

Is there anything in your life that you think you stand no chance against? Is there anything in your life that just strikes fear into your heart? Maybe you live in fear of a diagnosis. Maybe you live in fear of financial ruin. We can all run into things we are afraid of, things we think we stand no chance against.

The Old Testament Israelites had things they were afraid of too. The danger that Psalm 2 focuses on is the danger of surrounding nations. Israel was surrounded by all these different nations. Around them were Philistia and Edom and Moab. There was Aram to the North and Egypt to the South. And then there were giant nations like Assyria and Babylon. And these nations could at anytime form alliances and come to attack God’s people. It says, **“The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed” (Psalm 2:2).**¹ And when that happened that could strike great fear in the hearts of God’s people (See Isaiah 7).

But when there are things that strike fear in our hearts, when there are things we think we stand no chance against, it’s comforting to know that those things stand no chance against Him. **“The One enthroned in heaven laughs, the LORD scoffs at them” (Psalm 2:4).** The things that seem so big and intimidating and frightening to us are nothing to the LORD.

Three big enemies that a Christian faces are sin, death and the devil. Those are three enemies that we wouldn’t stand a chance against on our own. But God anointed Jesus to fight those enemies for us. It says, **“I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill” (Psalm 2:6).** Many have pointed out that kings in the Old Testament protected the people and fought the people’s battles. Jesus is the King that God has installed to fight our battles and defeat our enemies.

In the Old Testament kings were *anointed*. In verse 2 it said that the rulers band together **“against the Lord and against his anointed” (Psalm 2:2).** “His anointed” refers to the king. “To anoint” means to pour oil on someone’s head. In the Old Testament they would anoint someone to show that God had set this person apart for a special task. Kings were anointed to show that God had set them apart for a special task, the job of being king. King David for example was anointed by the prophet Samuel. Jesus was anointed by God to be our King.

The Bible often calls Jesus “Jesus Christ.” Christ means “the Anointed One.” When was Jesus anointed? Jesus was anointed at his baptism. But he wasn’t anointed with oil. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit. It says in our Gospel for today, **“Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove” (Mark 1:10).** God anointed Jesus at his baptism to show that God had set Jesus apart for a special task, the task of being our King, the task of defeating our enemies of sin, death and the devil.

And then at Jesus’ baptism the Father spoke from heaven and said, **“You are my Son” (Mark 1:10).** That’s exactly what it says in Psalm 2, **“You are my son” (Psalm 2:7).** We ourselves don’t stand any chance against our enemies sin, death and the devil. But the Son of God is our King. At his baptism Jesus was set apart for the special task of defeating those enemies for us.

Think of how he defeated our enemy sin. He lived a perfect life in our place. Right after his baptism he lead out into the wilderness where he was tempted for 40 days by the devil. He never sinned once. We have given in to temptation many times but Jesus never did and his perfect obedience counts for us, so that when God looks at us he sees the perfect life of his Son. And then he defeated our enemy sin on the cross. In order to win the victory over sin Jesus took the guilt for all of our sins on himself. And now through faith in Jesus all your sins are forgiven because Jesus took them away.

Our King Jesus also defeated our enemy death. He defeated death when he rose victoriously from the dead on Easter Sunday morning. Death is an enemy that we would have no chance against on our own. But our King Jesus has **“destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).**

Our King Jesus has also defeated our enemy the devil. One of the things the devil does is he accuses us of sin. But he can’t accuse us anymore because Jesus has paid the price for our sins on the cross. The devil also tempts us. But our living Savior protects us from the devil’s temptations. God’s Son, our King Jesus has defeated sin, death and the devil

¹ All Scripture quotations are from the NIV.

and protects us against them everyday. He also protects and strengthens us against another enemy. And that's the enemy we all have inside ourselves, our sinful nature.

When we read the opening verses of the Psalm, **"Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed?"** when we read those words we might think, "Of course, why would anybody set themselves against God? Why would anybody think they can win against God or overthrow God?" Why would they think that they can fight against God and win? But of course each one of us has a sinful nature that still clings to us. And in Romans 8:7 it says about the sinful nature: **"The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God" (Romans 8:7)**. Just like in the Psalm the rulers band together against the LORD, your sinful nature is hostile to God. And you might say, "Well, I'm not hostile to God." And it's true that you have been reborn of the Holy Spirit² and in your new person you are in perfect harmony with God and his will. But your sinful nature still clings to you, and your sinful nature remains hostile to God.

This why, have you ever had this happen before, that there is a part of God's Word that you really don't like. There's one of God's commands and there's part of God's will that you really fight against inside. Now sometimes it can be that you don't understand it fully. Maybe it's a part of God's Word or a command of God that hasn't been explained well to you. But sometimes you do understand it fully and there's something inside of you that fights against it.

For example, God tells us not to hate and that anyone who hates their brother is a murderer. And yet if someone wrongs us we might let hatred rule our hearts and our thoughts and our words. How foolish are we to think that we can overthrow God in any area of our lives!

What do we do when we discover that our in our sinful natures we are fighting against God? This is where Martin Luther talked about the continuing importance of baptism. He said, **"Baptism means that the sinful nature in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death" (Small Catechism)**. In Romans 6 Paul says that Baptism so unites you to Jesus that you died with him and were buried with him. And every day we crucify our sinful natures. We crucify those thoughts and desires that are hostile to God. We daily drown those things in baptism. Martin Luther goes on, **"It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever."** In baptism we die with Jesus and we are also raised with Jesus to walk in newness of life. When we think about it our sinful natures might be the biggest enemy that we face. But just like Jesus was anointed with the Spirit in his baptism, the Holy Spirit was also given to you in your baptism. He renewed you and gave you a new heart and gave the power to fight against your sinful nature. In your baptism you were united to Jesus. The reason your sinful nature only clings to you now instead of rules you is that you were united to Jesus in his death to sin and resurrection to new life. In your baptism God said you, "You are my Son. That's who you are. You don't belong to sin. You belong to me." Jesus is God's Anointed One because he is the only Savior. But in your baptism you also are God's anointed one because you have been set apart to belong to God.³

Our Psalm says, **"Therefore you kings, be wise; Be warned, you rulers of the earth" (2:10)**. For "be warned" the Hebrew literally says, "Let yourselves be admonished."⁴ It's wise to let yourselves be admonished and corrected by God's Word. **"Serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling" (2:11)**. It's interesting that it says, "Celebrate his rule with trembling." Why does it say "with trembling." It means that we should have a humble attitude. We should always remember that we have a sinful nature and every day remember to drown that sinful nature in our baptism.

"Kiss his Son or he will be angry" (Psalm 2:12). If we refuse to pay homage to Jesus. If we refuse to believe in him, then God will be angry. But if we take refuge in him then we are blessed: **"Blessed are all who take refuge in him" (Psalm 2:12)**. There are a lot of things in life that we think we stand no chance against. But Jesus is the Son of God who was anointed, set apart by God for the task of fighting our enemies for us. Let's take refuge in him. Amen.

² I owe this thought to the Formula of Concord, Article VI.

³ See the definition for sanctify in *Luther's Catechism* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2017), 384.

⁴ Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew lexicon.