

Submit to God's Son

[Introduction]

Paul Tripp tells the story about a birthday party for one of the girls in his kindergarten class. The girl's mother decorated the classroom, provided birthday treats to share, and brought a few gifts for the birthday girl to open. But one kindergarten boy became jealous because he wasn't the center of attention. And if he couldn't be the center of attention, then there wasn't going to be a party. And so, he became more obnoxious and disruptive. Eventually, a mom walked over, knelt beside him, and turned his chair so that he looked directly into her eyes. And she said, "Johnny, it's not your party!"

Psalm 2 is like that. It's a passage that looks us directly in the eye and says to each of us, "It's not your party!" It's a reminder that we're not the center of the universe. King Jesus is. And to be clear. God, in Psalm 2, isn't looking to just tweak your worldview. No. He's after more than that. God calls you to **submit to his Son**. To allow Jesus to tell you what to do and how to live. That's the bottom line of this Psalm: **Submit to God's Son**. This call to **submit** follows from the flow of Psalm 2. First, we're reminded of **man's desire for self-rule**. Second, we're challenged by **God's declaration of his Son's rule**. And third, we're confronted with a decision: **Will we submit to God's Son?**

The **desire**. The **declaration**. And the **decision**.

We begin with **man's desire for self-rule**.

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1. Man's desire for self-rule (Ps. 2:1-3)

The **desire for self-rule** says, "You can't tell me what to do." And that's what is being said in verses 1-3.

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."

David, the original author (see Acts 4), is God's anointed – the king of Israel. There's been constant conflict and fighting with the surrounding nations. Their desire is to be free from king David's rule and authority. And therefore, from God's rule and authority. They want independence. Self-rule. These nations say, "Let us break their chains and free ourselves from slavery to God (verse 3, NLT)."

But these verses also speak to something more fundamental. The deep human desire to be free from God's rule and authority. It's a desire that goes all the way back to the beginning. Adam and Eve chose to decide for themselves what's good and evil. They rebelled against God's rule and chose self-rule. Ever since, the one thing humans have in common is the desire for self-rule.

At the 2018 Golden Globe Awards, Oprah Winfrey was given a lifetime achievement award. In her acceptance speech she said, "What I know for sure is that speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have." The philosophy of living *your truth* is just a nice way of saying, "you can't tell me what to do." It's self-rule. One observer points out where this philosophy leads. "Among other things, the philosophy of 'your truth' destroys families when a dad suddenly decides 'his truth' is calling him to a new lover, a new family, or maybe even a new gender." No one can argue with "your truth."

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Champions of gender ideology apply the desire for self-rule to sexuality and gender. They say that we can decide to be whatever gender we feel like. But God says that every human is created in his image – specifically male and female. God says that our bodies are part of his good design. God says that our given sex is good. And God's good design is a reality that can't be altered by our feelings or by surgery.

It's important to distinguish between champions of gender ideology and those who struggle with gender identity. Those who struggle need the compassion, grace, and love of Jesus. It's one thing to struggle, it's another to champion an ideology that rejects God and his right to define sex, sexuality, and gender.

It's also important to distinguish between self-rule and repentance. In the Christian life, we all still struggle with self-rule. But there's a huge difference between trying and failing and not even trying. There's a huge difference between a lifestyle of repentance and lifestyle of self-rule. Repentance is pleasing to God. Self-rule is rebellion against God.

Psalm 2 begins by stating something that is crucial to understand about every human being: the universal **desire for self-rule**. In verses 4-9, God responds to this desire with his own declaration. **God's declaration of his Son's rule**.

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2. God's declaration of his Son's rule (Ps. 2:4-9)

Look at verses 4-9.

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.”

God makes a declaration to David. One commentator explains it like this: “God declares that the good rule of Psalm 1 will be exercised by his good Ruler, the king on Zion.” Zion is another name for the city of Jerusalem. This commentator also notices that God's declaration includes the promise of a *relationship* and a *rule*.

- **God promises the king the relationship of father and son.** God declares: “You are my son...” It's similar language to God's promise to David and his kingly dynasty (2 Sam. 7:14). This king will be as a son to God. He will be like God. He will rightly represent God to the people. So, God promises the king a *relationship*.
- **And God promises the king a rule.** God declares, “ask of me” – pray – and I will make you to rule the entire world. And every rebel will be shattered like pottery.

God can promise this world-wide rule because he's the Ruler. Notice what the psalmist says in verse 4. “**He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.**” God “sits” in the heavens. That's a reference to his throne. God is seated on the throne. God created everything. That makes him ruler of everything. He's “Lord.” He has supreme authority, power, and control.

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As a very young kid, I remember a Saturday morning commercial on TV. It was directed at kids. It tried to teach us to be careful in the street because cars were more powerful than us. **“You may be the toughest kid on your block, but you’ll never win a fight with an automobile.”** That’s what the Psalmist is saying in verse 4. He reminds us that God is big. He’s bigger than China. Or Big Tech. Or the Progressives. Or the Conservatives. Or Jeff Bezos. Or Vladimir Putin. Or the Taliban. Or you. Or me. God is bigger. He sits in the heavens and laughs.

So far, the Psalmist has reminded us of man’s desire for self-rule and challenged us with God’s declaration of his Son’s rule. Next, the Psalmist confronts us with a decision. The decision to submit to God’s son.

3. The decision: submit to God's Son (Ps. 2:10-12)

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 kings and rulers addressed in the beginning are now confronted with a decision. The king that God installs will rule the entire world. So, be wise. Kiss the son. That means **submit to him**. Blessing comes to all who do. And no wonder. This son is the righteous man of Psalm 1, who is also the king of Psalm 2. So, his rule is a rule of goodness, love, and justice. Who wouldn’t want to live in such a kingdom! So, be wise.

And be warned. For those who decide not to submit, there are consequences. Destruction and wrath. This king will shatter every rebel like pottery.

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In Psalm 2, God speaks to David of a king. A king who is also a Psalm 1 man. If you know anything about the history of Israel, you know that none of the kings lived up to the Psalm 1 standard. Not even king David. And so, as time went on, the people of Israel looked for this king to come. They gave him the title "Messiah," which in Hebrew means "to anoint." The Greek equivalent is "Christ." So, the Old Covenant people were looking for the anointed king who is also a son. The Messiah. The Christ.

The New Testament shows how Jesus is the Christ that Israel had been waiting for.

At Jesus' baptism God declares that Jesus is his Son.

...behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17)

It's an echo of God's declaration in Psalm 2. We hear this declaration again at Jesus' transfiguration.

He [Jesus] was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." (Matt. 17:5)

Then, in Acts 4, we read how Psalm 2 is fulfilled in Jesus' crucifixion.

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And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said,
“Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and
everything in them, 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?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’—

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, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined
to take place. (Acts 4:24-28)

God fulfills Psalm 2 in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is “the holy
servant.” He is the Righteous man who is also the Anointed Son of Psalm 2. Herod
and Pontius Pilate are the kings and rulers, respectively. The Romans are the
Gentiles. The people are the peoples of Israel. All of these are gathered in
Jerusalem against Jesus as he is led away to be crucified. And this wasn't a
random travesty of justice. No. This was predetermined by the God who rules all
of history.

And recall when God declares,

“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.” (Psalm 2:6)

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God fulfills this by setting Jesus on a Roman cross outside Jerusalem. God's holy hill. With arms and feet nailed down, Jesus is lifted on the cross. A sign above his head reads, "The King of the Jews." On his head is a crown of thorns. Nobody expected a crucified King. A king who came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. For rebels like you and like me.

Crucifixion is what Rome did to rebels. And crucifixion is something like what God will do to every rebel. But God became man to bear the punishment rebels deserve. In our place. As our substitute. The cross shows us both the justice of God and the love of God. God's justice, in that sin and rebellion deserves judgment and wrath. God's love, in that God willingly became a man and experienced suffering, crucifixion, and death so that rebels could become friends.

But remember that God promised the Psalm 2 king a *relationship* and a *rule*. A dead king has neither. And so, God raised Jesus from the dead. For some, you think, "C'mon, people don't rise from the dead." Agreed. His first followers knew that too. But here's the thing. Jesus' resurrection is the central way we know Christianity is true. There's historical evidence that you can evaluate for yourself. An empty tomb. Eyewitness testimony. Explosive church growth. I've heard it put like this:

If the story of Jesus' resurrection was a lie, it should have been easily stomped out, right back at the beginning. Instead, it spread like wildfire through the ancient world – and 2,000 years later it's still going strong.

The apostle Paul was one of those eyewitnesses. Here's how he said it in one of his sermons:

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And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm,

“‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’

(Acts 13:33)

Jesus' resurrection was like a coronation. It was like God's official declaration that King Jesus is officially crowned as the sovereign ruler over all the world. Paul unpacks this in Romans chapter 1.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus...set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord... (Romans 1:1-4)

Doug Moo explains it like this:

What Paul is claiming...is that the preexistent Son, who entered human experience as the promised Messiah, was appointed [declared] on the basis of the resurrection to a new and more powerful position in relation to the world.

Jesus Christ is not a dead teacher but a resurrected King! As God promised, Jesus is the sovereign ruler of the universe. And Jesus will return as a conquering King to consummate his kingdom.

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So, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus we see Psalm 2 fulfilled. In the crucifixion, we see **man's desire for self-rule**. In the resurrection, we see **God's declaration of his Son's rule**. And once again, we're confronted with a **decision**.
Submit to God's Son.

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. (Psalm 2:10-12)

To submit to God's Son means you allow him to tell you what to do and how to live. I've heard it likened to driving a car. Most people control their lives by deciding what they want to do and how they want to live. They're in the driver's seat. Those who submit to Jesus move out of the driver's seat and let Jesus drive the car. They surrender control of their lives to Jesus' loving leadership.

So, why wouldn't you submit to King Jesus?

- **You don't want to be told what to do and how to live.** You don't want to be told what to do with your body, or your money, or your time, or your attitude.

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Why else wouldn't you submit to King Jesus?

- **You think, "I'll submit to Jesus after I've had some fun."** OK. First, you may not live that long. Second, the "fun" you're thinking of is probably rebellion. Third, think harder about what is fun or good. **"Blessed are all those who take refuge in him."** True blessing is found in knowing King Jesus.

Why else wouldn't you submit to King Jesus?

- **You think, "I've got to clean up my act first."** If you wait until you clean up your act, you'll never submit. Jesus invites you to come as you are. But he promises not to leave you as you are. Turn to Jesus for forgiveness. He's gracious to those who come to him. And he'll slowly change you over a lifetime.

Why else wouldn't you submit to King Jesus?

- **You think, "I've suffered too much."** Your circumstances say Jesus is not a good King. Don't listen to your circumstances, listen to the cross. It speaks the true measure of his love.

Or maybe you have submitted to King Jesus, but there's still an area of your life you haven't given over control. Maybe he's calling you to forgive. Maybe it has to do with finances. Whatever. Whatever it is, turn to Jesus. Confess. Affirm you have forgiveness. Request grace for change. A lifestyle of repentance is pleasing to King Jesus.

But John, are there any good reasons to submit to God's Son?

- **The blessing of knowing him.** Jesus is a true friend. He puts your needs before his own. He knows you better than you. He wants what's best for you more than you. He promises to care for you, help you, change you, and never forsake you. Never.

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- **The blessing of union with him.** When you submit to Jesus, you are united to him. What's true of him becomes true of you. You are given his record of righteousness. In him, you are counted as Psalm 1 man and woman. In him, God says to you, "my beloved son or daughter in whom I am well-pleased."
- **The blessing of a future with him.** King Jesus will come to consummate his kingdom. A world of love and goodness. A world where sin, suffering, and death are only distant memories. And he promises that all who submit to him now will live with him forever in his kingdom. And not as mere subjects, but as co-heirs and co-rulers with him!

Be wise. Submit to God's Son. For those who do, Psalm 2 should grow a deep and abiding hope. Not superficial happiness. But a deep and abiding hope that will see you through the deep, dark valleys of life in a fallen world. It's a hope that's fundamentally missing in our culture and in our world.

Be warned. These blessings are only for those who submit. If you insist on self-rule, Jesus comes as a conquering king. Your future holds destruction, vengeance, and wrath. Something like what he endured on the cross for an eternity.

[Conclusion]

Psalm 2 reminds us that "It's not our party." Life isn't primarily about you or me. Scripture isn't primarily about you or me. It's about Jesus! The Psalm 1 man who is also the Psalm 2 king. The king who came to rescue the world from sin, suffering, and death. The only thing that really matters is the decision before to submit to God's Son.

Be wise. Be warned.