

“Rebellion Against God”  
Psalm 2  
(Preached at Trinity, September 20, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Since the beginning of the world human beings have been in warfare against God. The Bible unfolds the continuing saga of this cosmic warfare.
  - A. In the Garden Adam and Eve rose up against the supreme authority of God. Satan promised they would become as gods.  
**Genesis 3:5** – “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”
  - B. In the days of Noah the entire earth had risen in rebellion – God crushed them.
  - C. In the city of Babel they rebelled against God and in their independence God crushed their rebellion and scattered them
  - D. In the city of Sodom they decided they could set their own standards. God destroyed them.
  - E. God will not allow foolish men to rise up against His rule.
2. In the years after Christ, with the exception of Constantine, Roman persecution of Christians was terrible. But God’s Kingdom would not succumb to their puny efforts. William Plumer wrote: “Of thirty Roman emperors, governors of provinces, and others high in office, who distinguished themselves by their zeal and bitterness in persecuting the early Christians, one became speedily deranged after some atrocious cruelty, one was slain by his own son, one became blind, the eyes of one started out of his head, one was drowned, one was strangled, one died in a miserable captivity, one fell dead in a manner that will not bear recital, one died of so loathsome a disease that several of his physicians were put to death because they could not abide the stench that filled his room, two committed suicide, a third attempted it, but had to call for help to finish the work, five were assassinated by their own people or servants, five others died the most miserable and excruciating deaths, several of them having an untold complication of diseases, and eight were killed in battle, or after being taken prisoners.”  
One of these emperors was Flavius Claudius Julianus who ascended the throne in A.D. 360. He was particularly cruel in his persecution of Christians. Taunting one believer named Agaton he asked him some questions with reference to so many Christians being put to death. “How is your carpenter of Nazareth? Is he finding work these days?” Without hesitation, the believer replied, “He is perhaps taking time away from building mansions for the faithful, to build a coffin for your empire.” God will not be mocked.
3. Even in modern history God still proves Himself a powerful force to reckon with.
  - A. In the midst of the enlightenment, when deism was spreading rapidly, Voltaire claimed Jesus did not exist and that the Gospels were produced by those who wanted to create God in their own image. On his death bed a priest asked him to denounce Satan to which he responded, “Now now, dear man, this is not the time to be making enemies.” He died in 1778 and in 1814 his remains were stolen and dumped in a garbage heap. None were the wiser to this until 50 years later when his enormous sarcophagus was opened and discovered it was empty.

Voltaire proclaimed that within twenty-five years the Bible would be forgotten and Christianity would be a thing of the past. Forty years after his death in 1778 the Bible and other Christian literature were being printed in what had once been Voltaire's very own home. God will not be mocked

- B. Ernest Hemmingway considered himself living proof that one could fight against God. He boasted of living a life of sin without consequences. At the end of his life he suffered from alcoholism and depression and in the end he put a shotgun to his head and ended his life. God will not be mocked
  - C. German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche declared Christianity as the religion of weaklings. He coined the phrase, "God is dead." In the last months of his life he suffered a complete mental breakdown. God will not be mocked
4. Men continue to rise up against God. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Psalm speaks of the folly of such a course.
  5. This psalm is also one of the great messianic psalms pointing to Christ. Not only does it speak of Christ, Christ Himself speaks in this psalm.
  6. Some believe the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> psalms were originally joined together. If this is the case we can see a continuation of the path of the wicked mentioned in the 1<sup>st</sup> Psalm.
  7. Psalm 2 is a psalm rich in parallelism – it is largely constructed of synonymous lines.
  8. Psalm 2 is divided into four parts. Tonight as we examine the psalm I'll also divide it into four parts.

Part One: Man's Rebellion – **Verses 1-3**

Part Two: God's Reaction – **Verses 4-6** – He laughs at man's puny attempts

Part Three: The Voice of God's Son - **Verses 7-9** – He declares the decree of God

Part Four: God's Warning – **Verses 10-12** – Sinners are warned to give up their rebellion

#### I. Part One: Man's Rebellion – **Verses 1-3**

- A. It begins with the question of disbelief by the psalmist  
 "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?"
  1. The word for "heathen" literally means "nations"  
 The word for "rage" points to an conspiracy or plot  
 The whole world had risen up in a grand plot to overthrow the rule of God
  2. Why would anyone in their right mind plan an attack against a force that is infinitely more powerful where the chances of prevailing are zero?
  3. In **Verse 2** it is described in terms of the political and national leaders.  
 This has certainly been true from the beginning of time and continues today – from one end of the earth to the other.  
 There is an almost universal denial of the rightful throne of Christ.
  4. **Verse 3** describes the complete effort of man to rid himself of God and His rule. This is so true as we watch our nation today – from politics to business to entertainment – all want absolute freedom from God's control.
- B. Such rebellion is madness
  1. Who would imagine such a vain thing? – The word for "vain" describes something that a futile, hopeless, empty, senseless
  2. While they think their course makes sense it is actually madness.  
**Romans 1:22** - "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,"

3. The lost man sees the gracious rule of Christ as bondage  
**Psalm 2:3** – “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.”  
 “bands” and “cords” refer to materials to bind someone – fetters and ropes. They see obedience to God’s Law as a bondage – irksome, burdensome.
  - a. The truth is the rule of Christ is a gracious rule to those who know Him.  
**Matthew 11:29-30** – “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.”
  - b. The servants of Christ know Him as a glorious Lord

## II. Part Two: God’s Reaction – **Verses 4-6** – He laughs at man’s puny attempts

- A. God’s reaction is that of derision and wrath
  1. The psalmist describes God’s reaction first as laughter – not hilarity but of mockery and contempt  
 It would be like having a neighbor who for years has threatened to turn his dogs loose on you because you walk on the sidewalk in front of his house. Finally one day he opens the gate and out run four dogs barking and growling and foaming at the mouth running towards you. As you prepare for the worst you suddenly realize they have no teeth. You would answer your neighbor, is this what you’ve attacked me with?
  2. During the days of Noah the entire earth had rebelled against God. You can imagine their mockery as Noah built the ark. At the appointed time God destroyed them all.
  3. God’s laughter then turns to wrath – man will be terrified at God’s anger  
 “and vex them in his sore displeasure.”  
 “vex” - to disturb, alarm, terrify  
**Hebrews 10:31** – “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*”
    - a. Many do not believe this
    - b. God is not looked upon with terror. Sin is considered a small thing.
- B. God’s plans and purposes are not altered by man’s rebellion  
**Psalm 2:6** – “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.”
  1. The heathen shall not prevail - God’s Son is enthroned
  2. Notice it is stated as a finished act – victory is assured

## III. Part Three: The Voice of God’s Son - **Verses 7-9** – He declares the decree of God

- A. The Son states the decree
  1. It is an eternal decree
  2. The Son shall be sent forth as King! Powerful Lord!
  3. This is God’s eternal purpose – to redeem a multitude of these rebellious sinners and adopt them as heirs.
- B. The Son has been crowned - This is the beloved Son!
  1. He has been promised a rich heritage – His righteous people. They have become His holy possession

2. Christ also owns all things – He rules over all things. He has ownership even over the nations that have risen up in rebellion against Him.
  3. This is why their rebellion is such folly.
- C. He rules them with an iron scepter.
- Psalm 2:9** – “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”
1. In ancient kingdoms the king’s scepter was symbolic of his reign
    - a. A gold scepter described wealth
    - b. Jesus rules with an unbending rod of iron
  2. John described it in terms of judgment
 

**Revelation 19:15** – “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”
  3. Those who resist Christ will be smashed as a piece of pottery dashed against the wall. When His rod comes down all rebellion will be shattered.
- IV. Part Four: God’s Warning – **Verses 10-12** – Sinners are warned to give up their rebellion
- A. God gives His gracious invitation
1. In this life there is opportunity for repentance and reconciliation
  2. “Be wise” – rebellion against Christ is the height of foolishness. God charges all, “Be wise.”
 

**Psalm 14:1** – “The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.*”
  3. This is a great act of condescension
 

**Isaiah 1:18-19** – “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. <sup>19</sup> If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:”
  4. Heed God’s warning – Heed His wise instruction. End your rebellion now!
- B. God gives clear steps in repentance
1. Serve the Lord with fear. Dethrone yourselves and serve your King. Our nation wisely coined the motto in the 1950’s – “In God we Trust” This was because it was assumed that our nation was in His hands. Today we no longer believe this.
  2. “Kiss the Son” – give homage to Him. Adore Him. Embrace Him in total allegiance. The kiss is the ultimate expression of love.
 

**Song of Solomon 1:2** – “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love *is* better than wine.”
- C. The warning is repeated
- Psalm 2:12** – “lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”
1. To deny Christ your love is to kindle his wrath.
  2. **Verse 12** is translated in two different ways:
 

“when his wrath is kindled but a little”

“His wrath may be soon kindled” or “quickly kindled”

Both are true.
  3. God will crush all rebellion in His wrath. He will unleash His judgment at any moment.

4. It will be a small thing for God to destroy His enemies. A little kindling of God's wrath should be sufficient to cause terror in the heart of man. God is able to destroy all His enemies with just a flick of His finger. **Isaiah 40:15** – "Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing."
  5. All unbelievers must heed this warning. All must embrace Christ in brokenness. They must confess their sin and forsake it or they will face the wrath of God.
- D. God's promise of great blessing to those who follow Christ  
 "Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him."  
**Psalm 33:12** – "Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD; *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance."
1. This takes us back to Psalm 1  
**Psalm 1:1** – "Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly"
  2. Our first job in evangelism is to declare the rightful throne of Christ and plead with men to lay down their foolish weapons of warfare
  3. Then we declare the blessings of obedience. We declare how wonderful it is to know Christ, to embrace Him, to love Him.

#### Conclusion:

1. Have you embraced Christ? Or have you taken your place among the heathen in rebellion against the King of kings?
2. Have you seen how glorious this King is? Have you embraced Him and given Him your allegiance and your love?