

Respectfully, Sir **The Universe: Submission to God**

Psalm 2

Pastor Dale Evans

January 6, 2019 pm

Since the fall (described in Genesis chapter three), there has been a tension, if not an outright conflict, between the concepts of leadership/authority and serving/submission. This discord has been seen in the world as subtle transitions in cultural norms and has even erupted into outright revolutions. This debate and dispute has not missed Christianity and has infiltrated churches with confusion as well. How home life is to function, the roles of employer and employee, and even church governance has been affected and influenced by this topic. The answers seem to swing from views on the extremes often labeled authoritarianism and egalitarianism. Over the next several evenings we want to present what is what we like to refer to at Clearcreek Chapel as the “third way”, a middle, more balanced understanding of how the Bible places these ideas in tension. In particular the Clearcreek Chapel elders will examine the concept of submission, the willing yielding of one’s will and actions to another’s, attempting to provide as Biblical as possible an understanding of the topic.

Turn in your copy of Scripture to the second psalm. Let us begin by reading the entire psalm.

*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.”*

*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,
“As 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.
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.

The second psalm is, in some sense, to be read with the first psalm. They serve together as an introduction to the entire book of psalms, which we sometimes refer to as “The Psalter.” The first psalm begins with the phrase “blessed is...” and the second psalm ends with “blessed are...” a bookending device indicating they are to be thought of as a unit.

When we think of the Psalter as a whole, it can be viewed as being structured into 5 books. This may be to intentionally parallel the 5 books of Moses, Genesis to Deuteronomy, referred to as the Torah. The first book of the Psalter extends from the third psalm down to the forty-first. Psalms 42-72 represents the second, 73-89 the third, 90-106 the fourth, and then the fifth from 107-145. The entire collection is then concluded by psalms 146-150 which are known as “the hallelujah psalms”, which, when you read them, you can understand how they got that name.

As we said, this 5 book organizational pattern may be intended to parallel the 5 books of Moses. The collection of books from Genesis to Deuteronomy is referred to as the Pentateuch, which is a word meaning “five scrolls,” or the Torah, which means law or instruction. This intentional organization of the Psalter into five units suggests why the first psalm highlights the importance of Torah or “law” living. Now for us in the new covenant, we should read and apply this as “Bible” living. But when you then read that psalm in combination with the second psalm you are confronted with an emphasis on the rule of God and his eventual judgment upon those who ignore his law or decrees. Oh, and another thing, when we read the Psalms, there is often a focus on the idea of “king.” These “royal psalms” were likely used in the context of coronations. But by extension, the king was God’s vice-regent for his people on earth. Do not miss the divine overtones often present behind this idea of king.

Let us now focus our attention to the second psalm. As we read this psalm we should note that it is divided into 4 stanzas. These are represented as verses 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12.

The first stanza is in the narrator’s voice and finishes with a quote from the antagonists. Let us read it again.

*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.”*

The rage and the plotting described are against the LORD and his “anointed.” Being anointed is how one was identified as special or set apart, in this case as the king or ruler. The plotting is to establish independence or self-rule from “the king” and then by extension from God himself. Let’s “break away” is the rally-cry heard from the antagonists, the heathen kings of the earth.

The second stanza is also in the narrator’s voice with a concluding quote from The LORD.

*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,
“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”*

The LORD is indeed the judge and threatens wrath upon the would-be rebels. He reaffirms the position of “the king” as being his agent of rule. But this king rules, not merely from Jerusalem as a political capital or throne, but from Zion, the site of the temple, the very throne of God.

The third stanza now is in the voice of that king, the LORD’s anointed. It also includes a quote, this time a more extensive speech from the LORD that is recalled by the king.

I will tell of the decree:

The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

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.”

The king speaks, recalling his commissioning and position as “son”. All of the earth belongs to him to rule and judge. Note that the future of all of creation stands either as inheritance or in judgment.

The fourth stanza brings the entire psalm (and in a sense the first psalm) to a conclusion and is back to the voice of the narrator.

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

This is a call to repentance and obedience. Living under the word (in the psalms identified as Law or Torah) brings blessedness. It is also a reminder that the king, the son, is the focal point for God’s worship and is not only the agent for God’s mercy and refuge but also the agent for God’s judgment and wrath. The impact of this psalm is to call mankind to a submission to the LORD (by taking refuge in him), his anointed king and his Word (the Law) or face his ultimate wrath.

Submission, the yielding of one’s will and actions to the will of another, is what this Psalm introduces to us and is the theme of the next several Sunday evenings. Submission is a significant theme in Scripture even if it is not directly stated. The entire concept of “being created” calls us to understand the creation’s dependence upon its creator for purpose, plan and potential. However, in God’s purposes and plans, he has allowed this creation to exercise “independence” in existing under this dependence. His creation is never outside of a comprehensive determination, yet it is free in its choices and actions. So we find that man is and has been rebellious since Eden. Adam and Eve’s battle cry echoes that of the second psalm. The theme or storyline of the entire Bible is the restoration of a perfect understanding of submission. But it includes the necessity of reliance on faith and trust in God’s work in accomplishing this in our lives and in all of reality.

We must align our thinking and living with this concept of God's ultimate and absolute authority. From the moment of creation and the moment of our birth we must come to grips with the fact that we are beings "under authority" and need to learn the concept of willing submission. God does not treat us as some abused puppy, whipping us into fear and cowering, but has created reality to bring us to live and love his power, wisdom and goodness. Much of contemporary theology is written to soften or outright reject this sense of authority and sovereignty. Our attempts to raise the level of our responsibility frequently result in diminution of God's rule. Redefining God and his character then leads to our thinking that we "can" break away from his bonds of rule and his cords of care. This is exhibited in outright rejection of him, or, as it is more often, responding to temptation, trial and suffering in a way that refuses trust and obedience. We fret, become anxious and even despair in the face of life's challenges and hurdles. We may create a new personal story to substitute for God's story and gospel that attempts to explain our failures. We question, grow disillusioned and even fight with God and his means of growth. We do this by ignoring our Bibles, refusing to pray and failing to gather as God's people together.

But if we are committed to grow in our understanding of this concept of God's absolute rule, and as it follows, his love, care and wisdom, our trust grows, our anxiety lessens and our willing obedience is more complete. We must work to teach our children and ourselves that God's rule and our submission is the foundation for all of life especially in and among the people of God.

But it is not merely an awareness of God's sovereignty and rule that this psalm highlights. The king is not only the human representative of God, but is indeed the "son". At the opening of Jesus of Nazareth's ministry, after his baptism by John, Matthew in chapter three of his gospel, in verse seventeen records God's affirmation that *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."* This drives home the point that Jesus is the "anointed king", the messiah/Christ who is indeed the Son. And the author of the book of Hebrews opens his defense of the gospel of the new covenant by asserting the uniqueness of Jesus. Turn to Hebrews chapter one and read as we select some verses to demonstrate this:

From verses 1-4:

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."

And then the author quotes the second psalm and other Old Testament passages:

"For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'? Or again, 'I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son'? But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.'"

And then in chapter two we read:

“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”

It is in the gospel of Jesus where true submission begins, where we find refuge in him. The gospel’s message is that we are unable to save ourselves from our ruin and we must place ourselves under his work for salvation. We must come to him in faith, yielding our abilities, social standing, and even “goodness”. The Son who reigns from the throne is the one who both demands and enables submission. Even creation groans, awaiting the full confirmation of this rule, when every eye shall see and every knee shall bow and the whole earth is filled with the song “worthy is the Lamb” and God will be with his people (read Revelation 21 and 22).

So what impact does thinking of this psalm especially in light of the idea of submission have on our lives and on our work as Clearcreek Chapel?

We must grow in our understanding of God, his character, wisdom and word. He indeed is the creator and sustainer, the author and finisher of all that is and will be. He is all-powerful, all-wise and perfectly loving. We must continue to build a robust understanding of how God works in the world. Our current morning preaching series through Ecclesiastes is one such way to grow in this regard. Ecclesiastes will teach us much about the paradoxes of life and how to live in submission in spite of our lack of omniscience.

We must recognize that it is the Son, whom we know as Jesus, that is both the anointed king and true word. Indeed our understanding of God’s authority requires us to bow and “kiss” the Son. That means we yield our wills to the gospel and His work on the cross. Each day we must come to grips with our need of the gospel and bow, not to the cross itself, but to the Savior of the cross, who alone leads us daily through what the psalmist stated as “the valley of the shadow of death.”

We must be committed to live on the basis of this knowledge. We must take our refuge in him. We must live in the understanding that it is the gospel that fleshes out what this life involves. This will require us to work together to build trust and encourage those who struggle. In God’s wisdom, this is a community project, requiring at many levels a submission to learn and love God through the challenges around us. At nearly all levels of our existence, family, employment (as servants and masters), in the life of the church, there are examples and exercises for us to grow in our submission to Him but our submission to others. This will be examined more completely in the weeks to come in this series.

We must proclaim his rule to the nations. The gospel message we share in evangelism is the good news that we no longer need to rage but can have peace in God's rule through the worship (or kissing) of the Son. We are blessed if we find our refuge in Him and walk in His ways. We are subject to judgment if we attempt to live life on our own. There are two ways to live and two ways only. Come and yield your will to the God of the universe, come, kiss the son with us!