Opening Words

What makes God laugh? Did you know that God laughs? Three times in Psalms it says this. Today, we are going to learn one surprising reason why he laughs and learn how this can bring great comfort to our soul.

203 SS Psalm 2 – The Lord Reigns – Part 2

I want to tell you about my friend. I will withhold his name for protection. He travelled in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India to share the word of the Lord but radicals learned what he was doing, and because he was having great success – many turning to Christ – they pulled his vehicle over and for an hour threatened his life. They said, "If we ever see your face in these parts again, we will kill you." This friend has some co-workers who are Indian. They were not so lucky. They were not killed, but they were badly beaten because they were sharing the gospel of Christ in that land.

Hello everyone, thank you for joining us today as we continue our series Soul Satisfaction. This doesn't sound like an introduction to a message that brings comfort and satisfaction. This is talk of persecution. But as we will see in the book of Psalms, God's people learn to find deep peace and satisfaction of soul in the midst of the troubles of life. We have looked at an introduction to Psalms. We have looked at Psalm 1 and we are currently looking at Psalm 2. Psalm 2 begins this way,

> Why are the nations in an uproar
> And the peoples devising a vain thing?
> 2 The kings of the earth take their stand
> And the rulers take counsel together
> Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
> 3 "Let us tear their fetters apart
> And cast away their cords from us!"

Did you know these three verses are quoted in the New Testament? We find them in the book of Acts. The apostles were preaching with great power in Jerusalem. Thousands of men, besides their wives and children had come to Christ. The authorities were shaken by this turn of events. They thought they had dealt with this Jesus problem when they crucified him. Yes, there were stories of his resurrection, but who could believe such a thing? Then miracles started taking place in the name of Jesus and the message of Jesus was filling the city so the authorities arrested the ringleaders of the movement, the apostles, and threatened them with punishment if they continued.

This is when Peter and John said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; 20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." And when the authorities threatened them further they let them go and the apostles went back to the Church and reported what had happened and they all prayed together. Here is their prayer,

"Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, 25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

"'Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?
26 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed'—

27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,

What a great prayer! They did not let the persecution silence them. They prayed and asked for greater boldness to speak. But did you notice they quoted from Psalm 2? The nations of the world rebel against God in many ways but since the resurrection of the Lord, his enthronement, and the pouring out of the Spirit which empowered the Church to preach, the new form of rebellion is to attempt to suppress the Gospel just as Pilate and Herod tried to suppress Christ himself. But notice the perspective of the apostles. They were not in fear of these rebel rulers because their rebellion was overruled by God. Their rebellious acts played into the hands of God so that what God wanted to happen, what God predestined to happen, that the Messiah would die for the sins of the world, did happen.

And this is the message of Psalm 2 – in spite of the rebellion of the kings of the earth, the Lord reigns and this is what can bring deep soul satisfaction. This takes us to verses 4-6 of Psalm 2 which tells us God's response. Before I read it, let me ask you this question – what do you think God's first response is to the rebels who refuse to turn to him? Do you think it's wrath? No, guess again. Do you think it is compassion? Not this time! Here are the verses:

> He who sits in the heavens laughs,
> The Lord scoffs at them.
> 5 Then He will speak to them in His anger
> And terrify them in His fury, saying,
> 6 "But as for Me, I have installed My King
> Upon Zion, My holy mountain."

In Psalm 1 the scoffers were sitting and hurling their insults at those who were humbly seeking to walk with God. In Psalm 2, the scoffing expands to a critical mass and entire nations seek to throw off the authority of God but we also see in Psalm 2 that someone else is sitting and someone else is scoffing. The Lord is sitting in the heavens and he is scoffing at the scoffers and the rebels. He who sits in the heavens laughs. Do they actually think they can overthrow God? They are finite. He is infinite. They are limited in power. He has all power. They will become weaker and die. He lives forever. Their strategies are foolish and doomed to failure. He is all-wise! They may be kings, but he is the Sovereign Lord. The Hebrew word for "sit" could easily be translated enthroned. God is

eternally enthroned and he is enthroned in the heavens. How are they going to get to him? They are flesh and he is spirit!

It's good to know that this is God's response. God is not worried. God is not afraid. God is not calling for an emergency cabinet meeting with the angels. God looks on in astonishment at his creatures who seek to defy him, shakes his head, perhaps rolls his eyes, and says, "This is amazing. This is astonishing. This is ridiculous! They actually think they can overthrow me? This is hysterically funny." What does God's laughing sound like? I bet it is something to hear!

Two other places in Psalms talk about God laughing. One of them is in Psalm 37. Listen to verses 12-13:

12 "The wicked plots against the righteous
And gnashes at him with his teeth.
13 The Lord laughs at him,
For He sees his day is coming.

There's that word plot again. Remember verse 1 of Psalm 2, how the nations are devising plans or plotting against the Lord. Picture that if you can. Picture the kings of the earth gathering for counsel and discussing how they can overthrow God. How foolish.

One of my favorite novels is called Byzantium by Stephen Lawhead. It tells the story of a group of monks in Great Britain who embark on a journey to Byzantium, or as many know it Constantinople. On the way they are waylaid by Viking marauders and one of them is captured and enslaved. He lives with them, learns their language and then is forced to travel with them because they have heard there is a wealthy city full of gold and they are going to capture this city and plunder the gold.

The city in their language is called Mecklenburg. The monk has never heard of it. But he is forced to go with them and to his astonishment, as they get close, he discovers that their Mecklenburg is really Byzantium, the majestic and massive capital of the eastern Roman empire. But it wasn't just the monk who was astonished. The little band of Viking marauders are astonished as they approach the city and survey its heretofore unimaginable size and power and wealth. It was ridiculous for them to think they could overthrow Byzantium and plunder its gold. It is more ridiculous for the rebel kings of the world to overthrow God. It is a laughing matter.

Here in Psalm 37 God is laughing at a person who is plotting against a righteous man. Why does God laugh? Because he sees the end of the wicked.

The other verse in Psalms which speaks of God laughing is in Psalm 59. David is the writer. He is being pursued by Saul and his army. And this is how David begins:

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
Set me *securely* on high away from those who rise up against me.
2 Deliver me from those who do iniquity
And save me from men of bloodshed.
3 For behold, they have set an ambush for my life;

Fierce men launch an attack against me,
Not for my transgression nor for my sin, O LORD,
4 For no guilt of *mine*, they run and set themselves against me.
Arouse Yourself to help me, and see!
5 You, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Awake to punish all the nations;
Do not be gracious to any *who are* treacherous in iniquity. Selah.
6 They return at evening, they howl like a dog,
And go around the city.
7 Behold, they belch forth with their mouth;
Swords are in their lips,
For, *they say*, "Who hears?"

David is pretty upset! David sounds pretty desperate! Who wouldn't be if he is running for his life from an army of ruthless killers. But then David says this:

But You, O LORD, laugh at them;
You scoff at all the nations.

Isn't that good! Isn't it good to remember that God is so in control that he is laughing at the wicked with all their scheming and plotting. That is what brings true soul satisfaction for if God laughs at the nations and sees their rebellion as no problem, then the stresses we face are no problem to him as well.

But the humor subsides and then God does something else. We read in Psalm 2:5-6, these words:

Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury, saying,
6 "But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain."

God reminds the rebel kings of the earth that they must submit to him and to his representative on earth that he enthrones on Mt. Zion. This is the king of Judah. This is David or one of David's sons who reigns on Mt. Zion. And the surrounding nations, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, the Philistines must bow to his authority.

We have much more to say about this king on Mt. Zion and how he rules. We will finish looking at Psalm 2 in our next broadcast and we will find some surprising and exciting truths that will change your life and give true soul satisfaction. Just remember, when people or problems come against you, he who sits in the heavens laughs, not at you but at your enemies!