

Text: Psalm 2

Title: "The War Against the Resurrected One"

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Introduction: On two occasions in our New Testament, the enemies of the gospel of Christ received a warning not to fight against God. In Acts 5 Gamaliel counsels the Sanhedrin to leave the apostles alone. His words were, "But it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:39).

The second warning seems less sincere. Serving their political agenda against the resurrection-denying Sadducees, the Pharisaical persecutors of the Apostle Paul suddenly came to his defense shouting, "We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God" (Acts 23:9).

In both cases, the warning issued went unheeded. Men chose rather to fight against God. The ancient war against God and His people continues to this day. There is, of course, in these warnings an obvious presumption of great wisdom. It truly is an absurd thing to fight against God, because man is guaranteed to lose when he fights against God.

These Jewish leaders had grown up knowing this truth, unlike many today who war against this one true God. It is likely that Jews understood that warring against God is a bad idea because of passages of Scripture like Psalm 2, a psalm that would have been known to them in a way that it is not known by many today. The Psalm summarizes man's ancient war against God and His resurrected Son, and this morning I would like us to see four things it says about this fight.

I. Man's war against the Resurrected One has a battleplan (vv. 1-3).

Illustration: On March 18 the US Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case called *Murthy v. Missouri*. The plaintiffs in the case are doctors and scientists who had their accounts closed by social media companies during the covid pandemic. At issue is whether or not the White House, the CDC, the FBI, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, and the Surgeon General's Office should be prevented from "coercing or significantly encouraging social media platforms to censor constitutionally protected free speech" [<https://markets.businessinsider.com/news/stocks/supreme-court-hears-oral-argument-in-pivotal-ncla-case-against-gov-t-social-media-censorship-1033173834>; accessed 3/22/2024].

Application: The First Amendment of the Constitution, of course, provides the answer. It prohibits the federal government from "abridging the freedom of speech." So, when the federal government colludes with social media companies to silence US citizens, it is breaking the law.

Our government utilizes a plan very similar to the battleplan of the war against God when it does things like this. Notice with me some features of this battleplan.

1. The battleplan is conceived by man's nations and peoples (v. 1; *heathen* = *nations*). The war against God is both political and spiritual, a war conducted by the politically powerful and elites of society (v. 2).

In our day, God has established four separate domains of human authority, each of which is subject directly to Him, not man: the individual conscience, the family, the local church, and the nation-state. When we say that these entities should be subject to God, we mean the God mentioned in verse 2 – Yahweh and His Anointed or Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. The nation-state is under the authority of Jesus Christ, just like individuals, families, and local churches are. Its rulers will answer to Him.

2. The battleplan is conceived in secret (v. 1). This verse is the only occurrence of the Hebrew verb, here translated *rage*. A related noun occurs twice in the Old Testament, once in a positive sense in Ps. 55:14, where the psalmist took *sweet counsel* together” with a former friend, and once in a negative sense in Ps. 64:2, where the psalmist confronts dangerous enemies. He prays, “Hide me from the *secret counsel* of the wicked.” What the passages have in common is the fact that the counsel in each case is confidential. It is taken in secret. The raging of verse 1 is the taking of secret counsel.

When the nations rage and the peoples imagine a vain thing, they do so with a criminal lack of transparency. Those on the side of the God of truth have nothing to hide. Those warring against the God of truth have much to hide.

Illustration: The NH legislature is considering a bill called “The Students First Act,” which would require mandatory reporting by school districts of school expenses. The goal of the bill is to provide the public with greater transparency of the way tax dollars are used by public schools. Many parents have been surprised by some of the hidden agendas in public education in recent years. In Massachusetts, a girl of 14 years of age with gender dysphoria can have access to puberty blockers without telling her parents.

Exposure is God’s prescription for confronting man’s battleplan against Him. We are called to do so in His behalf. Eph. 5:11, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove [expose] them.”

3. The battleplan is thankless rebellion (v. 3). The war against God is a war against the Creator who has given His creatures life and breath and all things. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (Jam. 1:17).

And yet, when sinful man considers his relationship to this generous and caring Creator God, he sees only fetters and cords. He would destroy God's design for individual human dignity with evolution, racism, abortion, euthanasia, and substance abuse; he would destroy God's design for the family with feminism, divorce, homosexuality, and transgenderism; he would destroy God's design for the local church with materialism, modernism, and worldliness; and he would destroy God's design for the nation-state with anarchy, critical theory, open borders, wars of aggression, and cruel tyranny.

Man is destroyed by his own battleplan against God, because its rebellion originated with God's ultimate enemy who hates man and God. Rev. 12:7-10 describes this enemy: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

To the glory of our Great God and Savior, this war of Satan and those whom he has deceived against God has a battleplan that has been exposed and defeated. Satan has been cast down.

II. Man's war against the Resurrected One is futile (vv. 4-5).

Illustration: Fourteen years into his reign over Judah, a 39-year-old Hezekiah saw many of his fortified cities fall to the powerful Sennacherib of Assyria, the kingdom that had destroyed northern Israel. Assyria exacted tribute from Hezekiah, which drained both the royal and the temple treasuries. He began dismantling the gold from the temple complex to pay the tax.

Finally, the greedy enemy advanced against Jerusalem. Hezekiah's only defense became his prayers. God's answer came to Hezekiah through a vision of the prophet Isaiah. God's message to Assyria said in part: "The virgin, the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel" (2 Kings 19:21-22).

Application: Isaiah tells of the laughter we read about in verse 4. There is a kind of sad irony in the futility of the war against God, about which we must either laugh or cry. In the case of proud Sennacherib, he had forgotten that he was warring against the God who gave his Assyrians life and breath and all things. He woke up one morning, and 185,000 of his troops were suddenly corpses. He returned home in disgrace, where insult was added to injury as his own sons murdered him while he worshipped in the temple of his false god.

And so, one of the reasons the war against God is futile is that you need life and breath to conduct a war, and God is the One who gives us this with each breath we take. The war against God simply has zero chance of success. But this futile war need not end in the destruction that this unrepentant Assyrian experienced because of what the Psalmist says next about it.

III. Man's war against the Resurrected One is lost (vv. 6-7).

Illustration: Those who crucified our Savior had a futile battleplan (Matt. 27:1, "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death"). As we read in the Gospels about what came of their battleplan, we do not read that the Lord Jesus broke them with a rod of iron and smashed them like a potter's vessel. No, we read the opposite. We read that this

enemy battleplan, this war against God, broke Christ with a cruel cross and smashed Him until He was laid in a tomb.

Application: Verse 6 begins with the word *yet*. I would agree with the KJV translators that a contrast is introduced here. Verse 5 tells us about God's wrath and anger against sinful man, and verses 8-9 tell us that God's just judgment of sinful man is coming, but verses 6-7 tell us that something stands in between God's wrath and God's judgment.

The word translated *set* in verse 6 is the normal verb for the *pouring out of a drink offering*. We could translate the verse this way, "But I have poured out my King like a drink offering upon my holy hill Zion." Being poured out like a drink offering is a form of Old Testament sacrifice (Exod. 29:40-41, 30:9). It is a symbol of pouring out one's life unto death. Paul spoke of his own experience in these terms: "I have been poured out like a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Tim. 4:6).

The prophet Joel describes the blessing of the propitiation of God's wrath against sinful Israel in terms of His leaving behind a drink offering and a meat offering (Joel 2:14, "Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God?").

Here the psalmist tells us that God will deal with His wrath by pouring out his King, the Messiah, Jesus Christ as a drink offering in Jerusalem. This is why the enemy's battleplan of Matthew 27 succeeded the night of the crucifixion. It turns out it was God's plan for ultimate victory all along.

In His death, Jesus Christ vanquished the enemy's war against God. And the next verse describes the result of that victory in terms of His resurrection and exaltation as the unique Son of God (v. 7).

Paul preached in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch from this text: "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts 13:27-33).

Man's war against the Resurrected One was vanquished by His death, burial, and resurrection. Just when the enemy thought he had accomplished his greatest victory, he found that Calvary's cross was actually his ultimate defeat.

IV. Man's war against the Resurrected One must stop (vv. 8-12).

Illustration: Perhaps you remember the episode during the temptation of Christ during which Satan, the enemy of God, told Him, "Ask of me, and I shall give you the kingdoms of this world." Satan was encouraging Jesus to skip verses 6-7 and go directly to verse 8. Jesus faithfully refused.

Application: Instead, our Savior waited for verses 6 and 7 to happen before verse 8. Now He is risen, ascended at the right hand of God, in possession of what His Father promised, all authority in heaven and in earth. All that remains now is a simple request to the Father, after which He will come again

to take by force what is now His. And what all this means for you and I this afternoon, as well as for the kings of the earth, is that our war against Him must stop now before it is too late.

Perhaps you see the importance of coming to peace with the Resurrected One, but you do not know how. How may a sinner end his war against God? The Psalmist tells us (vv. 10-12). Reverentially tremble before the Son, and embracingly trust in Him to save you from your sins. Believe the good news, that He died for you and rose again. Call on Him to save you.

Conclusion: As we conclude our study of the psalm, I want to highlight a word in verse 10. It is the word *now*. Your war against God must end now. I do not know what has caused the stubborn hostility of your unbelief against Him, but I do know that in spite of your hostility, He is the source of your life-breath again today. I also know that His Messiah died for your sin so that you could turn from it and take refuge in Him. He is the King who died and arose again for the citizens of His kingdom. Now is the time to put your trust in Him.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*