



"God's Strength in the Storm"

[Psalm 29](#)

Dr. Stewart :

I really liked thunderstorms. I like bugs and animals and people and all those things, but I REALLY like meteorology. It's kind of cool. I'm going to share a little bit of that with you. Because Psalm 29 is about thunderstorms. God's strength in the storm. My first experience with thunderstorms was when I was around five and I was coming into our house, just after the back of our house was struck by lightning. The house was filled with smoke. And we had a thing on our TV that was called a rotor. Do you know what a rotor is? It's a little plastic box. And it was high tech at the time, a little plastic box that you turned a dial and it would turn your antenna, which was outside your house and 30 feet high, in a direction to catch the signal. So that thing is on top of our TV, but it was split in half after this lightning strike. The TV was fried. And outside our house, we had coach lights. The coach lights were blown off the house into the yard. There's some power there. Wikipedia says this, A thunderstorm is a storm characterized by lightning and thunder. Thunderstorms form in cumulus clouds and they're often accompanied by strong winds, heavy rain, sleet or hail, even snow. Have you heard of thundersnow? Some thunderstorms have no rain at all. Where do they come from? I'm glad you asked. Thunderstorms resulted from the rapid upward movement of warm moist air, often in the presence of a warm or cold front. As the moist air moves upward, it cools and it condenses and it forms the cumulus cloud. And if you've looked outside lately, you've seen some over the last few weeks, right? They can be 12 miles high. As the rising moist air reaches its dew point, it condenses into droplets that become larger and they fall and the downward draft of air that comes causes a wind. So you often see a strong when associated with it. Some particularly large and severe storms are called super cells. And super cells can be up to 15 miles wide, and 90% of those can cause severe weather, including hail, damaging winds, lightning, straight line winds up to 80 miles an hour, flash floods and even tornadoes. And after the storms last week, Ohio had flood watches yesterday. The energy produced by just a typical thunderstorm is extreme. The energy required to lift water vapor in a typical storm is more energy than was released in the Hiroshima bomb blast, that's in a typical thunderstorm! Lightning, as we pointed out

earlier, is also powerful. Lightning is an electrostatic discharge of energy up to a gigajoule of energy. That's kind of cool. I told you, I REALLY like this stuff. LOL. And it's released with each lightning strike. Lightning can be dangerous or even deadly if it strikes people or animals. It does not even need to be a direct strike, it can just be close. A lightning strike can also cause intense heat, if it strikes in a dry area without much rain, it can start a forest fire. We'll see an example of that in our psalm.

The Bible gives us practical examples in the world around us. They help us to understand God, in this case to understand God's power. Not just natural power in the universe but power which extends beyond the natural to the supernatural, to the spiritual realm. We'll see that. Psalm 29, starting in verse one, written by David. Now my Bible says ascribe, yours might say give, "Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness. The voice of the Lord is over the waters. The God of glory thunders, the Lord, over many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars. The Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice the Lord makes the deer give birth and strips the forest bare, and in his temple all cry, 'Glory!' The Lord sits enthroned over the flood, the Lord sits enthroned as King forever. May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!"

This psalm celebrates the strength of Jehovah, the king of creation, the ruler over all natural forces. The pagan nation of Canaan worshiped the gods of nature, such as the sun and the storm, but to Jehovah alone belongs the glory and the honor. Verse one, "Ascribe or give honor to the Lord, O heavenly beings." In The Message it says, "Bravo, God, Bravo! All angels shout, Encore!" Your version may say, Oh mighty ones. Another version says, Oh heavenly ones, or The mighty. I think this speaks of two groups. It speaks of angelic beings but it speaks of men as well. Great men. In this world and in heaven; kings, leaders, all men are to give honor to God. For angels, giving honor and glory is second nature. But to men, especially kings, what do you think? Is it easy for them to give glory? No, they're used to getting it, aren't they? They're used to having honor for themselves. God will have to show his power and he's going to force them to bow and we'll see that, historic examples of people who bowed to thunderstorms. Calvin says, David intended to humble the princes of this world, who, being intoxicated with pride, lift themselves up against God by by storms, a terrific voice, subduing by thunders, hailstorms, tempests and lightnings. These stubborn and stiff neck giants, who, if they are not struck with fear, refuse to stand in awe of any power of heaven. The reason is, because there is nothing more common with them than to abuse their lofty station by wicked deeds, it is necessary, as it were, to compel them by force. David, therefore, commands them to give strength unto Jehovah. In short, he exhorts them to lay aside their haughtiness, and their false opinion about their own strength, and to glorify God as He deserves. In Revelation 21:24 we see the kings of the earth will enter the city, the New Jerusalem, in all their glory. God doesn't take away or squash or demolish their glory, he gave them their glory. They represent him in their glory. He puts them in authority here, the rulers of the earth. That's a bit humbling sometimes when you don't agree with them. They would do well and we would do well to remember any good, any gift, any strength is given to us from above, and we should offer it back to him.

Because what do we have that we did not receive? Nothing. Verse one, middle part of the verse, Matthew Henry says this, Give unto the Lord glory and strength, acknowledge his glory and strength and give praise to him as a God of infinite majesty and irresistible power. Whatever glory or strength he (the king or even us) has, by his providence entrusted you with, offer it to him to be used for his honor in his service. Give him your crowns. Let them be laid at his feet, give him your scepters your swords, your keys put all in his hands. Remember who is writing this to us? King David.

Verse two, "Give to the Lord the glory due his name." How much glory is due God's name? In Isaiah 6:3, the angels, these cherubim, are flying around God, two arms covering their face and their feet, and they're flying and they're saying something. Now, not the first phrase, I'll get to that. But they say, The whole earth is full of his glory. The natural response of angels is to glorify, it springs up like an artesian well. We tend to be glory stealers. We like to have some for ourselves. As we're before God, our response should be like in Revelation 5, the 24 elders fall on their faces before the lamb. And there's 100 million angels singing, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive glory. Because of his sacrifice, he deserves all glory. Verse two, middle of the verse, "Worship the Lord in the splendor of His Holiness." Remember in Isaiah 6, the cherubim are flying and they say three words, over and over again. What are those words? Holy, holy, holy, three times they say holy. What is holiness? It's being set apart, completely separate, absolute purity. In 1 John 1:5, God is light and in him is no darkness at all. Not an iota, or a speck. Perfect light, he is perfect righteousness. Moses wrote down the law in the Old Testament. If they follow the law on every point, they could have a relationship that was right with God. But what's the problem? We can't follow the law, right? We break it. We're law breakers, all of us. It points to our sin. But the law itself is perfect. It's a representation. It's a reflection of the character of God. Within the laws, you read the law, it shows us God. It speaks to us of who he is. When Moses brought down the law to the people from Mount Sinai, what was the weather forecasts? What did the Doppler radar show? Do you remember? There was lightning and thunder on the mountain as he comes down. And as they read the law again, if you read that passage of lightning and thunder, it's intimidating. What was the people's response to that? They backed up and they tremble with fear. And that's the correct response to the law because the law brings only death. We have a better way through Jesus. We're going to see that at the end of this psalm but I want to hold that thought for now.

First, we must experience the storm. Have you ever been out in a thunderstorm? Last week I stood outside, under the awning at the hospital, because I knew I was going to be doing this message. And I'm really waiting on a thunderstorm. I wanted to get out there! And so I'm under the awning and the storm is getting pretty close. I'm like, Whoa! But I didn't run out in the middle of the road and look up and say, Take me God. I was a little afraid of what would happen. They're intimidating when it's close and you see the flash and immediately hear the crack and the rumble. If it's really close, you can feel it. Have you felt that? Four years ago in July, we were camping in a tent on an island in northern Minnesota. There was a small group of us, only 14, with two campsites. And a thunderstorm comes up and it's night, we're in our tents. And we're surrounded by these really tall pine trees. And the wind starts blowing and you can hear the trees kind of whipping around. And I can remember thinking, if a branch or a tree fell on our tent, that'd be it for us. We'd be dead. I'm remember praying to God, who's over this storm, to keep us safe. It was scary. And the lightning and the thunder, you could hear it coming and it's getting closer

and closer. Until immediately when you saw the lightning, you heard the crack of thunder, it was right there. And I yelled, Are you all okay? to everyone around us. We wanted to make sure that nobody was struck. We survived, thank God. I don't recommend camping out in a thunderstorm, especially in a tent. You could do real damage.

Verse three, seven times we see this phrase repeated, The voice of the Lord, The voice of the Lord. That's in verses three through nine. "The voice of the Lord is over the waters." Some view this is a storm coming in off the Mediterranean Sea to the wilderness of Israel. Others view the waters as clouds which bring water and yet others as the oceans and God controlling the waters all around the Earth. Certainly God's in charge of waters of every kind. Job 38 speaks of this. God asked Job, Who keeps the seas in their boundaries? The answer? God does. He's in control of both rainfall and drought. He controls floods, as we will see. He directs the lightning bolts, Job 38:35. The God of glory thunders, God demands our attention and he gets it. You know, in surgery a few weeks ago, when a thunderstorm moved through, we were doing a procedure, we're looking at the monitor screen, and the power went out. We have an emergency generator and it only takes 30 to 60 seconds to come on. But we're standing there and we can't do anything. I mean, nothing. You just hold your stuff because we can't see. And God got our attention. Matthew Henry says, Every time we hear thunder, let our hearts be filled with great and high and honorable thoughts of God. Think of God. Let us admire his work and speak of his greatness.

Verse four, "The voice of the Lord is powerful." It seems to summarize this whole passage. It's on display...thunder, lightning, tree splitting, tree stripped of the branches, fire from lightning, skipping Lebanon, the mountain waves created by great wind...it all demonstrates God's awesome power. This is the an attribute of God. Do you know what it's called? This attribute that we would speak about, that talks of his strength is omnipotent, omnipotence, the all powerful Almighty God. Later we'll talk about the flood in Genesis when God destroyed the entire earth and all the people because of their wickedness, except Noah and his family, just eight people. The voice of the Lord is full of majesty, majesty speaks of his royalty. He is King of kings. Spurgeon says, When the lion roars, all the beasts of the forest are still. So is the earth hushed and mute when Jehovah thunders marvelously. The voice of the Lord. These vehement repetitions resemble a series of thunderclaps, one seems to hear the dread artillery of heaven firing volley after volley, while peal on peal the echo follows the sound. He speaks of the amazing power of lightning, and irresistible power attends the lightning, of which the thunder is the report. In an instant, when the Lord wills it, that the force of electricity produces amazing results. A writer about this subject speaks of these results as including a light of the intensity of the sun and its strength. And it is capable of fusing the most compact metals, a force in a moment paralyzing the muscles of the most powerful animals. Many prominent men have been afraid of storms. The Roman Emperor, Caesar Augustus, was so terrified when it thundered, he wrapped himself in a seal skin and he sat in the corner to defend him from the lightning. Another Roman Emperor, Caligula, would cover his head or he would get under the bed when the storm would come. Martin Luther was caught out in a thunderstorm when he was just 21 years old. He was a law student and while riding his horse one day, there was a downpour and lightning and he hid. And the lightning struck so close to him that it drove him to his knees. And he cried out, Saint Ann help me! He was catholic. And then he vowed to become a

monk. And that vow actually changed the world. You know, another lawyer wouldn't have done us any good. LOL. God used him. We're thankful for him. That's because of the storm. God used that.

Verse five, "The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon." The cedars of Lebanon are famous around the world for their strength, durability and beauty. They grow to 80 feet tall, the Bible speaks often about them. Old Testament commentary says, the thunderstorm rolls in over the mighty waters of the Mediterranean Sea, verse three, and then moves on to the land Lebanon, where it breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon, the strongest trees in the Middle East. This could be from lightning strikes or from intense winds.

Verse six, the storm is so powerful that it shakes the mountains. And in figurative terms, Lebanon or Mount Lebanon skip like a calf and Sirion or Mount Hermon skips like a young wild ox. That seems like a strange picture. The strong winds make the mountain forrest to move in waves, which reminds us, reminds the psalmist of the skipping calf.

Verse seven, "The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire." This could speak of lightening itself as it comes down from the sky. But lightning can cause intense heat when it strikes. And if it's a dry storm, like we talked about, it can cause a fire. And the wind that accompanies that helps to fan the flames. Wildfires can be devastating to property, and very deadly. We received a letter from an old friend, a guy that we've gone to church with years ago. He is an executive with the Navigators. And he lives in Colorado where several years ago there was a raging wildfire that came into his subdivision and it burned every house in his subdivision. And it came within three feet of his house and it stopped. Who's in control there? He said it was God's undeserved providence. He felt terrible for his neighbors. God has control of these natural forces.

Verse eight, "The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness, the wilderness of Kadesh." This would be a well known wilderness to the Jews. The shaking seems to be best explained by a severe storm with lightning, thunder, strong wind, which can shake you, especially with the houses in David's day, not a lot better than our tent probably.

First part of verse nine, "The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth." In Europe and Asia there are deer called Red Deer. They make our little white tails look kind of puny. They are up to 300 pounds. And apparently in a severe thunderstorm, it can cause these female deer to deliver prematurely. Now, this statement may seem kind of out of place, we're talking about trees being stripped and lightning and wind and all of a sudden there's a deer delivering here. That's it seems kind of a strange thing. But, you know, it points out that God, he is intimately involved with his creation, right? He's right there, even with this deer that's in labor. He speaks about the sparrow that falls to the ground. He knows about that, Matthew 10:29. Some commentators have suggested that labor is hard for the female dear. And I would guess if I talked to some ladies here, they would probably echo that. The storm starts and speeds

along the labor for the deer, it's a help. I couldn't find that in Wikipedia. LOL. But our commentators are saying that. In any case, storms are scary. Early in my medical career, I helped care for a young girl who had been struck by lightning. She was on a ventilator, she had massive injuries, which I remember to this day, it was one of the worst traumas I've ever seen. Storms are to be feared.

Second part of verse nine, "The voice of the Lord strips the forrests bare." Intense wind can uproot trees, and strip the branches. After we have heard seven times, the voice of the Lord, like the repetition of lightning strikes, God has demonstrated his power. The end result, verse nine, end of the verse, "and in his temple all cry, Glory!" Like the kings at the beginning, many of us may be hesitant to give God honor. But when the whole case is heard those who are his people, those in the temple, they cry out, Glory! Can you say that? Glory! Glory! Even those who don't know God may acknowledge this power, they are forced many times to acknowledge this power. When people become aware of their own fragility, it's a good time to tell them that we fear too but God has given us hope, he's given us protection, and it's in his son, Jesus Christ. We'll talk more about how that works in just a little bit. To make God famous, to proclaim his gloriousness, that should be our goal. I'm truly thankful that early on as a believer, when I was studying the Bible, the guys that I was with, one of the first lessons that we went through was a tape series, and it talked about the glory of God through the Bible. And I'll tell you, there's a lot written about the glory of God in the Bible. The Westminster Confession said, we've quoted it so many times, the chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. Our chief goal, to glorify God to make him famous. That should be our response praise to God and the storm and after the storm. Matthew Henry encourages us when we see God's awesome work in a storm, to remember this psalm and bring his words and his work together. Give him praise and glory in this place.

Verse ten, "The Lord sits enthroned over the flood." What's he talking about here? What's the flood? The Genesis flood. Genesis six through eight, right? And why did God flood the earth? Because every thought in the heart of man was only evil, continually. Men were completely depraved. God judged humanity for their sin, God provided salvation to a small group, just eight people. But Genesis 6:7 says, Noah found favor with the Lord. God wiped out every living thing on earth; people, livestock, animals and birds—all were destroyed by a massive flood. There's all kinds of speculation about that flood. It wasn't just the gentle rain that just kept going but it says the great fountains of the deep were broken up, so there's water from below that's coming and water that's pouring down from above. And at the Creation Center you see a tsunami that covers parts of the earth. I don't know if that's how the water came. But there's some trauma to the earth when this happens. An awesome flood. God protected Noah, he made a covenant with Noah. Never again would flood waters destroy all life. He put his sign in the sky. What's his sign? The rainbow. He will never again flood the earth. He won't destroy the earth, he's promised. And he sits enthroned over the flood. He was over the destruction and he's over your protection, he holds back the waters. You may wonder sometimes, when it keeps raining and raining, if it's gonna flood again, but he's promised. "The Lord sits enthroned as King forever." He is not only over the waters and the storms but he's over everything in your life. Ephesians 1:11, he makes everything work out according to his plan. He is a sovereign King. In Daniel chapter four, Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest king on earth. He had lost his sanity, he ate grass like an ox. And when God granted him his sanity back, he says, my sanity returned and I praised and worshipped the most high and honored, the

one who lives forever. His rule is everlasting and his kingdom is eternal. There's a king giving God glory. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and give glorify and honor to the King of Heaven. Satan's not King, some people give him that place, where he is somehow God's rival, he's not God's rival! Jehovah's King! Satan must wait. He's got to be told what he can and can't do, like when he comes to ask about Job in chapter one. God allows him to do that. Nothing in your life comes about except by the will of God.

Verse 11, "May the Lord gives strength to his people!" This carries weight when we're talking about the God of all power. He's the one who controls the strength. He asked for strength for his people. We've seen the physical power of God on display in the storm in verses 10 and 11. Now the cool calm which comes after the storm, this Almighty God comes to you with strength to rejuvenate you after you've endured the storm. Not only the physical storm, but the storms of life, the things that come against you. The world, the flesh, the devil. Jesus said, In this world you will have trouble. Daily, we have trouble. And they crash in around us every day. He promises strength to his people. He furnishes us with strength for every good work. He's created us, believers in Christ, he's created us to do good works, Ephesians 2:10. He's got them out there. They're made for us to do. He gives us strength to do them. We may feel weak from the battle over the fight with the world. He gives strength to endure. Paul said, I can do how much through Christ who strengthens me? I can do everything. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. He gives me strength.

"May the Lord bless his people with peace!", the last part of verse 11. And this is the best person to be giving peace, the one who's defeated the strongest enemy. Jesus has conquered sin and death and hell. He's defeated the devil who waits for judgment. Revelation 20:10 says, Then the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. And they were tormented day and night forever. His destiny is sealed, that's where he's headed. But our greatest enemy is not the devil, our greatest enemies sin. By the law of Moses, the entire world is guilty before God, we can never be made right by the law, Romans 5:20. God's law was given so that people would see how sinful they are. We can never go to heaven by trying to be good, trying to live the 10 commandments. And there's more than that, by the way, if you read the Old Testament, it's a good summary. And Jesus expands on. We have broken God's law, every one of us. We desperately need God's help, his grace and his son. Jesus is the sovereign ruler of the universe. He directs the lightning bolts and is in complete control of the storm. In Matthew 4:39, Jesus is out for it with his disciples in a boat, and there's a storm that comes up and you know what Jesus is doing? He's asleep, on a cushion in the boat. And they wake him up. The wind and the waves, they're coming in the boat. We're gonna die! Jesus, did you forget about us? What's he do? He rebukes the wind and the waves. And he says, two things. Peace! Be still! And the wind and the waves stopped. And there was a great calm, it obeyed him. Jesus is the ruler of the storm. And that's a real comfort when you're in a physical storm or in this worlds storms, if you're his child. Jesus, the King of Kings came down to earth as a man, he fulfilled the law perfectly. Colossians 1:20 says, Jesus made peace through the blood of his cross. See, we were at war with God, we were enemies with God, we were against him, against his way. We'd broken his law. But through Jesus sacrifice, you can be reconciled, you can be made right with God, you can become a friend of God. He does that through the blood of his cross, through his sacrifice for us. You must believe that he died on the cross, in your place, for your sin. And you deserved hell for what you had done, and he

took your place. Through his sacrifice, he conquered sin and hell and death and there's a promise of eternal life with God and his son. May the Lord bless his people with peace. If you are wondering about a relationship with God, come talk to us, come talk to Thom or myself, Karen or Linda.

Let's look back at Psalm 29 for just a moment. Pastor has said the Psalms are poetry and there's rhyming, but not like what you're used to. There is a cemetery about this psalm as we've done it. The two opening verses call us to give to the Lord. He repeats it three times. It's kind of like the storm that's building. And then, seven times he says the voice the Lord, like lightning striking over, over and over again. I'm not very good at sound effects. Nate, maybe you could work on that and get me a sound effect, a lightning sound effect. He tells us of his mighty works in the storm itself and then there's the calm after the storm, the last two verses. McClaren says, Seven times the roar shakes the world. The voice of the seven thunders is the voice of Jehovah. The recurrence of the same initial words, the voice of the Lord, then a pause. We hear the successive peals or strikes, the silence that parts them. Three times we have the reverberation of the rolling through the sky, or among the hills, imitated by clauses which repeat previous one. So he's saying in verse three, five and eight, there's a repeat of the verse. Look at that. Verse three, The voice of the Lord is over the waters. The God of glory thunders, the Lord over many waters. And verse five, The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. And again in verse eight, ...shakes the wilderness...shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. So it's like rolling thunder. The range and effects of the storm are vividly painted. It is first on the waters, which possibly means the Mediterranean but more probably the waters that are in the sky, the clouds that are gathering moist air to pour down on us. Then it comes down with the crash in the northern mountains, splintering the gnarled cedars, making Lebanon rock with all its woods, leaping across the deep valley and smokey Hermon. He hears the voice rolling from the furthest north and extreme south, that goes to the roar. The awful voice shakes the wilderness and it comes across it's level surface. Then, as the tempest rolls away, spent and transient, the sunshine streams out anew from the softened blue over a freshened world. And every raindrop on the leaves twinkles into diamond light. And the end of the psalm is like the after brightness, and the tranquil low voice of its last words is like the songs of birds again as the departing storm growls, low and faint, on the horizon. The Lord will bless His people with peace. May you know true peace, even in your storms.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you for this psalm that it speaks to us of your power in this storm. We look to you and we know we live lives that are troubled, often. We know we struggle with sin. We pray and bring that before you. The God who is over all these things and the greatest power of all, the forgiveness of sins through Jesus through his sacrifice, Lord, we're thankful for him. We just pray that you'd help us to come to you, to bow to you, to give you the glory. We thank you. You deserve it because of all that you've done through the sacrifice of your own son, Jesus name, amen.