

The God who Laughs in Wrath

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- [0 : 0 0] Blessing to that reading from his holy word. And as you see on the screen there, the title of our sermon this evening, The God Who Laughs, The God Who Laughs in Wrath.
- And of course, as we go through the main points, we'll see how that is brought forward and brought clear in this psalm.
- We see three aspects to the psalm. We see, first of all, the conspiracy of those who hate the Lord and his people, the joining together of those who would seek to undermine and to bring to naught their futile attempt to silence the name of the Lord Jesus, silence the voice of the Lord Jesus.
- And of course, that is utterly futile. The reaction of the Lord to the conspiracy of those who are plotting against him. And then finally, the warning, the warning that we hear from the psalm, warning against those who will not bow the knee to our Lord, to our Saviour, the God who laughs in wrath.
- Now, those of you who've been with us through our evening services, you'll have seen how we're very much going through a sort of mini-series on our knowledge of God, who God is, how God has made himself known in his word.
- [1 : 3 3] And so far, we've learned or seen that God is the God of grace. We've seen God in his grace. We've looked at the majestic God, God in his majesty.
- We've seen God making himself known as the one who's loved us with an everlasting love. But in our knowledge of God, in seeking the more to know God, we can't omit in our thinking on God, we can't omit in applying God's word in relation to God himself.
- We can't omit the whole aspect of God and his wrath, the wrath of God. In other words, the holy and just anger that God has against all who reject him.
- The wrath of God, the anger of God, the just anger of God against all who would oppose God's rule. Against all who say, even if the Lord Jesus will not have this man to rule over us.
- And I suppose it's the case that, and I include myself in this, that we don't preach the wrath of God often enough. When was the last time you heard even a sermon on the wrath of God?
- [2 : 5 8] Yes, we want to hear of the God of love. We want to hear of the God of mercy. We want to hear of the God of grace, the God who loves us. We want to hear of the majestic God, the God of compassion.
- But if we're going to somehow want to tickle the ears of those who hear and omit the God of wrath, then we're not giving, we're not preaching what's called the whole counsel of God.
- The whole aspects of who God is, the whole of God's revelation of himself. Because we know God as God has made himself known in his word.
- And as God has made himself known in his word, he's made himself known, yes, as the God who is love. And the God of mercy is the God of grace, the majestic one.

But he's made himself known too as the God of wrath. And so this evening we're going to focus very much on this theme of the wrath of God.

[4 : 00] And to help us, of course, we could select different passages, of course, of Scripture to speak of, to show forth this aspect of God's nature. But we're going to look at Psalm 2 this evening.

This psalm very much points out the wrath of God that's expressed and shown against those who, well, who despise God and God's rule.

Because this is a psalm that speaks of the terrifying fury of God. But at the same time, it's a psalm that gives the Lord's people much encouragement. You who are his, you have that absolute ground of eternal security.

You who know him, yes, you know him as the one who saved you, who saved you from his wrath. And you know that you're safe in his arms and that you honour the one who is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

So what do we see then in this psalm that really points us to the wrath of God? Well, first of all, as we said, as we notice, we see conspiracy against the Lord.

[5 : 11] Let's read again the first three verses. Why do 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 their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.

Now, we don't know exactly when these words were written, but in all likelihood they were written some 3,000 years ago when David was king.

It's not specifically mentioned that he wrote the psalm, but in all likelihood this psalm was written around the time. It's certainly not just David was king, but when Israel itself was facing hostility from their enemies around.

And, of course, whether it's 3,000 years ago or today, these words are still absolutely applicable. Because the church, the church of the Lord Jesus, the church that honours the Saviour's name, the church itself is surrounded by those who hate the Lord and hate the Lord's people.

And the church very much is aware of the raging of man against God and his people. And we see it not just abroad, as we see it so much that so grieves us when we see those who take power, who are utterly opposed to the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

[6 : 41] But don't we see it even in our own land, when we see the plans that are utterly contrary to God's word, plans being formulated by our government that would seek to undermine the word of God.

And, of course, we grieve, we mourn, we cry out, Lord, Lord, have mercy. We see God's word, God's standards being challenged by those who have no fear of God.

Those who would seek, well, to see the Bible disappear, who would seek to see churches disappear, who would seek to silence the Lord's people in the so-called name of progress.

You know, we're living in an age, yes, when there is that conspiracy against the Lord and his people. Things are happening, things are being proposed that would have seemed unthinkable even a generation ago, but now being promoted as acceptable and woe betide anyone, anybody, any believer who seeks to challenge the high priests of secular progress.

And then there are the movements across the world where believers are persecuted in the name of the Lord Jesus, whether it's atheist regimes, whether it's militant Islamic terrorists, even our own so-called democratic governments who tolerate so much, but the last thing that's tolerated is a biblical worldview.

[8 : 15] And yes, we have to confess that these are dangerous times. These are times when we're seeing conspiracies against the Lord and his people, and these conspiracies are right.

But yes, although they're dangerous times, they're not hopeless times. The writer of the psalm affirms that even the times that the Lord's people live through are not hopeless times.

We're going to look at that in a moment. But before we have that reassuring comfort of the blessings of God towards his people, even in these dangerous times, then we do have to look more closely at this conspiracy that the psalmist mentions here.

And the response of the psalmist when he asks, why? It's the first word of the psalm. Why do the nations rage? Why? This is really a question of what we might call incredulity.

You know, incredulous. Well, why? Why would lesser mortals, why would kings, rulers, why would peoples of influence, why would people who are as nothing compared to Almighty God, why would they even think that they could overpower and bring to nothing the Lord who is Almighty in power, the one who made heaven and earth?

[9 : 40] Why? Even the way that the question is asked surely indicates that all these conspiracies against the Lord and his people are fruitless, hopeless, utterly futile.

These are actions of conspiracy that actually condemn those who are making these conspiracies against God and his people. So the person here in the psalm who's asking the question, why?

It's a question of astonishment that anybody, any person or any group could even think of plotting and plotting successfully against the Almighty.

These are conspirators against God. These are people who are plotting against God but have no hope of success. And that why, why of astonishment?

Well, we hear it right at the very start of the psalm. You know, nations that seem so great, so powerful. Peoples of the world, around the world who are conspiring well against God, doing something so futile that the psalm writer asks why.

[10 : 50] Because as he says, the psalmist says, they're conspiring against the Lord and his anointed one. See, the person who's writing the psalm is obviously somebody who loves the Lord.

He knows God. He knows that God is almighty and perfect. He is our great God and King. The person who wrote the psalm, he's admitted to God. And so he's in this perfect position to know that all the conspiracies of man against God are utterly futile.

Utterly futile. Who would even think of conspiring against our God and saviour? And the psalmist here notices such a contrast between those who are of the Lord and those who are against him.

In fact, if we were to go back a psalm to Psalm 1, the psalmist in Psalm 1, and very often Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 actually are considered actually two parts of the same whole.

So in Psalm 1, the psalmist has written of those who are blessed, who meditate on God and his word. In fact, in Psalm 2, the same word for meditate is used for plot.

[12 : 04] In other words, those who meditate to plot. But they aren't blessed as the one who meditates in the Lord, as in Psalm 1. Those who meditate to plot, as in Psalm 2, they're not blessed.

They're condemned. But what's being meditated on the Lord and his anointed one? What's being plotted? It's this desire of different people, even different groups, to come together to seek, to silence God, to silence his word.

And even bringing that into the present context, our present day conspiracy to silence the church. Even to remove the name of the Lord Jesus from every aspect of our nation, from our institutions, from our schools, from our places of influence.

And doing so in the supposed name of freedom. Freedom from the strictures of the church. Freedom from the word of God. Which, in fact, is no freedom at all.

It's that sentiment that we read there in verse 3. Let's burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us. It's that mindset that says, I want to break free.

[13 : 22] You know, it's the attitude that says, I'm the master of my fate. I'm the captain of my soul. It's the view that says that the Bible, the church, what these preachers preach, just restricts our freedoms.

It's that philosophy that's summed up, you know, if it feels good, do it. You know, in other words, the day that we're living in that very much expresses individualism.

You know, self at the centre. Self, what we want to do, we'll do, irrespective of anyone else. I am at the centre. Self at the centre.

And so things like the commandments, things like God's law, things like Christian doctrine, such as judgment against sin, even sin itself, even the authority of scripture, all seem to be inhibiting the freedoms that individuals feel they have a right to.

But such attempts at so-called freedom from God and his word, these attempts are futile. They're pointless.

[14 : 33] They're utterly in vain. You see, as we said, the psalm writers are so astonished that these attempts at freedom, that they even could be attempted, even considered.

And you who love the Lord Jesus, you who know him as Lord of lords and king of kings, equally, you can be astonished and asking why?

Astonished at the futile attempts of so many to silence God. God cannot be silenced. God cannot be silenced. Because you know what true freedom is.

You know freedom from the power of sin. You have a freedom to live for the Saviour. And you know the true freedoms found in the Lord's anointed, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you're not going to be amongst those who are clamouring for freedoms upon freedoms that are, in fact, no freedom at all. But that clamour for false freedom only results in God's response.

[15 : 39] And as we read in verses four to nine, it's a response of wrath, the wrath of God. This is God's reaction. This is the God who laughs in wrath.

Because up to now, up from the first three verses, we've heard the voice of the one who's astonished that anyone could conspire against God.

But in this second part of the psalm from verse four to nine, we hear God's voice. We hear the Lord speak. And we see and hear God looking down from heaven on those who are so busy with their activities against him.

And we see the reaction of God. He laughs. He laughs. He laughs in derision. And he declares words that are words of utter fury.

I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. This is the announcement of the reign of the Lord of Lords. This is the announcement, ultimately, of the reign of the Lord Jesus.

[16 : 42] And no nation or no group of nations can withstand the one whose throne is established forever. And God's not going to negotiate with these rebels.

God has installed his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God has given his son authority. Authority to rule. And that's the end of the matter. We see, Christ's kingdom, that's established.

It's not going to be moved. His throne is secure. His reign is eternal. And that's maybe we might say the general response that we see in these verses of the Lord who laughs in derision.

But I think we do need to focus in a little more. We need to look at this a little more closely. What's been sent here? Well, let's think again of the Lord who laughs, as we see in verse 4.

It's interesting, actually. Until I actually started to look at this psalm in a little more detail. I really realised how many other times we see the expression of God laughing.

[17 : 46] But in his laughing against the wicked. Psalm 37, for example, we're told that the Lord laughs at the wicked, but he sees that his day is coming.

Or again, we can go to Psalm 59. These words, you, O Lord, laugh at them. You hold all the nations in derision. And so when we see and hear of the Lord laughing at the wicked, it's not a laugh of ridicule.

It's not the kind of laugh that we see in comedy. This is the laugh of derision. In other words, it's a laugh of contempt. It's a laugh of scorn.

I mean, these rulers, these rulers of the nations, those rulers of nations who are opposed to God, they may well have laughed at God. May well have laughed at even the being, even the very notion of being a God.

And these nations and rulers of nations may well have laughed at believers who stand firm on the rock. It's the Lord Jesus. But we say with all reverence, the last laugh is with God.

[18 : 56] Because God won't be mocked. There'll be a day coming when those who rejected God in life are going to laugh no more. And all the smiles of the self-satisfied, smug politicians who laugh at Christians, who mock believers, these laughs are going to be turned to shame.

The laughs of the world leaders who ridicule the tortured believer, these laughs are going to be changed to weeping. That weeping that's going to happen, happening in the place of eternal torment.

Well, they'll not be laughing, but instead weeping and gnashing of teeth. Just as Jesus said in the number of occasions. Because it's the Lord who laughs, who laughs and scorn against, against his foes, against his enemies.

Because it's the Lord who speaks, as we're told in the passages, the Lord speaks to them in his wrath. And he terrifies them in his fury, as we read in verse 5. And wrath, even the word wrath and fury, that God's going to fully unleash on the day of judgment.

One of the greatest Scottish churchmen was, I'm sure you all know of him, Thomas Chalmers. We have one of Thomas Chalmers. And Chalmers, in one of his sermons, Chalmers said this, of the fury of God.

[20 : 28] I'm going to read exactly what he said, because I think we have to hear Chalmers in his own words. He said these words, amongst many, but he said these words. On that last day, there'll be a tremendous discharge of fury.

The wrath that sinners are now doing, so much to treasure up, will be poured forth on them. The season of God's mercy will have come to an end.

Yes, we've seen God's wrath expressed against sinner man. We've seen that through history. But that wrath, that fury is going to be unleashed when the Lord Jesus returns in judgment.

And, you know, even to contemplate for a moment, even just for a moment, even to contemplate God's fury, God's wrath, surely that should bring each and every one of us on our knees in repentance.

You know, that awareness of his terrifying wrath. Well, even if any of you tonight are still unconverted, even bring to mind what we read here in the psalm of the wrath and fury of God against all who refuse to acknowledge him, we'll listen to the word of God.

[21 : 41] Realize that God's wrath is real. And cry out, in the words that we heard this morning, cry out, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Don't let this opportunity pass you by. Because the fury of God isn't just any kind of ordinary anger, ordinary wrath.

This is the wrath of God that no one can withstand. God won't soften his wrath, because it's wrath that condemns. But what does God say particularly in his wrath?

We need to look at it a little more closely. Well, he says that there's a king. He says there's a king above all kings. He says there's a Lord of lords. As for me, I've set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

Really echoing what we've just said a moment ago, these are prophetic words that look forward to the reign of the Lord Jesus. His reign is supreme. His reign is eternal. And again, in a prophetic pronouncement that was fulfilled in Jesus, we're actually hearing Jesus, the Son of God, echoing his Father's words that we read in verse 7.

[22 : 52] You are my Son today, I begotten you. Ask of me and I'll 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.

These are words that are so clear that tell of the wrath of God. And tell us of Jesus. Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus isn't, you know, gentle Jesus, meek and mild.

Well, Jesus is the one to whom all authority has been given. And all authority given from the Father to oppose and defeat his enemies.

And Jesus has his Father's full support in Jesus' mission. The mission to save his own. And in saving his own to thwart the schemes of evil.

Remember at Jesus' baptism, well, the words of Psalm 2 were echoed at Jesus' baptism. When Jesus was given that public affirmation as the Son of God by his Father.

[23 : 56] And the word of the Father given for all to hear, you are my Son, you are my Son. And again, the transfiguration of Jesus. Remember when Jesus' bodily appearance changed.

Again, the words of Psalm 2 were revealed. And Jesus being acknowledged as the Son of God the Father. And then as far as Jesus' resurrection is concerned, well, you read in Acts 13, verse 33, Paul quoting from Psalm 2, verse 7, these same words.

Paul indicating that the promise that was made to David of an eternal dynasty fully realised in Jesus, the Son of God.

The risen Lord Jesus, the resurrected Lord Jesus, is now seated at the right hand of God. He's exercising his power now. It's where he's going to exercise his power, his reign forever.

It's not just the power that we think of that's so transitory, so passing. This is power that's overwhelming. Because when Jesus comes as judge, judge of the air, he's going to wield the sword of justice.

[25 : 15] And there'll be no mercy shown to those who refuse to come to him in faith and to enter his kingdom. And so we've got to hear the words of the Psalm again, Psalm 2, particularly verses 10 to 12, where we read and hear the warning from God.

God's warning to the rulers of the world. God's warning, yes, even to all who still reject the Lord as Saviour. Verse 10, Now therefore, O kings, be wise, be warned.

Be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear. And rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest you be angry. And you perish in the way. For his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him. None of us know how many Christians there are in positions of authority in the world. We don't know how many there are in various positions of influence and power in the earth, even now and at this time.

I don't think there are many, many at this moment. We have civil leaders, political leaders scattered across the globe.

[26 : 28] Very few, it would appear anyway, are of the Lord. We still have to bring them before the Lord and still pray that they'll heed the call of God to serve them and heed that call to embrace the Son and loose from the terrible fury of God and submit to the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

And so you and I have an obligation. We have an obligation to pray for our rulers. It's an absolute scriptural command. Pray that they'll be led to hear the voice of God calling them to repent and, yes, figuratively anyway, kiss the Son.

So, in other words, submit to the rule of the Lord Jesus. And pray that our leaders, our leaders in power and government, that leaders in different facets of our land, that they'll take refuge in our Lord and Saviour and King Jesus.

And that in him, they'll find eternal security. We look at our media outlets every day. We hear news every day.

We see our leaders or political leaders or leaders of various aspects of our society. We hear them and see them every day. When was the last time you actually prayed for them?

[27 : 45] When was the actual last time that you prayed for those who have that, you might say, militant secular agenda? Who are outright in their opposition to our Lord and Saviour, opposition to the gospel?

When was the last time you actually prayed for those who have no inefficient, it seems, in speaking against the gospel of the Lord Jesus? Pray for them.

Pray for those you're going to see next week and hear next week and who'll give that sort of appearance of brazen hostility against God.

Pray. Pray for them. Pray that they'll turn from their evil ways and repentance. Turn to the Lord and Saviour, Jesus.

And you who know the Lord Jesus, well, be encouraged. Be encouraged in this psalm. You who have submitted to the rule and reign of Jesus.

[28 : 45] Remember he's king. Remember his kingdom has no end. And that eternal kingdom is going to be revealed in all its glory when Jesus returns.

And yes, as we said, we may well be living in dangerous times. We will see our rulers, our various rulers, parade their power and self-righteous pride.

Remember the Lord is king. His throne is established. He can't be overthrown. And you who are his, remember you're saved.

You're saved from the wrath of God. Remember, your only refuge from the storm, the storm of God's wrath, your only refuge is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because he bore the wrath of God.

On the cross, he became that curse of God. He faced the wrath of God for sin when he became sin for us. He bore the wrath of the Father so that you might not face the wrath and fury of God.

[29 : 50] So give thanks. Give thanks to the Lord Jesus. Give thanks that he faced the punishment that you and I deserve. And give thanks that you know true freedom from the wrath of God.

And in that knowledge of God, in that knowledge of your salvation, live. Live your days. Live your days awaiting that day when Jesus returns.

And all who are his will rise to be with him forever. Amen. Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we truly are humbled to know and to read of you who laugh in wrath.

Lord, teach us to know who you are and to respond to your word in repentance and humble submission to you.

And truly, Lord, we do pray for those who, even this week, will even broadcast their opposition and hatred to your word. Lord, change their hearts.

[31 : 02] Convert them. Even as you converted Paul in his quest to silence Christians. Lord, we thank you that you saved him.

We pray, Lord, you'll save those who have that same desire to silence the very voice of Jesus. For we know, Lord, and give you thanks. That voice will never be silenced.

Hear us, Lord, as we continue then in worship before you now. We pray all these things in and through the name of Jesus. Amen.

Amen.