

The Fear of the Lord: Rebellion

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 July 2021

Preacher: Davi de Paula

[0 : 00] And so, Lord, as we come to hear your word, we pray that you would give us the hearing of faith. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Please have a seat. And it's a pleasure now to hand over to Dabby. Thanks, Dabby.

Great. Well, good morning, everyone. It's lovely to see you all this morning. It's my real pleasure and privilege to be with you all this morning.

If you don't know who I am again, James has mentioned. My name is Dabby. I'm here with my wife, Emma, currently the student worker at Chandler's Church, also studying ETS, a free church candidate, away to Berghead next month to train as a minister there with Peter Turnbull.

So if you have any tips about Berghead, please do feel free to share them. I've made this plea multiple times. Not many people have come forward. I think that's more to do with Berghead than me.

So we're looking forward to it, though, regardless of what it's like. We're going to be thinking about Psalm 2 together this morning. So if you'd like to open that up in your Bibles, if you've got some with you, or your phone, please do so just now.

[1 : 26] And do keep that open in front of you. We'll be making reference to it as we go through. We're beginning a new series in the Psalms this morning. James has asked me to begin this series.

A series entitled The Fear of the Lord in the Psalms. And this is a really appropriate place to start. So let me read it to us, and then I'll pray for our time together, and then we'll get started.

Let me read it for us. Why did the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, Let us burst our bonds apart and cast our cords away from us.

He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury, saying, Ask for me.

I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decree. The Lord said to me, You are my son. Today I have begotten you.

[2 : 41] Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Now, therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Let me pray very quickly before we start. Our Father, we pray that you will bless us this morning by raising our affections afresh towards your Son and your King, our loving Savior, the mighty Lord Jesus Christ.

In his name we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, let me begin this morning by asking us a really quick question.

[3 : 47] When your co-workers or your colleagues or your friends at school or your uni friends ask you what you're up to at the weekend, what do you say?

When I was in high school and university and even now sometimes at the Barbers or with neighbors, my answer would consist primarily of what happened on Saturday.

If I was particularly brave, I might mention church on Sunday, swiftly followed by what we had for lunch. Perhaps you can relate to that.

Why is it that I wasn't and I still am not from time to time willing to be as open about the spiritual side of my life, the spiritual reality I know to be true, as I was and am the leisure, the hobbies, the interests, the family side of my life?

Well, I used the words brave earlier on quite purposefully, and that is because I think what fuels this kind of doctoring of information was and is ultimately a sharp, instantaneous, stomach-churning fear.

[5 : 09] A fear of what they will think of me and subsequently what they might do to me or how they might treat me.

Perhaps you know what I mean. You're standing at the school gate and a parent who you're friendly with suggests a play date on a Sunday morning. Or it's LGBT month at school and your friends ask you why you're not wearing the appropriate color if you've chosen not to.

Or your uni friends ask you why you've stopped drinking when everyone else keeps going and all the eyes in the room turn toward you. And the fear strikes, doesn't it?

What are the consequences going to be for me if I say what I believe and what I think to be true?

And of course, all the alternative options suddenly become really attractive, don't they?

Maybe I could stay quiet. Maybe I could dodge the question. Maybe I could soften the answer.

Maybe I could lie. Maybe I could lie. Peter and John, as we read in Acts 4, had just experienced something we might be really terrified of.

[6 : 28] Imprisonment. Further threats of punishment followed by gag orders because what they were saying was not acceptable. Perhaps it's closer to home nowadays than it would in a long time.

And although we might not be in immediate danger of this kind of response yet, there are other responses we feel very much in danger of. Being left out. Not being considered for promotion.

Abused. Bullied. Kicked out of group chats. Ridiculed. Defamed on social media. These are real possibilities and they're really uncomfortable. They're upsetting.

They're unfair. And our fear of these consequences is real. Isn't it? And it often feels insurmountable. Well, Peter and John, when they're released from prison and they return to their friends, they use Psalm 2 as a prayer.

And they keep speaking. And they're the first real signs of opposition to the gospel for Jesus' followers. Post his resurrection. Real physical, political, religious persecution.

[7 : 40] Psalm 2 is where they turn. Now, why is that? Why do they choose this Psalm? Well, hopefully we'll see as we study it together why it would be really, really appropriate for that situation and for our situations as well.

As we long to speak for Jesus in a culture made of authorities that are, on the whole, counter to his rule and counter to those who trust in his gospel.

And in the midst of real pressure, real persecution, Peter and John, they are convinced again that to be with King Jesus, the Lord's anointed, even though it is not uncomfortable, or it is uncomfortable, it's ultimately the only blessed place to be.

So let's look at the psalm. We'll take each chunk in turn, each stanza in turn. So four points on the whole, really quickly, I promise.

Firstly, verses 1 to 3. The world proclaims its rebellion against the Lord. The picture that is painted in verses 1 to 3 is of the attitudes of the world, its countries, its peoples, its kings, its rulers, and what attitude they have in relation to the Lord.

[8 : 53] And to sum up in a way, it's worldwide, universal rebellion. And that rebellion manifests itself in plots and attempts to burst the bonds, the control, the authority that the Lord has on them.

It's a striving for freedom. Individual freedom, complete autonomy, and separation from the creator God and his anointed supposedly oppressive rule.

And that rebellion, Peter and John find out, has direct implications for those who do submit to the creator God and his anointed king. They experienced that firsthand.

Herod and Pilate and the religious leaders of the time, the rulers and the kings, if you will, so hated Jesus' call for submission and repentance that they killed him.

And now, the physical well-being of Peter and John was in danger. Their freedoms were curtailed. Their relationships with their friends and their neighbors, I'm sure, became very tense. As with Jesus, so with his followers.

[10 : 13] Of course, that's also true today. We look at the news and we see street preachers being arrested, chaplains reported as terrorists, Christians resigning for jobs as politically, morally.

The nation turns more and more individualistic and secular, particularly in the realms of sexual orientation and gender. God's authority and rule is more and more rejected, ridiculed, left to the side.

And so are his followers. And perhaps you're thinking, gosh, that's really bleak. I know all this. That's why, when the circumstances call for it, I'm really scared to speak.

Verse 12 of Psalm 2, at the very, very end, says that it's, to be on King Jesus' side is a blessed place to be. But whenever I side with him, I suffer.

And that, it becomes harder and harder to believe that really is the blessed place to be. Well, in response to that, have a look at the very first word of the very first verse of Psalm 2.

[11:33] Why? The author of the Psalm looks upon all this rebellion as absolute folly. The people, these rulers, they should know better.

Trying to be free of the reign of the Lord and his king is like trying to be free of air and breathing. Not only is it impossible, it's a stupid thing to want.

The disciples knew that all that they were facing was folly. They looked at Herod and Pilate and the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel that rose against them, the powers of oppression. And with this Psalm on their lips, said, in a nutshell, why do you guys bother?

That's an audacious thing to say. It might be outrageous if it were not true. The disciples have the right attitude.

Luke sneaks in a little detail, which is wonderful. It's in verse 4. No need to turn it up. I'll read it for us.

[12:49] Even as the Sadducees rushed upon Peter and John to shut them up, 5,000 had already been added to their number. You see, rebellion against the rule and authority of the creator God by his creatures has always been the case.

And it's always been present. And it's always had implications for the Lord's people. But here's the thing. It never actually works.

Emma and I work with students here in Edinburgh. Even in lockdown, we've seen students trust the gospel and settle in churches.

Churches are being planted throughout Scotland, as secular a nation as you can get, perhaps. Iran has the fastest growing evangelical movement in the world, and that's within a real Islamic theocracy.

Gospel partners in East Asia will regularly comment on the overwhelming success of the underground church, particularly in China, a communist state that is really dead set against Christianity.

[14:02] In fact, I read last week about a covert expedition in the 80s, which saw one million Bibles smuggled into China in under two hours, directly under the noses of the port authorities and the guards.

And it's outrageous. It's amazing. All these are examples of what has been happening and is always happening in our country and in our world.

The rebellion of the world's people and their rulers against the Lord, it never really works. And in fact, the opposite is often true, isn't it? Under the most oppressive rebellion, it's often there that the gospel grows.

Peter and John and their friends were not surprised at what they were experiencing. They knew what this psalm teaches.

But they were seeing and experiencing not just the opposition born out of the rebellion of verses 1 to 3, but also the affirmation that comes with that first word of that first verse.

[15:12] Why? The world's powers, they threw everything they had at them, and they would throw more, but the gospel never stopped growing. And we must ask the question in face of all these facts, who has the real power here?

Where is real blessing to be found? Have a look further on in the psalm, verses 4 to 6.

The Lord responds to this rebellion with a king. The Lord's response in verse 4, it really confirms the sheer kind of folly of this rebellion.

He laughs and he speaks back. Firstly, as he laughs, he holds them in derision. He's not bothered by any of it. None of it is an inconvenience to him.

I mean, that's the reaction a parent might have at the protests of their young child. It really, really, really does not matter how much kicking and screaming occurs.

[16:25] Authority is not undermined. The child does not get their way. And his speech, the Lord's speech in verse 5, has a terrifying effect.

Now, I wonder what we'd expect this speech to consist of. Perhaps a threat or a warning. But no. It's the proclamation of a coronation.

The heavenly Lord proclaims that he has an all-powerful king on earth, on Zion Hill. Now, knowing who this king is, is of immense importance.

Because the kings and the rulers and the authorities of the world certainly look powerful. Their claims for my loyalty and my service certainly seem to be substantiated by all the glamour and the power and the influence and the riches that they hold.

And it looks like blessing would be found in submission to them. But no. The Lord has established a king.

[17 : 32] The mere mention of whom causes fear to rise in the hearts of the rebellious authorities. It seems like this is the guy we should be submitting to.

Well, who is this king? Established by the Lord himself. Well, in the next verses, we hear this king speak.

And the claims that he makes of himself are quite extraordinary. Have a look at verses 7 to 9. The king speaks now.

He says, I will tell of the decree. And he proclaims two things about himself. His identity and his job. And firstly, his identity.

He's the anointed king whom God calls his son. Now, in the Old Testament, there are a few people who would fit this description in some way.

[18 : 31] Most notably, David and Solomon, the kings. They would have been sons of God. And if Sam may have well been used for their coronations, David is attributed as its author in Acts.

However, it don't quite fit the description of this king as we read it in Psalm 2. Primarily, because it could not have been said of them that their rule was as vast and as grand as verse 8 suggests. Certainly, they had their problems when it came to the surrounding nations. David and Solomon's rule was not absolute and worldwide, as is described here.

And this left the people of God back then really longing for someone who would fit this title properly.

They know that this king is who they need to vindicate them against the rebellion of the nations.

They know he will come, but no one seems to fit the bill.

[19 : 41] Until one day, Jesus rose from the waters at his baptism. And the voice of the Lord from the heavens was audible for everyone, saying, This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

A direct allusion to Psalm 2. Jesus is this king. That's what Peter and John knew.

And his job is to bring the nations into line. He has come to bring judgment upon the nations who rebel.

And quelling this rebellion is as easy for him as letting a pot fall and smash on the ground. Piece of cake.

Piece of cake. Now what other power, person, authority do you know that can make claims like this?

[20 : 50] Governments, nations, conquerors, empires, they have all come and gone. Their rule never coming close to the extent and the size and power of this king's reign.

All 195 countries, all 196,695,711 square miles of this earth. Every inch belongs to one person. And that is Jesus. Now we are in a much more privileged position in comparison to the Old Testament believers.

We can be sure of who this king is. Peter and John saw him and wrote about him. We can read about him now and know him to be the one with all power over all the earth.

Both the physical world as we read of him stopping storms with his words. Both the spiritual world as we see him command legions of demons with only a word.

[21 : 56] The one with power over even death itself. Everything, literally everything under his authority. Now can we begin to see now how Peter and John and their friends were beginning to have the fortitude and the encouragement to stand firm against the pressure and the opposition that they were faced with.

They saw and they knew who this king was. They knew the king Jesus who died and rose from the grave. And they knew that to bend the knee, to take seriously his call for repentance and submission was the only way to live.

There is no one else to serve. There is no other power to obey. Even themselves, their own hearts must be brought in line with this king's calling. This king is incredible. There is no one like him. Now, I understand that maybe some of us are perhaps still feeling a little pessimistic.

Yes, this is very impressive. But I'm struggling now. Perhaps we feel a little bit like the Old Testament people of God would have felt as they sung this psalm.

[23 : 18] Where is this king? The work policies I'm being asked to ascend to, they're pressing in. The pressure from co-workers is mounting. My friends at school, they treat me with real contempt from time to time.

I'm kicked out of group chats. I'm not invited to events. My lecturers at university, they treat me differently because I don't agree with them. As the world rebels against the Lord and his king Jesus, I suffer.

So, King Jesus, if you're so powerful, do something. And if that is you, I know it's tough.

Much wisdom is necessary as to how to navigate these things. And the Bible has more to say on these issues. But the reaction for now and for this morning that Psalm 2 should be causing within us, hopefully already is, is exemplified by the believers in Acts 4.

And that is perseverance in joyful service. Born out of an assurance that this king that we serve is like no other.

[24 : 34] Here's what the believers in Acts pray alongside Psalm 2. And it's surprising. It's not a call for the king to come and enact the judgment that he promises.

But instead they pray, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness. In other words, give us what we need to keep speaking.

They trust the Lord, this king. They're convinced of who he is, of his power. And they know that he knows best in whatever he has predestined.

Peter would later write and explain that the Lord is not slow, as some understand slowness, but is patient, longing that many more would bend the knee in repentance.

It is out of patience and kindness that this king has not enacted his judgment yet. He is not a tyrant. He is a kind and loving king, but he is powerful. And so, we must be realistic.

[25 : 47] Psalm 2 isn't a cure for fear and evangelism and witnessing. Psalm 2 provides me with the confidence and the fortitude that I need.

That means that when the fear strikes, as I am confronted with the rebellion of the world against King Jesus, the fear is not what decides what I do or what I don't do, or what I say or what I don't say.

Instead, it's my fear and my reverence and my worship of the king, of the whole world, that finally decides what I do or what I don't do. It's true.

We often don't feel like we're on the side of the most powerful king the earth has ever seen. But we are. This king's the real deal.

And we can trust that we will be vindicated when Jesus' judgment comes, and it will come, and it will be swift. And that brings us on to the last stanza of the psalm, verses 10 to 12.

[26 : 56] How the world should respond. Submit and be blessed. Where will you stand when King Jesus decides that this rebellion, the injustice, the sin involved in it all, it will not carry on any longer?

Where will you stand? Well, perhaps you're listening here this morning in person or online. Maybe your friend has brought you along, or someone has taken over the TV at home, and you're forced to watch this.

I hope it's been okay so far. Will you be wise? You might not think that you're in a state of rebellion against God.

You're just getting on with your life. But what do you feel when his claim of ownership over you and your identity is proclaimed, as it has been just this morning?

When you hear of this king, and you are told to bend the knee, to serve him, to kiss the son, not romantically, but in submission, or there will be consequences.

[28 : 05] What do you feel? What's your reaction? Well, I'm willing to bet the reaction is the pit of your stomach churns a little bit, and your fists clench, and you think, no, why should I?

Well, here's a plea from this psalm, of Peter, of John, of us who do submit to this king. Will you be wise? Do not remain in that state, clenching your fists against Jesus.

That is a dangerous place to be. Fear him, and rejoice at the refuge that can be found in him. Serve him gladly, and know him to be the son of the good creator God, who will and is establishing his kingdom.

The believers in Acts, in the first century, were absolutely convinced that Jesus was this king. What will you do?

Will you be wise? At least, might you look at him a little bit closer with a friend? For those of us here this morning who are Christians, we have recognized our state of rebellion.

[29 : 27] We repent of it, and trust Jesus for forgiveness, well, take assurance. You're serving the real and only true authority, the king of the whole world, Jesus.

It's not easy, but it certainly is the blessed place to be. Just look, and think about this king for a second. He's a son of God, who stooped low to serve sinners, to heal the sick, to bring food to the hungry, and break the powers of darkness and evil, who died in the place of such people, averting the wrath of God, and who is now resurrected and reigning, bound to come again to vindicate his people and end their pain, their suffering and their tears, who will bring righteous justice against rebellion and rebels, who would have been us, were it not for his patience and grace already shown toward us?

Who else is left in this world to serve, to love, to worship, and to glorify? No one else, only King Jesus. It's amazing that we former rebels get to be on his side.

So, as we come to an end, what did you do at the weekend? Well, perhaps before answering that question this week, or as we arrive at this school gate, whenever schools come back, or the door of the classroom, or the entrance to the office, or the door of the family friend's house, before we interact with anyone maybe, could we quickly pray, Sam 2.

Father, whatever discomfort is before me, it does not affect the rule and the power of your King. I am in awe of the glory of your Son, King Jesus.

[31 : 24] Help me to appreciate how blessed I am under him, and help me to serve him above all else. Maybe that's a short prayer we could say before we talk to anyone.

And may we always remember that to be with King Jesus truly is to be blessed. And would the Lord give us what we need to keep on speaking.

Let me pray as we close. Father, we are in awe of your Son, Jesus, how gracious and yet how powerful he is.

Please help us to serve him in joy and fear above all else. Help us to keep speaking for him and about him. Give us wisdom as to how to do this in our particular circumstances.

Give us boldness by the Holy Spirit within us. Comfort and convince those of us who are suffering as a consequence of the world's rebellion. Convince us afresh that we really are blessed to be alongside the only true king of this world.

[32 : 37] In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to hear a song sung to us now and as a response of our hearts let's sing it in our hearts, not out loud, in adoration of our glorious King.

Let's sit and listen to this song. Amen. Amen. Who has held the oceans in his hands?

Who has numbered every grain of sand? Kings and nations tremble at His voice.

All creation rises to rejoice. Behold our God, seated on His throne.

Come, let us adore Him. Behold our King, nothing can compare.

[34 : 07] Come, let us adore Him. Who has given counsel to the Lord?

Who can question any of His words? Who can teach the one who knows all things?

Who can fathom all His wondrous deeds? Behold our God, seated on His throne.

Come, let us adore Him. Behold our King, nothing can compare.

Come, let us adore Him. Who has felt the nails upon His hands, bearing all the guilt of sinful man?

[35 : 49] God eternal, humble to the grave. Jesus, Savior, risen now to reign.

Behold our God, seated on His throne. Come, let us adore Him. Come, let us adore Him.

Behold our King, nothing can compare. Come, let us adore Him.

Come, let us adore Him. Behold our King, nothing can compare. Come, let us adore Him. Come, let us adore Him. Come, let us adore Him.

Behold our King, nothing can compare. Come, let us adore Him.

[37 : 04] Well, as we stand, let's say one final prayer together. Let me lead us. Now therefore, O kings, be wise.

Be warned, O rulers of the air. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish in the way.

For His wrath is quickly kindled, but blessed are all who take refuge in Him. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen. So welcome, please.

Thank you.

[38 : 32] Thank you.