

PSALM 29

THE THUNDERSTORM PSALM

There is no phenomenon in nature so awful as a thunderstorm; almost every poet – from Homer and Virgil down to Milton – has described it. Here, too, in the Bible, we have a picture of a thunderstorm – one of those tempests which would rise from the Mediterranean Sea, travel by Lebanon and along the inland mountains toward Jerusalem, and send the people into the Temple-porticos for refuge. But besides those touches of terror with which such a tornado is here described, each successive peal of thunder portrays a sacred vitality and power from the presence of Jehovah, and shows that He alone is to be worshiped and glorified.

“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name!” exclaims the Psalmist in the opening verses of this composition. God’s glory is the result of His nature and acts. He is glorious in His character; for there is such a store of everything that is holy, good, and lovely in God that He must be glorious indeed. The actions which flow from His character are also glorious; but while He intends that they should manifest to His creatures His goodness, mercy, and justice, He is equally concerned that the glory associated with them should be given only to Himself. Nor is there anything in ourselves in which we may glory, for what makes us any different from any of our other fellow human beings? And what do we have that we did not first receive from the God of all grace? Then how careful we ought to be to walk humbly before the Lord! There is room for only one glory in the universe; and so the moment we glorify ourselves, we set ourselves up as rivals to the Most High. Shall the short-lived insect glorify itself

Overview of the Psalm, adapted from Charles Spurgeon:

It seems to be the general opinion of commentators that this Psalm is meant to express the glory of God as heard in the pealing thunder, and as seen in a tornado. Just as Psalm 8 is to be read by moonlight, when the stars are bright; and just as the 19th needs the rays of the rising sun to bring out its beauty – so also, this composition can be best rehearsed beneath the black wing of the tempest, and by the glare of the lightning-flashes. The verses march to the tune of thunderbolts. God is everywhere conspicuous, and all the earth is hushed by the majesty of his presence. The Word of God, in the Law and the Gospel, is also depicted here in its majesty of power. His true ministers are sons of thunder, and the voice of God in Christ Jesus is full of majesty. Thus we have God’s works and God’s Word joined together; let no man put them apart by a false idea that theology and science can by any means oppose each other.

The first two verses are a call to adoration. From verses 3-10, the path of the tempest is traced, the attributes of God’s Word are rehearsed, and He Himself is magnified in all the terrible grandeur of His power. And the last verse sweetly closes the scene with the assurance that the omnipotent Jehovah will give both strength and peace to His people. Let heaven and earth pass away – the Lord will surely bless His people!



against the sun which warmed it into life? Shall the shard of pottery exalt itself above the person who fashioned it upon the potter's wheel? Shall the dust of the desert strive with the whirlwind? Or shall the drops of the ocean struggle with the tempest? Certainly not! Then "give unto the Lord, all ye righteous,

give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto him the honour that is due unto his name!" Yet perhaps it is one of the hardest struggles of the Christian life to learn this sentence: "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be glory!" It is a lesson which God is always teaching us – sometimes by the most painful discipline. When a Christian begins to boast that he "can do all things," without adding the rest of the verse – "through Christ which strengtheneth me" – before long, he will have to bemoan himself in the dust. He will then groan, "I can do nothing." When we do anything for the Lord, and He is pleased to accept our doings; let us lay our crown at His feet and exclaim, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me!"

But now see how the Psalmist here sets forth God's dominion in the kingdom of nature. In the thunder, lightning, and storm, we may see and hear His glory! Let our hearts be filled thereby with great, high, and honorable thoughts of God – in the holy adoring of Whom, the power of true Godliness so much consists. O Lord our God, You are very great! The power of the lightning equals the terror of the thunder; and the fear that is caused by these effects of Divine power should remind us of the mighty power of God, of man's weakness, and of the defenseless and desperate condition of the wicked on the Day of Judgment. But the effects of the Divine Word upon the souls of men, under the power of the Holy Spirit – these are far greater than the manifestations of even the most terrible thunderstorms in the world of nature around us! By the power of the Lord's Word, the stoutest are made to tremble, the proudest are cast down, the secrets of the heart are brought to light, sinners are converted, and the savage and unclean become harmless and gentle and pure. If we have heard the Lord's voice, and if we have fled for refuge to the hope that is set before us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; then let us remember that children do not need to fear their Father's voice – even when they hear Him speaking in anger to His enemies. Those persons who are outside of Christ do well to tremble, for they are without shelter; but let those who abide in His appointed refuge bless Him for their security – looking forward to the Day of Judgment without dismay, since they are as safe as Noah and his family were in the Ark!

Lord, we praise You that Your same power which is revealed in the thunderstorm and in the hurricane is also promised to be the strength of Your chosen ones! We beseech You, dear Savior, to let us hear more and more of Your voice in all the gracious manifestations of Your love. Amen.