

When Worlds Collide

P s a l m 2 *

The tumult of life and trepidation over the future can understandably tip us off balance. Our lives simply seem to fall apart which confirms our view of a chaotic world and raises the age-old question; 'why?' Our individual lives can seem overwhelmed at times but when we look upon the global scene we can be subject to despair. In Psalm 2, sensitive ears can hear the voices of four speakers. The careful reader will listen to God's assessment of their individual life and the current world scene.

The human heart's rebellion (1-3)

God the Father's rebuke (4-6)

God the Son's revelation (7-9)

God the Spirit's reprimand and invitation (10-12)

Why we need the Psalms

We need the psalms because they point us to Christ, who is the source of our salvation. But we also need them because they describe the life of the saved—that is, the qualities that those who have faith in Christ are to seek and to practice. More specifically, the psalms:

TEACH US TO BE MUCH OCCUPIED WITH GOD. They magnify and exalt him as the Sovereign Creator and Ruler of the universe. What is it to be much occupied with God? It is '... to treasure his Word, to delight in his worship, to reflect on his glorious attributes, to rehearse his great acts in history, to trust in his care, to glory in his gospel and to anticipate his final victory. The more occupied with God we are, the more strength we find for living.'

TEACH US TO PRAISE GOD and show us how to praise him. There are few lessons that we more need. So very often we mumble mechanical praise from hearts that are crowded with unworthy loves and occupied with earthly concerns. The need is for robust praise from hearts that are deeply schooled in the stunning truths of the Sovereign Lord who not only made us but pours from his bounty countless blessings, the chief of which is eternal salvation through his Son.

TEACH US TO HAVE FAITH IN GOD in our afflictions and to receive comfort from him. They express every human emotion and address every human need. John R. W. Stott writes: 'The reason why Christian people are drawn to the psalms is that they speak the universal language of the human soul ... Whatever our spiritual mood may be, there is sure to be a psalm which reflects it—whether triumph or defeat, excitement or depression, joy or sorrow, praise or penitence, wonder or anger.'

We might say the psalms show us how to respond to every conceivable situation that life throws at us. William Hendriksen notes: 'In the psalms the believer pours out his heart before Jehovah. Accordingly, expressions of repentance, communion, hope, faith, love, etc., abound. There are psalms for every occasion in life and for every spiritual condition, so that the Psalter is universal in its appeal to believing hearts.'

TEACH US TO HAVE ZEAL FOR GOD'S CAUSE. From hearts flooded with love for God, the various psalmists expressed fervent desires to see the advancement of God's truth, the vindication of his name, the acknowledgement of his glory and the triumph of his kingdom.

All of this requires, as the imprecatory psalms so wonderfully comprehend, the defeat of evil and the judgement of evil-doers.

TEACH US TO VALUE AND PRACTICE both public worship and private devotion. The psalms throb with both kinds of worship. The former is vigorously endorsed in the pilgrimage psalms, as well as in other types. And the latter is modelled by individual psalmists who, even during heart-wrenching circumstances, find their hearts going out after God in praise and adoration.

Roger Ellsworth, *Opening up Psalms*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 15–17

* These notes are prayerfully prepared to aid, not replace, your personal study of God's Word.