

# Lord of the Storm

## Psalm 29

Just as Psalm 8 should be read beneath the moon and stars and Psalm 19 when the sun breaks over the horizon, in order to understand Psalm 29 you need a raging storm. David witnessed the Lord's lightning splinter cedars and His thunder shake the wilderness. Spurgeon said this Psalm was written to the tune of thunderbolts.

### Summary of the Text

This psalm has three sections. The first functions as a prologue, exhorting the mighty ones three times to give glory to God, to worship Him in the beauty of holiness (vv. 1-2). The body of the psalm spans seven verses where the "voice of the Lord" is mentioned seven times as it drives a tempestuous storm (vv. 3-10). His voice is over the waters where the storm begins (v. 3). It is powerful and full of majesty (v. 4). It hits land where Yahweh's voice snaps trees, splintering the cedars of Lebanon (v. 5). They dance like a calf, the forest of Lebanon and Mount Sirion like a young wild ox (v. 6). His voice sends lightning and shakes the wilderness of Kadesh where Israel traveled following the Exodus, Miriam was buried, and Moses sent the spies (vv. 7-8; Num. 20:1; 13:26). The voice of the Lord causes the deer to give birth as lightning flashes on the forest. Everyone in the temple exults in God's majesty and calls out, "Glory!" (v. 9). Flood follows the whirlwind and Yahweh is enthroned upon it, King forever (v. 10). In the concluding verse, David says after this harrowing storm the Lord gives strength to His people and blesses us with peace (v. 11).

### The Voice of the Lord

The threefold command to give God glory results from David witnessing a cataclysmic storm. The Greeks would try to placate Zeus of the thunderbolt in hopes of escaping his capricious wrath—anything to make him stop. But David calls worshipers of the living God to look at His power, and beauty, to "hear" His voice, and worship Him in response. We don't live in a mechanistic world wound up like a clock, where natural forces impersonally unfold as we try not to get in the way. Scripture teaches us to see the glory of God in His magnificent creation, and honor Him as a result. Of course, there's nothing we can do to take glory away from Him, but we can blindly refuse to see it, becoming glory-less ourselves. Many Christians don't like the storm. They are spiritual snowbirds flying wherever it's comfortable rather than deal with the storm and pursue their calling. Ezekiel saw the whirlwind glory cloud of God: *"a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness was all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire"* (Ez. 1:4). Above this cloud resides the throne of God with one like the appearance of a man, surrounded by fire, brightness, and the rainbow. Ezekiel falls on his face (1:26-28). Few prophets have been privileged to see this, but all of us see the storm.

### Give to God

We must give glory and strength to God (v. 1), a two-part response that recognizes His God-ness and strives to obey and honor Him. He crafts thunderstorms, typhoons, hurricanes, earthquakes, and tsunamis, and many people who deny God shut their mouths when confronted with the boom of thunder. Reacquaint yourself with this glorious terror. Martin Luther was already a believer when he was caught in a terrible storm, but he pledged to serve the Lord for the rest of his life if He would spare his life. Giving glory to God means honoring Him as your creator and recognizing all you have is an unmerited gift. Gratitude flows naturally from this sanity of joy. You see His omnipotent strength and use your finite strength to love Him (Deut. 6:5; Mk. 12:30). Giving glory and strength becomes worship in the beauty of holiness because it is offered to God through the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Word of God, the voice of the Lord (v. 2). Just as He sovereignly brings the storm, so by His Spirit He works this in us entirely by His grace. Evangelical Christians often seek

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some kind of emotional “worship” experience to authenticate their faith. It’s not that experiences are bad—this psalm describes one vividly. But the experience here is one of God’s glory objectively revealed in the storm and then shouted in the temple. Chase an emotional experience and that’s all you’ll find. But give God the glory and strength due His name and you will find Him in Jesus Christ.

### Strength & Peace

Jesus is Lord of the storm in the New Testament. He is the true Poseidon who calms the wind and waves as the disciples are afraid for their lives (Matt. 8:27). Jesus comments on their “little faith” because of how slow they are to realize that the storm-rider is with them in the boat. We like rushing water in manageable doses. The best we can do is surf a singular wave for a time or float on top of a gushing river with foam strapped to our chests. But God rides the flood, enthroned and ruling there (v. 10). He obviously enjoys this and uses it to accomplish His will upon the earth. What looks like hopeless chaos, confusion, and conflict turns out to be for the advance of the gospel of grace. The word “flood” occurs only in this passage and in Genesis 6-11 referring to Noah’s flood. That water quenched the violence that filled the earth (Gen. 6:5, 11) by drowning everyone, and the rainbow promised that God would never do it again. Instead, in the rest of the Old Testament, we see promises that a flood of grace is coming, that *“the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea”* (Hab. 2:14). Water flows from Ezekiel’s temple not to drown the world but to heal it (Ezek. 47:1-12). At the feast of Pentecost, a firstfruits of harvest festival, the Jews would read this psalm. At the fulfillment of Pentecost, a violent wind rushed upon the disciples and God sent divided tongues of flame that rested upon and empowered them to speak the gospel in everyone’s language (Acts 2:1-4). The mayhem made people think they were drunk, and this inaugurated the mission of the gospel to all the nations, a storm that has never stopped. When you give God the glory due to His name and acknowledge His unconstrained power, He gives you strength and peace. With Him you ride the storm and become part of the flood of His grace.