Opening Words

You would not heed the counsel of a wicked person, would you? Of course not, but wait until you hear the story of what happened in a Christian school in our country!

202 SS Psalm 2 – The Lord Reigns – Part 1

Hello everyone. It's so good to have you with us. If you have been tracking with us you know we have started a series called Soul Satisfaction. We are looking at some of the psalms written by David and other great men who poured out their heart to God. They poured out their heart in trouble. They poured out their heart in thanksgiving. Both are loved by God. He wants us to come to him with our troubles. He wants us to give thanks for his mercies toward us.

We looked at Psalm 1 which spoke of the two paths laid out for every man. One path is to listen to wicked counsel. That leads to perishing. The other path is to listen to God's word, meditate upon it, and follow it. That path leads to prosperity in the things of God.

Which do you listen to? Do you listen to the counsel of the wicked? Most who hear might say, "No way, I would never go to a wicked person and ask for their input into my life." Listen to the following story recounted in The Journal newsletter, a Christian publication that helps young people develop a biblical worldview.

> The sanctuary was quiet and beautiful. We walked in and began setting up for chapel. We pulled our props and the computer out of our bags. We tested the equipment. Everything worked. We sat down on the wooden pews and waited for the crowd of Christian middle- and high-school students. A few minutes later we could hear them coming. The hum began in the distance and grew louder as students walked down the hall and into the sanctuary. Soon the reverence was drowned out by loud teenagers excited about a break from classes. One of the teachers walked on stage and grabbed a guitar. As he began to lead the Christian school through a rendition of "How Great Is Our God," the enthusiasm faded until it was completely gone. Small pockets of students sang while the rest waited quietly for chapel to be over. After a few songs, it was time for us to begin our presentation. We showed a random video of a panda bear sneezing — the students laughed. We read a section of verses from Proverbs about wisdom — the students listened. And then we played the music video for the number one song in America at that time.
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> The guy in the song sang about how he's changed and promises not to abuse her anymore, but tells the audience he's lying to her so she won't leave him. The girl in the song admitted she couldn't leave the relationship because she didn't know where to go and being with him — in an abusive relationship — was better than not being in a relationship at all. As the song entered its chorus, students around the auditorium (in a very conservative Christian school) began to hum. A moment later the entire student body was singing loudly — all of their enthusiasm returned full throttle. After the song was over, we projected the lyrics so the students could read what they had just been singing. As the reality of the lyrics penetrated their minds, it became clear:

> they had no idea what they were singing. The students at that Christian school didn't realize they were imprinting a philosophy of abusive relationships on their brains. [The Journal, April 2013]

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the path of sinners or sit in the seat of scoffers. Sometimes the wicked counsel comes wrapped up in pretty packages and catchy music. But instead of this, God's people are to meditate day and night upon the word of God. And for good reason. Those who meditate upon the word of God are like a tree planted by a stream of water that continually gives life. Even when the rainfall doesn't come, the tree prospers because its roots go down deep into the stream.

But those who do not become empty shells. They become like the chaff of the wheat that is useless and is blown away. I'm sure you heard of Michael Jordan, the greatest basketball player ever to live. But Jordan has a problem. His obsession in life has been basketball and without basketball in life he feels like a ship that is adrift at sea. He says his self esteem is tied directly to the game. For the first ten years, after his retirement he was moving as fast as he could to fill the void. He created distractions in his life. When his work schedule cleared he would call his office and tell them not to bother him for a month, to let him relax and play golf. But after only three days, he was on the phone calling his office asking them to schedule a plane to pick him up and take him someplace new to entertain him.

Jordan said, "I'm my own worst enemy. I drove myself so much that I'm still living with some of those drives. I don't know how to get rid of it. How can I find peace away from the game of basketball?" What a sad picture, a picture of an empty man, of a man who is on the path of perishing. We should pray for him and others who are on this path. [Leadership Magazine, Spring 2013]

This is why you and I exist. We are here to point the way that leads to prosperity in the things of God, in the things of eternity, in the things that matter. This, may I remind you is why WGS Ministries exists. This is why we ask for your prayers. This is why we ask for your donations. This is why we are asking for your special offering that we might put this broadcast into other nations. We are calling out to the nations of the world to get up from the seat of scoffing and to turn from the path of independence and the counsel of the wicked and to run to the life-giving streams of God.

And this leads to our next psalm, Psalm 2, which also forms this 2-chapter introduction to the entire book of Psalms. While Psalm 1 calls individuals to receive instruction from the Lord, Psalm 2 speaks of the struggle with entire nations that have turned from God and Psalm 2 instructs the nations of the world to turn to God. What is the central instruction given to the nations? It is this – the Lord reigns. This is where blessing comes from, from acknowledging that the God of Israel is the God of the whole earth and that all the nations need to turn to him. And if they do, guess what? They will be blessed. Psalm 1 began with the word blessed and Psalm 2 ends with the encouragement that those nations that submit to God's king will be blessed.

Psalm 2 is what Bible Scholars call a royal psalm or a coronation hymn. In the ancient world, kings were viewed as having a special relationship with God. In some cultures, when a king was crowned,

he was considered to be adopted into a special relationship with God and he was called God's Son. This was true in Israel. When God made a covenant with David, that one of his descendants would always rule the nation, he talked about the relationship between him and the king in father-son terms. In 2 Samuel 7:14 God said this about each king coming from David, "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me." And on the day of the king's coronation the people would say that ***God*** had begotten a son to rule on the earth as his representative. This was ***God's*** king.

Let's listen to how the psalm begins.

> 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!"

The opening verses of Psalm 2 describe a world in rebellion against God's authority. Let me point out a few things to you in these first three verses. First, it says that the nations are ***devising*** a vain thing. Many translations use the word, plot. The nations are plotting against God. What is interesting is that this is the same Hebrew word as the one used in chapter 1 that talked about God's people ***meditating*** on God's word. We have the contrast again. We have the two paths again. The path of life and the path of death. The path of blessing and the path of perishing. The path of meditating on the things of God and the path of plotting rebellion against the Lord.

We see that in the nations today, do we not? Take North Korea for example. This is the most oppressive nation on the earth and Christians take the brunt of it. An estimated 400,000 to 500,000 Christians live in North Korea. Christianity is growing. But 70,000 to 90,000 of them are in prison for their faith. That 20-25% of the church in prison! The nations are in rebellion.

In the Middle East, in Iraq, the Christian population has been cut in half, some through martyrdom, but most through Christians fleeing to other countries so they won't be killed. Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing?

In the United States, the government at one point tried to regulate the size of soft drinks and for a young girl to get her ears pierced, she must have parental consent. But parental consent is not needed for the morning after pill. Parental consent is not needed for an abortion. And governments refuse to regulate the abortion industry which are houses of horror for the babies and for the mothers. Why are the nations in an uproar and the people's devising a vain thing?

Psalm 1 said how blessed is the man who does not stand in the path of sinners but in Psalm 2 we hear that the kings of the earth take their ***stand*** against the Lord. In Psalm 1, we are told how blessed is the man who not walk in the ***counsel*** of the wicked. In Psalm 2, the nations ***counsel*** together against the Lord and his anointed.

We have a challenge on our hands, do we not? Individuals and nations counsel, plot, devise, meditate upon things that are worthless or wicked. Whether it is Michael Jordan making an idol out of himself and the game of basketball or a leader of the world making an idol out of himself and turning an entire nation against the Lord, the battle is real. You and I are participants in the struggle. Join with us at WGS Ministries with your prayers and financial support for this battle. Join with us as we continue looking at Psalm 2. There is so much to say and satisfaction for our souls awaits us if we will heed the counsel of God's word!