomon or a later king of Israel you would have immediately had in mind a picture of several of the kings of the surrounding nations. You know that until recently the countries of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and East Germany and others had their own governments and prime ministers or presidents but they were under the total domination of the then Soviet Union. Likewise in Solomon's day there were nations around Israel that were controlled by Israel. It is those kings that the songwriter pictures. You can see them meeting together in secret muttering about how much they hate the God of Israel and the anointed king of Israel. You can see them plotting, laying out their plans as to how they will break the bondage they think they are in.

According to the Bible it was God who established, who appointed, the king of Israel. And so when nations rebelled against the king they were rebelling against God. Now this whole Psalm could be read solely with that historical setting in mind. You could go to stanza two and see God in his anger over the rebellious attitude of those other kings. Then in stanza three you would see the king (Solomon or some later king) saying that they ruled by divine right and they had the authority to crush those kings if they didn't obey. And in the fourth stanza you see the songwriter warning the kings to bow in submission for their own good.

But when you read this Psalm you get the sense that **some king of Israel, greater than even David** or Solomon, is in mind here. In fact when you look at the words "anointed one" at the end of verse two you have the words that in other places

are translated, "messiah". And then in verse 8 we read, "I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession." You begin to understand that the Psalmist was speaking not only of the king who was on the throne at the time he wrote the Psalm but also of some future king who would completely fulfill the language used here. Even if the Psalmist didn't know who that king would be, the New Testament demonstrates that Jesus perfectly fits the description.

Look with me at Acts 4:25-28. Here 800-900 years later the Apostle Peter, writing with the same divine authority as the Psalmist, and using the language of Psalm 2 tells us that Jesus is that "anointed one" - the King.

Acts 4:25-28 "You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:" "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶ The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One."²⁷ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

With that in mind we can now see the Psalm is not historically bound to Solomon's day but is applicable to all ages including our own.

This Psalm, using 9th Century B.C. language, is describing with complete accuracy the world in which we live today. Look again at Stanza 1. Nations, peoples, kings and rulers take their stand against God the Father and his Son the Lord Jesus. They say, "Let's get rid of God's rule over our lives."

In A.D. 300 the Roman Caesar named Diocletian set out to wipe out Christianity. After killing thousands throughout the empire he erected in Spain two columns. On one were inscribed the following words, "Diocletian Jovian Maximian Hercules Caesares Augusti, for having extended the Roman Empire in the east and the west, and for having extinguished the name of Christians who brought the republic to ruin. On the

other, "Diocletian Jovian Maximian Hercules Casesares Augusti for having... everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ." (from Spurgeon p 14) What a fool! Diocletian is gone, the columns are gone but Christ and Christianity live. And yet Diocletian's attitude is agitating in the heart of every human being.

People love a God who remains a fairy tale of good luck and good things. But they hate a God who would actually interfere in their lives. Colorado school teacher Ken Roberts was forbidden by the courts to have a Bible on his desk in the classroom and forbidden to read it silently in the classroom to himself during breaks because as Judge Finesilver wrote he "feared that children might see him (Roberts) reading the Bible silently, and become interested in reading the Bible." Roberts' principal commented that it was fine to teach Native American religion in the classroom because the Indians were praying to a rainbow goddess, not to Jesus. (Denver Christian News, Aug 1992) It is not that all religions are unacceptable in the classroom it is that Christianity will not be tolerated. From the beginning of human history it has been our desire to push God out and make ourselves lords of our lives. How many of us here want God only as long as God gives us what we want? How many of us have picked and chosen the desires of God that we will obey? How many of us have known full well what God's will was on a certain matter and yet have flaunted our so-called "liberty" and rebelled against God. How many of us see God as holding us in bondage - keeping us from doing what we believe will bring us happiness and fulfillment. How many of us have taken all we're going to take - saying that if this is the kind of God he is than we're done. How many here, this morning, are right on the verge of putting God, Christianity and Church on a shelf and just doing their own thing? They want no more of God's rules or standards

and so like a rebellious adolescent they are about to break free.

After describing this rebellion the Psalmist changes scenes. We move from the bitter conspiracy of the people in the first stanza to the throne room of God in the second stanza. God looks down on our rebellious hearts and ways and he laughs! The language of these verses is difficult for us: Verse 4 "The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them." This is difficult for us because we don't like to think of God as mocking anyone. But the Psalmist is trying to describe how ridiculous this puny arrogance of people is. Have you ever seen a one year old thrash about furiously in the arms of his mother trying to escape? We've often seen such things and laughed at the sheer futility of it. Have you ever seen a rebellious five foot 13-year-old angrily step up to his six foot 200 pound father and claim he's going take him on? If it wasn't so sad you'd laugh.

The Songwriter is saying, "Do you have any idea how ridiculous that picture in the first scene is? God is not threatened by their rebellion! God is not made nervous by their scheming or plotting. God is not troubled by their anger. God does not fear our wrath. A man told me recently that he saw a bumper sticker that read, "Two things are certain: There is a God and you're not Him."

Staying in the same scene, the next picture we get of God in verse 5 is not one we're used to but it is accurate. Those who would disregard God or rebel against him will be rebuked in his anger and terrified in his wrath. Those are strong words. The words portray the hot burning anger of a horse with flared nostrils threatening someone to the point of panic and terror. God will not tolerate arrogance for long.

Then in verse 7 we see the reason for God's wrathful hostility toward the rebel:

Just as God appointed the kings over Israel so God has appointed Jesus as THE King. And he will not tolerate his Son being blasphemed, disregarded, and disobeyed. Be careful how you use his names - don't you dare use them lightly in careless language. Be careful how you respond to his commands and prohibitions - don't you dare disregard his Word. Be careful how you rationalize yourself into disobedience - don't you dare flaunt his will.

In this second stanza the Psalmist leaves no doubt about the sovereignty of God the Father. And then he shifts scenes and brings us a picture of the King himself. And this picture is no more comforting to the rebel than the former one. The King says, "Yes, I am who my Father says I am - I am God the Son." "And to me", the King says, "God has given all the nations of the earth as my inheritance".

There is not one person in all history who does not come under the rightful and ultimate control of Jesus Christ. He has every right to rule them with an iron scepter, speaking of the authority to do with them as he chooses or to dash them to pieces like pottery thrown to the ground. R.C. Sproul so well states that **one amazing fact about God is not that he doesn't save everyone but that he doesn't destroy everyone.**

In this third stanza the Bible leaves no doubt about the sovereignty of God the Son.

In those first three stanzas of the song we have three/fourths of the message of the Bible:

1. Men and women are sinfully rebellious against God, AND
2. God is holy and righteous.
3. God is right if he simply crushed us.

Some may not like those truths but they are fools if they don't accept them. If you think God doesn't exist or that you can disregard him or that he will overlook your rebellion then you are in deep trouble.

But the Songwriter didn't write the song just to tell the bad news he wrote it to plead with us to accept the good news. (Read verses 10-12)

300 years ago Cotton Mather, a New England Preacher wrote, "The great design of a Christian preacher is to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men" and women (Piper, [Supremacy](#) p 23). Author John Piper wrote, "The Lord sends preachers out into the world to cry out that God reigns, that he will not (allow) his glory to be scorned indefinitely, that he will vindicate his name in great and terrible wrath. But they are also sent to cry that for now a full and free amnesty is offered to all the rebel subjects who will turn from their rebellion, call on him for mercy, bow before his throne, and swear allegiance and fealty to him forever. That amnesty is signed in the blood of his Son." (Piper, [Supremacy](#), p23). The sovereignty of God has been made very clear in the first three stanzas of the song now in this stanza the GRACE of God breaks onto the scene.

That grace comes with a warning:

vs 10 "be wise, be warned.

vs 12 "Kiss the Son" meaning pay true homage to the King.

Understand that the day when he says "Enough!" may come for you at any time. Here is what God said through the Apostle Paul in I Thessalonians 5 "You know very well that the day of the Lord's judgment will come like a thief in the night. While people

are saying "peace and safety" destruction will come on them suddenly like labor pains on a pregnant woman." That is the warning. God is under no obligation to give it but in his GRACE He does.

And then He offers a promise in verse 12, "Blessed are all who take refuge in Him." This word "blessed" is the same word that is used at the beginning of Psalm 1. It means Happy. "Happy are all who take refuge in him." Remember verses 1-3? In their ignorant fear of God the people thought he was out to do them harm. And in their pride they wanted nothing to do with his control of their lives. They refused to reverence the Lord and they refused to serve him. They saw reverence and service as bondage. But just the opposite is true: A proper understanding of who God is and a willingness to serve him result not in bondage but in security and joy.

This should not surprise us. Even psychologists today will tell us that the child with the greatest security and happiness is a child who knows full well the integrity, the authority and the love of his father and mother. A child does not feel security in the presence of a wimpy, wishy-washy father. A child feels security in the presence of a father who he knows will exercise authority with integrity and love. In such a father a child rejoices with trembling. It is the kind of fearful respect that allows a child to know happiness. Such a Father is our God. Bow down to Him. Submit to His authority. Ask for his mercy.

When Jesus, the Anointed One, the Messiah, God's Son, the King, died on the cross outside of Jerusalem, He did so to take the wrath of God that should have been poured out on us and our sin. God in his integrity and holiness cannot simply overlook sin. The sin of our prideful rebellion against God demanded the wrath of God. Jesus

bore that wrath. Now God says, accept my offer of full amnesty, full pardon, bought and paid for by my Son Jesus. Come to Him to find that his authority is not bondage but freedom. Come to Him to find that his laws are not burdensome but liberating. Come to Him to find that in Him is fullness of Joy. This psalm is a warning with a promise. Derek Kidner wrote, "There is no refuge from God (there is only refuge) in Him" (p 53). That's the perspective we need in life: Our God reigns!

Have you been in rebellion against God? Will you bow to his authority and accept his pardon today? Some of you are tempted to say, "Pastor, I bowed to his authority years ago and I accepted his pardon but my life is anything but happy. In fact, I'm so discouraged that I'm about ready to throw in the towel." Oh, you as much as anyone need to hear this Song - Your God reigns! He is sovereign!

Those who have taken refuge in him know that the victory is secure even if the battle is not over. No one has said it more clearly than the Apostle Paul: "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit of God, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Psalm 2 says that our God is sovereign and blessed are all who take refuge in Him. It is that perspective that gives life. And it is that perspective that gives courage to keep on.

If you are physically able I encourage you to go to your knees. If you are physically unable to kneel but willing to do so in your heart then you join us in this prayer: "Oh, God, I bow my knees at this moment as I bend my will to yours. I hereby

declare that you are God not me. You are sovereign, not me. I acknowledge your right to rule in my life. I accept the pain of life with the pleasure of life believing you ordain all things. I swear my allegiance to you for life and eternity. Thank you for Jesus, for forgiveness, and for the truth of your sovereignty which gives me proper perspective in life."