

God The Invincible Warrior

Text: Psalm 2:1-12

Series: Psalms [#2]

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Theme: **God Defeats Every Challenge.**

Introduction

When Psalm 2 tells us that God laughs and scoffs at those who oppose Him, that He will speak to them in His anger, that His king will break them with a rod of iron and shatter them like earthenware, we may feel uncomfortable. We may want to fly from this Psalm to other Psalms such as Psalm 86, where verse 15 tells us, “But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.” Or to Psalm 33:5 that tells us “... the earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord.” But even if we do, we cannot escape the truth of God’s *wrath*, His righteous anger and judgment.

Sometimes we see statements in the Bible that are not easy to accept right along side others that are easy to accept. Isaiah 42 declares that God’s Servant, the Messiah

“will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish...” (2-3).

But the same chapter also declares that

“The LORD will go forth like a *warrior*, He will arouse His zeal *like a man of war*. He will *utter a shout*, yes, He will *raise a war cry*. He will prevail against His enemies” (13).

And we can’t dismiss these statements because they are in the Old Testament. We find the same thing in the New Testament. For example, in John 3 we read “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (16). But a few verses later we read, “... he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the *wrath* of God abides on him” (36).

There is no escaping these difficult statements. “The Lord God” who drowned the Pharaoh’s troops in the Red Sea, Moses and Israel sang, “is a warrior” (Exodus 15:3). So, what do we do? How do we handle these statements? We cannot interpret the statements that are easy to accept in one way — such as being God’s certain, unchanging truth — and then interpret the ones that are not easy to accept in a different way — such as being just a reflection of a particular time. Both the easy and not easy to accept statements of the Bible are true. In fact, we have to understand them together in order to truly understand either one of them. This task is not always easy. It is very important to understanding Psalm 2.

Last week as we began this series I noted that Psalm 1 frames the book of Psalms, that is, it gives us basic truth we need to have in focus to understand the rest of the Psalms.

Specifically, the truth that there are only two ways to pursue happiness and success, the way of the world and the way of the Word. And only the way of the Word brings true happiness.

Psalm 2 also frames the rest of the Psalms. Some have thought that Psalms 1 and 2 might originally have been one Psalm. While I don't see it that way, it does underscore the importance of this second *doorkeeper* Psalm.¹ You cannot grasp the Psalms of praise, of pleas for mercy or cries for judgment on the wicked as God intends without the truth in Psalm 2. The truth that *God is the invincible warrior. He defeats every challenge.*

Let's walk through the Psalm taking it stanza by stanza, and then I will make some observations on how it applies to us. In the first stanza of three verses God is challenged.

God Is Challenged.

Look at the challenge in the opening verses.

“Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!’” (1-3)

When you stop to think about it, this is a ridiculous challenge. Certainly the Psalmist thought so. He asks “*Why, Why* would leaders and nations oppose, revolt against eternal sovereign God and His Anointed? It is senseless, it is stupid, it is *ridiculous!*”

Let's note some of the background of the Psalm. Acts 4:25 identifies King David as the writer. It seems that he wrote it in a time when peoples and nations around Israel were fighting its authority. This Psalm has several *tenses*, that is, layers of meaning. In the first *tense* it related to David and his rule. We read just a bit ago from 2 Samuel 7 where God set out His promise, His covenant with David. God would establish the kingdom and take those who sat on the throne as His sons. That is, the king is His *anointed* one, adopted as His son to rule over Israel for Him. So, to revolt against King David was to revolt against God. That's the *first tense*.

A second *tense* was this covenant being part of the installation or coronation ceremony of a new king of Israel. When he covenant was repeated it reminded a new king of His blessings from God and also his responsibilities.

The third *tense* is the ultimate fulfillment in Christ as the Anointed, the Messiah of God. Jesus Christ is eternally God the Son. The apostles applied this part of Psalm 2 to Him and those who crucified Him in Acts 4:24-27. The apostle Paul applied it to Christ's resurrection stating that the resurrection declared Him to be the Son of God.² The writer of Hebrews also applied this part of Psalm 2 to show Christ's superiority over angels (1:5) and His priestly role (5:5).

Reflecting on who God is and what it means to be His anointed, it is ridiculous to revolt against His rule.

It is a ridiculous challenge, but it also was and is a real challenge. The language pictures people murmuring, complaining, plotting and taking a stand against God and His Anointed. They want to tear off the fetters and cords that bind them (3). They see God's rule as restrictive and heavy, rather than freeing and light as it really is. Remember Jesus' words,

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

(Matthew 11:28-30)

There was, is and will be a real challenge from sinful people to God's rule even though it is vain, empty, futile. *God is the invincible warrior. He defeats every challenge.* The book of The Revelation tells us that after all the devastating judgments God will pour out on earth, people will still fight against Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (cf. Revelation 19:11-16). And even after Christ rules on earth for a thousand years with peace, prosperity and justice, when Satan is released the nations will follow him and gather to fight God and His people (cf. Revelation 19:7-9).

Yes, God is challenged. In the second stanza, verses 4-6...

God Responds.

King David writes,

“He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying, ‘But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.’” (4-6)

God's response may surprise you. He laughs and scoffs at them. Have you ever pictured, can you picture God dismissively laughing and scoffing at people? Nations from the four corners of the earth will challenge Him and, as one writer put it, “God *quakes*. He quakes not in fear, but in gales of derisive laughter.”³ In Psalm 59 David called out to God when Saul sent men to kill him. David prayed, “But You, O LORD, laugh at them; You scoff at all the rulers” (8). In the first chapter of Proverbs wisdom personified calls people to turn to her, to listen and learn. To those who reject the offer she says “I will even laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes” (26).

We know David stated God's response in terms we can understand, in human emotions. God's responses, unlike ours, are always pure and just. We must not soften the force of God's laughing and scoffing at opposition and rebellion. In fact, it is part of our confidence that God does and will uphold justice.

God is not concerned about being defeated. He is the invincible warrior and defeats every challenge. In Psalm 37 King David wrote, “The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, for He sees his [the wicked one’s] day is coming.” (12-13)

God’s response here is also a lashing speech. Look at verse 5. “Then He [God] will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury ...” God’s response is rightful and righteous as He defends His sovereignty. David describes it in the terms *anger* and *fury*. *Anger* is God’s response to anything that violates His holiness or challenges His sovereignty. *Fury* is an intensified anger, sometimes translated *burning anger*. It comes from a word originally meant *to cause to burn*, and so we have the expression of the anger of both people and God “being kindled,” or set on fire.

Yes, God *is* “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth” (Psalm 86:15). But no one should ever presume on His patience and lovingkindness. Psalm 76:7 tells us “You, even You [God], are to be feared; and who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?” As well, the writer of Hebrews tells us, “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:31).

God response, however, might seem a bit strange. He does not pronounce a specific judgment, but simply states that the words he is giving out of His anger and fury will terrify them (5). Then He goes on to say, “But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain” (6). How does this fit? After all, the rulers and peoples already knew King David was on the throne, those in later generations knew there was a King on the throne in Jerusalem, and when Christ returns no one will mistake that He is the King. So why this? God is simply saying, “Remember who you are dealing with. *I* have installed *My* King — My full authority and power stand behind him. If you take him on, you are taking me on.”

We have heard the challenge and God’s response. Now in the third stanza ...

The King Testifies.

King David is speaking in verses 7-9. In the *first tense* of the Psalm he is testifying, giving a solemn witness to God’s decree and covenant with him. Go to verse 7. “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’”

King David is testifying to and calling on God’s promises to him which we read earlier in 2 Samuel 7. That chapter opens with David enjoying peace and the luxury of his new house, but concerned that the special place of God dwelling and meeting with Israel was still housed in the Tabernacle, or “within tent curtains” (2). He wanted to build a more fitting and lasting structure. At first the prophet Nathan said “Go ahead.” But then God spoke to Nathan and told him that he had not asked David to do this. In fact, it was a task God reserved for David’s son Solomon when he came to the throne. But God promised David that He would make him great, give him rest from his enemies, establish His throne and kingdom forever and be a father to him, Solomon and the others who followed, and they would be sons to Him.

King David is testifying to and standing on the promises of God to him. The ultimate fulfillment of this is in Christ, the King of kings. This testimony, then, is a statement of the secure inheritance that God has given. It is secure even as the nations were in an uproar devising plots against King David. Psalm 89:19-29 elaborates on this speaking of David and unmistakably and ultimately of Christ. God chose and anointed David as His son. God will strike and crush those who attack David. He will keep him, his kingdom forever.

Christ tells us in Revelation 2, using the words of this Psalm, that He will give believers the right, authority and place of ruling with Him over the nations (26-27). Later in chapter 22 God tells us “we will reign forever and ever” (5). David’s and our inheritance is secure because it comes from God and is part of Christ’s everlasting rule.

The Peoples Make A Choice.

The fourth and last stanza confronts the reader, confronts all people with a choice. It is a choice that they must and do make. A choice with only two options, much like we saw in Psalm 1. The first option is to continue on the choice of rebelling against God. It is a choice that brings a terrifying judgment. Drop down to the end of the Psalm, verse 12. “Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled.” To do “homage” or “kiss” the feet of the Son means to bow before Him acknowledging who He is and submitting to His rule. All who do not do this in this life will “perish.” They will be shattered like earthenware (9).

This terrifying judgment is stated repeatedly in the Bible. Psalm 110 is another Psalm that presents Christ as the invincible warrior. God the Father says to Christ the Messiah,

“The Lord is at Your right hand; He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.” (5-6)

In Revelation 6 John tells us that when Christ breaks the sixth seal unleashing devastation on the earth

“Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” (15-17)

Yes, as we noted from John’s gospel earlier, “... he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the *wrath* of God abides on him” (36). Revelation 20 describes the judgment of sinners, telling us

“Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (14-15)

Jesus told us that in that day He will say to those who have rejected Him, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

There is another option, only one other option, an option that brings tremendous blessing. All who do homage to the Son, who take refuge in Him, verse 12 tells us, will not perish but be accepted and blessed. We find the gospel truth that “whoever believes in [Christ] will not perish but have eternal life” right here in Psalm 2. And so Psalm 34:8 tells us “O taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” Psalm 5:11 echoes, “But let all who take refuge in You be glad, let them ever sing for joy; and may You shelter them, that those who love Your name may exult in You.”

The prophet Zephaniah rang out a message about God’s anger and judgment on sin. He also sounded God’s invitation to “Seek the LORD” and so to be “hidden in the day of [His] anger” (2:3). All who bow their heart to God in faith, as Paul wrote are “... not destined .for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9). In fact, as Ephesians 1:3 states that God has blessed believers “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” God invites us to bow before Him now, trust Him now, and accept His forgiveness, life and blessings for ever.

Conclusion.

God is the invincible warrior. He defeats every challenge. So we see that this Psalm is a partner with Psalm 1. It is the second of a pair of doorkeepers to the Psalms. Together they help us frame not only our own lives, but the world in which we live. And so as we hear in the Psalms that follow hearts overflowing with singing God’s praises and giving their thanks to Him, as we hear the shrieks of fear, loss, suffering, as we hear the desperate cries for God to answer, as we hear the pleas for God to judge the wicked and avenge the righteous, these two Psalms give us the lense that enables us to see these other Psalms clearly, to enter into the truth and experiences as God intends.

Now let me make a few observations on how this Psalm applies to how we view and move through our lives. First, God is in control. *He is the invincible warrior who defeats every challenge.* Sometimes we don’t sense that God is in control. Things are not happening in the way and at the pace we think they should. The truth is that some things and people will not be sorted out with justice in this life. But our view as God’s people is the long view, the eternal view. The victory is certain because God is in control. No multitude of murmurers, no collection of attackers, no band of betrayers, not pack of slanderers, no cartel of evil will ever shake let alone topple God’s sovereign rule control.

Okay. But until then what? The second lesson is that we are to live by God's promises. King David shows us that by example. He was attacked by people from beyond and within Israel, even by some he had considered his friends. He went back to, nailed his faith to, he clung to God's promises to him. God has given us, as the apostle Peter wrote, "His precious and magnificent promises"⁴ for life today and forever. When it seems to us that God is slow in fulfilling them, He is not.⁵ He is always right on time, His perfect time. And so according to His promise we look ahead through and beyond today to the ultimate fulfillment of His promises, to being with Him and enjoying the "new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."⁶

Then as well, one last observation, Psalm 2 shows us that God the invincible warrior has enlisted us in the battle with Him. In a few minutes we are going to sing the hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers." I recognize that this hymn has been criticized as being too militant, being out of step with our day. It was written by Church of England Rector Sabine Barry-Gould in 1864 as a processional hymn for children in a celebration. He wanted to the children to learn to live as Christ's soldiers.

This battle is not political, social, economic or national.

"... our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:10)

We are Christ's soldiers in this spiritual battle. We must take up the full armor God provides, which Paul describes in Ephesians 6, to be able to resist and stand firm. We must wake up from the deception of the ideal Christian life being as calm as a toad in the sun and march into the spiritual war following and empowered by Christ.

As you spend time with God now, thank Him that He is the invincible warrior, that He does defeat every challenge. Thank Him that He calls you to join Him in the battle. Thank Him that He provides all you need, that He has "granted [to] us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). Ask Him to keep you free from the deceptions of Satan's forces about the nature and calling of being a child and soldier of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Determine to march onward following Him day by day.

¹ cf. Derek Kidner. *Psalms 1-72*. Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973, page 47.

² Acts 13:30-34; Romans 1:4

³ Ronald Barclay Allen. *When Song Is New*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, page 164.

⁴ 2 Peter 1:4.

⁵ 2 Peter 3:9.

⁶ 2 Peter 3:13.

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