

Reflections on a Storm

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[0 : 00] Psalm 29. A Psalm of David. 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 of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of 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.

[1 : 02] The Lord sits enthroned as king forever. May the Lord give strength to his people. May the Lord bless his people with peace. Power poles snapped in half.

Network obliterated. Thousands still in the dark in Queensland's southeast. You might not remember, but these are the Christmas storms.

You remember the ferocious storms that left a trail of destruction across much of the Gold Coast and the scenic rim last year, just as we were trying to get to CMS summer school and they had to cancel it.

Tornado winds of 150 kilometers an hour. Homes were leveled. Rooms were ripped off. Roofs were ripped off. Stephen Miles, the Queensland premier, quoted that three and a half million lightning strikes hit southeast Queensland between December 15th and January 1st, which is an extraordinary number, isn't it?

And an average, apparently, an average lightning bolt contains roughly one billion joules of energy. So three and a half million lightning bolts, one billion joules of energy each.

[2 : 15] I can't do the maths. Apparently, they dragged away 75,000 truckloads of debris, fallen branches, shattered trunks strewn across the road.

Thousands and thousands of requests for assistance. So I wonder if you've ever been in a seriously menacing storm. I don't know if anyone was caught up in that storm.

But it's not too painful if you can try to imagine it and recall it. Because this psalm is, at its heart, a reflection on a storm. It's a hymn that I can only imagine would have been sung to the sound of crashing cymbals and rumbling drums.

In Hebrew, even the words sound like rolling thunder. They're powerful and punchy. Havula Yahweh, Havula Yahweh, Havula Yahweh, Hishta Havula Yahweh.

Do you hear it? Ascribe to the Lord. Ascribe to the Lord. Ascribe to the Lord. Worship the Lord. And it's all meant to sound onomatopoeic and kind of menacing.

[3 : 18] As the storm builds and the winds howl and start to beat against the rock. The sound is growing in intensity. The rain is crashing and smashing and lashing the landscape.

And the lightning is flashing. Now I did a bit of meteorological research for this talk. I went into the land of Israel. And I discovered that Israel is caught between three weather systems.

Okay, so there's one that comes in from the northeast, bringing the cold. There's one that comes in from the southwest. So up from Africa, bringing the heat. And the one that usually brings the storms in the winter months is called the Cyprus Low Weather System.

Because it comes in from the northwest from Cyprus. Builds up over the Mediterranean Sea. And then unleashes mighty tempests on the land of Israel.

So I take it that David is talking about one of these storms in this psalm as he watches it hammer the landscape. It reminds me a lot of the book of Job, actually.

[4 : 20] As Elihu announces that God is about to arrive in the whirlwind to address Job. He has a similar reflection on wild weather. Elihu talks about how God commands the lightning bolts to strike their mark.

He talks about feeling his heart tremble and leap out of its place. He talks about how the clouds turn around and around by the Lord's guidance. To accomplish all that he commands on the face of the habitable world.

Whether for correction, or for his land, or for love, he causes it to happen. And that's an interesting conclusion, isn't it? I wonder if these dimensions of the storm we consider when a storm hits.

Do you think, is this the Lord's correction? Or for his land? Or for love? Like Elihu, and in stark contrast to our own weatherman, I suspect.

Sort of filter God out of everything. David sees the theological significance of this storm. He sees the hand of God in the storm.

[5 : 34] Or more precisely, he hears the voice of God. The name Yahweh appears 18 times in this psalm. As if the storm is almost saturated with his name.

Seven times David refers to the voice of Yahweh. God is the one commanding the storm. And it's like the thunder is a physical manifestation of God's voice. The psalm divides pretty easily into three sections.

At least three sections. So you can see them on your outline. And that's what we'll work our way through. In verses 1 and 2, the focus is on the glory of the Lord. So, 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. In the first line of verse 1, we're told who is being addressed. In the ESV, it's the heavenly beings. But literally in the Hebrew, it's the sons of God. Okay, that's the phrase is the sons of God. And I think it's important that we identify who these characters are.

[6 : 41] I don't think heavenly beings is a bad translation. But it's just slightly more narrow than the sons of God is. So, I just want to spend a moment thinking about it with you. First of all, I think heavenly beings are on view.

These spiritual rulers. And if you're anything like me, we tend to be very naturalistic in our thinking. We're not thinking about the spiritual rulers. We're sort of naive to spiritual forces and hierarchies. But the Bible assumes a spiritual hierarchy all over the place. Which we need to have some idea about. So, one place to go. One of the most famous places that talks about it is Psalm 82.

If you just want to turn there with me. Psalm 82. It's famous because Jesus quotes from this psalm. I think it's John's Gospel. So, turn to Psalm 82.

It's a psalm of Asaph. Asaph says, God has taken his place in the divine counsel. In the midst of the gods, he holds judgment.

[7 : 47] How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Give justice to the weak and the fatherless.

Maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked. They have neither knowledge nor understanding.

They walk about in darkness. All the foundations of the earth are shaken. I said, you are gods. Sons of the Most High, all of you. Nevertheless, like men you shall die.

And fall like any prince. Arise, O God. Judge the earth. For you shall inherit all the nations. So, in this brief portrait of the heavenly places, notice God is sitting over a heavenly parliament.

If you like, God is sitting like a king over a heavenly parliament. It's not a parliament that's been elected by people, of course, but a divinely appointed government. God has ministers.

[8 : 47] These appointed representatives, who are supposed to rule over his world in an orderly and just way. They are called gods or sons of the Most High. Because that's what a God is.

A God is not necessarily the word for a creator or an eternal being. A God is a ruler, a governor.

Okay? So, which just by the way, so when Christians say that there's only one God, we don't really quite mean that there's only one ruler.

We mean that there's only one ultimate ruler. One God above all other gods. The king of kings. The lord of lords. The ruler over all other rulers.

And his rule establishes and upholds all other rulers. So, it's just worth remembering so we don't get confused. Remembering that God is a title, meaning ruler.

It's a function, if you like. It tells us what something is. A God is a ruler. Yahweh is a personal name. Capital L-O-R-D in the ESV.

[9 : 48] Spells Yahweh. It's a personal name. It tells us who the God above all gods is. His name is Yahweh. But anyway, so underneath Yahweh, there are these other gods.

These other rulers. And they are an unruly bunch. A rebellious bunch. They are judging unjustly. They are showing partiality to the wicked. So, Yahweh says their punishment will be death. See verse 6. I said you are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you. Nevertheless, like men, you shall die and fall like any prince.

So, God is not going to let these rebellious rulers go on forever. They are going to die like men.

Now, I think given the logic of verse 7 then, that it is safe to assume that they are not men.

Right? They are not human because they are all going to die like men, aren't they? Now, again, we could go into more detail fleshing this out. But in other parts of the Bible, you could read Psalm 8, Psalm 89, Deuteronomy 32, and Job chapter 1, for instance.

[10 : 57] If you want to do some more homework, Psalm 8, Psalm 89, Deuteronomy 32, and Job 1. But for now, I just want to move forward. We need to first understand that there is this spiritual hierarchy above us.

But secondly, humans can be described as sons of God as well. That's why I think the translation, maybe heavenly being, slightly obscure as this.

A human is a son of God too. That's what it means that Adam was made in God's image. It means God was his father and is our father. Paul says in Acts chapter 17 that we are his offspring.

We are God's offspring. Now, this is all to say that, actually, I take that David is speaking not only to heavenly beings, as it were, but also to human beings.

He's speaking to all the sons of God. That is, all the rulers under God. Whether angelic or human.

And David is calling upon all rulers, both angelic and human, to worship Yahweh.

[12 : 03] Not to live in rebellion, but to come and submit themselves to Yahweh, give thanks to him, honor and adore him. Okay, so, back to Psalm 29, if you've moved away.

Now notice what he is calling the sons of God to do. David says, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Now that really sets the scene for what this psalm is going to be about.

It's all about glory and it's about strength. Kavod, the Hebrew word for glory, has to do with weight, with substance. It's about God's immensity.

He is the ultimate heavyweight. He is important. He is significant. Too often God is taken lightly, isn't he? By our friends and our colleagues and we ourselves.

We don't treat God with the seriousness that he deserves. So the whole point of this psalm is to impress upon the sons of God that we need to take God seriously.

[13 : 11] And nothing quite captures that like a storm, does it? And a storm is something you take seriously. A storm is something heavy. Again, over the summer, I was swimming outside at a public pool.

And someone spotted a flash of lightning. And it must have been miles away. I didn't even notice it. But as soon as someone spotted a flash of lightning, the lifeguards blew their whistles.

We were all ushered into shelter. You don't mess around in a storm. It's time to get out of the pool.

And that's what this psalm is about. But God's glory is on display in his awesome strength.

And we are all supposed to take it seriously. So lastly, why? Notice in verse 2. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name.

Due his name. In other words, we need to treat the Lord with utmost reverence and respect.

Because of who he is. Because his character demands it. And then the second line, worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.

[14 : 22] It's slightly tricky to know how to take this last line. The question is, does the splendor of holiness modify the word worship? Or is it modifying the word Lord?

Okay. So in other words, is it telling us how to worship by behaving in a holy manner? Or is it telling us more about why to worship? And that is because of the splendor of the Lord's holiness.

And on balance, I think probably more likely it's the latter idea. That we haven't been told anything about the name of the Lord yet. So in this line, we're being told.

And I think it just makes more sense of the poetry to read it that way. What makes God worthy of worship? That's what David is filling out here. It's that he sits in holy splendor. It's that he is uniquely beautiful.

He is magnificently above us. Different to us. Dazzling in his purity. He is just so different from everything else.

[15:27] You know, that he is described as holy, holy, holy. Not just holy. Not just really holy. But the most holy. His ways are not our ways.

His thoughts are not our thoughts. He's not petty or puny or pathetic in any way. Like we all are without frailties and foibles and fears.

He's perfect. Immortal. Invisible. God only wise. In light. Inaccessible. Hid from our eyes. Most blessed. Most glorious. The ancient of days.

Almighty. Victorious. By great name we praise. So when we talk about spiritual hierarchies. Don't get the idea that there is sort of a chain of being all the way up from the ant up through humanity. And then to the angels and then to God.

[16:27] Right? There isn't. We may be called gods at times. Sons of God. His offspring. But we are not divine. We are all creatures. Angels and men alike. He alone is in a unique category.

The creator. In the New Testament. Simon, I think I've got some slides for this, don't I? Yes. In the New Testament. In Colossians chapter 1.

You remember. Paul talks about how all things were created by the Lord Jesus. Things in heaven and on earth. Visible and invisible.

Whether thrones or dominions. Or rulers or authorities. All things were created through him and for him. Elsewhere Paul talks about rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.

The principalities and powers. These things are all sons of God. We are sons of God. They are kind of visible and invisible sons. But God alone stands far above all of us.

[17:27] To ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Because he is magnificently holy. Is the only appropriate response. And that's what David is calling for.

He is not just. God is not just one of a category of gods. He stands alone above all other powers. His rule is of a different order and quality. As well as quantity.

To ours. Which brings us to verses 3 to 9. Where David kind of drags the camera down as it were. From heaven. Onto the landscape of Israel.

Of course in ancient Israel there were lots of competing gods. And mythological ideas about Baal. And the storm gods. And so on. But cutting across all that.

The next scene is dominated by one voice. The voice of the Lord. It sounds very much like the first chapter in the Bible. Doesn't it? Do you remember how Genesis 1.

[18:25] The spirit of God is hovering over the face of the waters. Like a bird. Poised to swoop. And then God said. Let there be light. And there was light. God's spirit is God's breath.

You need breath to carry your words along. So when God's Holy Spirit is there. Hovering over the chaotic waters. We are expecting God then to speak.

And that's what happens. His breath is ready as it were. To carry his words and accomplish his will. Well now that's exactly what we see in Psalm 29.

The voice of the Lord is over the waters. Ready as it were. The God of glory thunders the Lord over many waters. If you can just imagine the raging and the roiling seas of the Mediterranean.

They're wild and violent as the Cyprus low moves in. Just like the unruly waters in Genesis chapter 1. But David sees God sovereignly reigning over them.

[19:26] He doesn't see chaos. And when he hears the collapse of thunder. He knows he's not listening to the power of Baal. He hears as it were the voice of God.

Ruling his world. And notice how throughout this section the voice of the Lord is often paralleled simply with the Lord. So in verse 9.

The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars. The Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. Or again in verse 8. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

In other words, how does the Lord act? He acts by his word. God's word actually is a direct encounter with God himself. God's word is how he reaches out and touches his creation.

He makes his mind, his inner thoughts known to us by speaking them. By speaking them out. He speaks out his will. And in his infinite power, his word always brings into effect what he wants.

[20:33] So remember Isaiah chapter 55. Again, I might have a slide for this, Simon. Yeah. Verse 10. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth.

It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Or again, this is why, of course, in John's gospel, in the prologue, John writes, In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

What John says, which is really extraordinary, isn't it, is that God is his word. So if you want to directly experience God, if you want to experience the life and light of God, what you need to hear is his word.

That's how he shares his life and light with us. It's how he overcomes the darkness in our hearts and minds. And that's why I should say, just by way of a little bit of application, it's so horrific to hear people belittle God's word, isn't it?

[22 : 10] Because they are belittling God. When people denigrate his word in the scriptures, it's outdated, it's boring, it's irrelevant, it's old.

What they're really saying is that God is boring and old and outdated and irrelevant. And they twist and distort the word of the gospel and misrepresenting God. And of course, when they mock and ridicule the word incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ.

What they're really doing is mocking and ridiculing God himself. So friends, let's treasure God's word. I really pray that that's a mark of SLBC, that we love God's word because we love God.

Now the storm in this vivid description seems to move across the landscape. It's slightly hard to tell which direction it's going.

We'll come back to that. Lebanon. Spelled Lebanon. But anyway, that's not how it swelled. But anyway, Lebanon.

[23 : 12] It seems to hit up the coast in Lebanon and move across from west to east. First, it breaks the mighty cedars that Lebanon is famous for. You know the Lebanese flag.

Have I got another slide, Simon? Yeah, the Lebanese flag still has a cedar on it. There are these massive trees that can reach up to 40 meters high, which is like 10 stories.

And they're not skinny, narrow little things either. They're really spread out and they're solid, hard wood. But David says, when the voice of the Lord sounds, the cedars snap like toothpicks and matchsticks.

And in verse 6, he makes Lebanon to skip like a calf and Sirion like a young wild ox. So Lebanon is a very mountainous region and Sirion is the highest mountain in that region.

It's another name for Mount Hermon. And what David is describing here is the whole landscape jumping. I only know this from Clarkson's farm. But you know, these little calves running out of the stalls.

[24 : 16] When they come out of the stalls, they're kicking their legs. They're powerful. They're excited. Except that David is not talking about a little calf. He's talking about a whole mountain jumping.

There's so much energy in the air. You would think that if anything would be steadfast and solid and immovable, it would be the mountains. But nothing can stand against, can stand still in the presence of God's mighty voice.

And then David focuses in on the lightning. The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. I think a better translation, the NIV has a better translation, strikes, but maybe even better would be hues or chops.

This is kind of the word that, for a lumberjack hewing down with his axe, hewing down a tree. The images of God chopping down the cedars with lightning bolts, the way a lumberjack hews timber with an axe.

The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. Now, this is where the geography does get slightly confusing. There were at least two Kadeshs in Israel that we know of, one in the far north and one in the far south.

[25 : 32] And both of them seem to be irrelevant if David is describing a kind of literal storm. They just both seem a little bit too far away. And then the name Kadesh means holy place. Anyway, so there may have been many more towns named Kadesh that we just don't know about.

It's kind of a general name. Either way, it probably doesn't really matter. The point is that, obviously, the land is shaking, it's trembling.

And again, you know, you should be thinking of a storm. I remember being in a huge storm once in northern Italy, up in the foothills of the Alps.

We were in a beautiful home, perched on the edge of a mountain, had big glass windows all around, overlooking the valley. It had been a lovely day. We'd gone for a swim in a bubbling brook. But overnight, a fierce storm began to brew and beat against that house. And we were all hoping it was built upon the rock. And the whole house was rattling.

[26 : 36] The windows were shaking. I genuinely thought that they might implode. It was unbelievable. Anyway, somehow we survived, by God's grace. And when we got up the next morning, we went for a walk along the road towards the stream, the same path we'd taken the day before.

And it was honestly remarkable how the landscape had changed. Massive chunks of the road had just been gouged out by landslides.

You know, like one or two stories deep. Rocks and boulders had tumbled down. Enormous trees had been uprooted. When we got to the bubbling brook, the whole course of the stream had changed.

It was just completely different. There were new waterfalls. There were new twists and turns. There were new pools. It was a majestic display of the power of the Lord.

And obviously, you know, it really stuck with me. That was 20 years ago or something. And again, friends, that is really what this scene is all about. And it's very destructive. It's not about the gentle rains, is it?

[27 : 42] Do you know what I mean? This is not the gentle rains that water our crops. There's nothing mild or temperate about this picture. Now in verse 9. Listen to how the NIV translates verse 9 again.

The voice of the Lord twists the oaks and strips the forest bare. Now again, I won't go into all the technical details about why I think the NIV translation is better here.

But I think it is. This line is not about deers giving birth, which sort of introduces quite a strange new idea into the text, doesn't it? No, the idea here is that having surveyed the cedars, we are now observing the oaks.

The oaks are getting all twisted up and bent out of shape. They are struggling to endure the heavy burden of the storm. Now, as I say, I'm not quite sure where this storm is tracking given the mention of the name Kadesh.

But apart from that, it does seem to be traveling across the north of the country. And if that's right, then by now it would have hit Bashan, which is a region famous for its oak trees.

[28 : 48] Okay, so Bashan and skip to the next. But again, these oak trees, sorry, are famous for their strength and God is making them look positively weak.

They just can't handle the weight, the pressure of this glorious storm. If they don't bend, they'll break, right? If they don't twist, they'll snap. He is stripping them bare.

And so we reach the climax of this section in verse 9. And in his temple, all cry glory. Now, what temple are we supposed to be thinking of?

If this is the Psalm of David, then probably the temple has not been built yet on earth. So I think, first and foremost, David is thinking of the heavenly temple.

This is where the storm song, as it were, has all been leading to. It's about impressing upon the sons of God the glory of God after such an intense, overwhelming display of God's strength.

[29 : 55] It's as if all the worshippers in God's temple are left with only one word on their lips. Glory. It's like they've seen it for the first time. You know, oh, glory.

This is glory. This is real glory. I'm reminded of 1 Peter 1, verse 24, where Peter says, all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass.

The grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever. You see the distinction he's making. Humans, we like to think that we are glorious, that we have some substance, some weight to us.

We are impressive. I want to make a big impact on the world. But our glory, Peter says, is like the glory of grass. You know, or like wild flowers.

We bloom and we get arrogant when we're in full bloom, but then we wither and fade. Grass is gone before you know it. You know, no one's using grass as a weapon or something, artillery.

[31 : 02] All the pomp and pageantry of emperors and kings and the power of men, which frightens us so, doesn't it? Because we're fooled by their shallow, pretentious displays of glory.

But Peter says, all flesh is not really very glorious in the end. It's just wispy and weak like grass. You want to see real glory? The word of the Lord remains forever. The voice of the Lord is substantial, mighty, powerful, magnificent.

It is serious. It is impactful. Excuse me. It is heavy. It will make its mark. And that's what we've seen in this psalm, isn't it?

God is the God overseeing the storms, dictating their direction. God is the God who commands the lightning bolts to strike their mark. The clouds turn around and around by his guidance to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world.

Whether for correction or for his land or for love, he causes it to happen. So as we reach the final third of the psalm, we return to the heavens.

[32 : 12] We get a picture of the Lord sitting on his throne. Above all the noise of the storm, there is someone sitting. He's not jumping. He's not even standing.

He's just sitting. There is a stability to that posture, isn't there? God is sitting on his throne. The landscape beneath is shaking. The trees are shattering. The mountains are quaking. But God is on his throne, solid, secure, and sitting forever.

The mention of the flood, the flood word, reminds us of Genesis 6-9, when God almost, as it were, uncreated the world and then restarted the world with Noah.

That, of course, was the greatest storm the world has ever seen. Forty days and forty nights of relentless torrential rains that destroyed every living creature on the land, all flesh.

God said that he would never flood the earth again like that. So I think here we're meant to be reminded of that promise, even while we're being warned again, of the kingship of the Lord that spells judgment for all mankind and all the wayward sons who might be living in rebellion against him.

[33 : 31] But we are also being reminded of God's mercy for those few like Noah who found favor in the Lord's sight. There is a chance of safety.

There is a way of escape. We don't have to be afraid of the storm. And the last verse really focuses on that. And I don't think it's a prayer.

Again, the NIV puts it as a statement and I think that's probably more accurate. The Lord gives strength to his people. The Lord blesses his people with peace.

The astonishing thing about this psalm in the end is that all of God's strength which we've seen on display, powerfully on display throughout the psalm, all of God's strength which might rightly send us kind of shivering and terrified to hiding under the bed.

All of God's strength in this last verse he gives to his people. He blesses his people with peace. There's no anxiety for God's people at the end of this.

[34 : 38] There's peace. Yahweh's strength is ours. He uses it for us. So God's people are not stuck in the storm or struck down by the storm.

We haven't been left shattered and broken. At the end of the psalm we find ourselves blessed with peace, shalom, safe on every side, satisfied and content.

After a storm, very often I think the world does feel new, doesn't it? You know, whatever that smell is, I can't remember the name for it. But the sun comes out and the grass starts to glisten again and the whole world has been washed clean.

Except that of course it hasn't. Just like in the days of Noah, it wasn't actually washed clean. God couldn't quite cut deep enough or whatever with his storm to clean up our world.

But there is a promise here that one day there will be a storm after which God's people will be at peace.

[35 : 46] Rest assured, friends, there will one day be a fiery storm so mighty that the world will be washed clean forever. Many will not survive it.

But for those who do, they will find themselves blessed with peace, shalom, on the other side of the storm. This is why the authors of Scripture always rejoice in God's judgment, in God's mighty, terrifying voice because after all the chaos, it brings peace.

So what does this psalm mean for us? Let me end with a few reflections. Number one, let the sons of God cry glory. So let the angels and archangels sing glory to God in the highest and let you and me too.

And in Christ, of course, now we are the temple of God so we don't go to a place of worship because we're always in the most holy place through our connection to Jesus. So brothers and sisters, in our hearts, with our lips, with our lives, let us ascribe glory to the Lord. We should treat him with the weight that he deserves.

[37 : 01] Like you would tremble and marvel at the power of a storm. How much more should we tremble and marvel at the God who sits enthroned above the storm, who sovereignly rules over the storm?

Next time you see a storm, hear the thunder, see the flashes of lightning. Have a think about how God's voice is in the storm. And God is the one who sends the lightning to strike its mark. And secondly, the voice of the Lord has triumphed. So we talked about those sons of God, those heavenly beings who refuse to worship the Lord. But in Colossians chapter 2, Paul says that through the cross, Christ, the word, he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him.

Or in Ephesians chapter 3, Paul says that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God is made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. Or again, in 1 Peter 3, verse 22, Paul talks about how Jesus has gone into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

And in other words, Jesus, the voice of the Lord, the word of God, he has conquered, he has triumphed, over the rebellious rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. He was made lower than the angels for a little while when he descended to earth.

[38 : 31] And they thought they'd conquered him, you know, and cornered him and crucified him. They thought they'd figured out a way to crush him. But in fact, in his death, Jesus triumphed over them.

He humiliated them. God's word achieved a mighty victory. And when he rose from the dead victorious, he ascended back up into the heavens far above all other rulers and authorities and every name that can be named.

He sat down at the right hand of God the Father to rule over God's kingdom forever. The voice of the Lord has triumphed gloriously. So we get to live in the joy and the power of his victory.

We continue to wrestle against principalities and powers, but we can fight with energy and with hope knowing that the war has already been won.

We have the strength of God in Christ Jesus. We have the strength of the word of God, the omnipotent word of God to fight with us and for us. And finally, the voice of the Lord has blessed us with peace and will bless us with peace.

[39 : 39] Remember that verse from 1 Peter chapter 1? I just want to return to that because I didn't give you the full context. Peter is quoting from Isaiah chapter 40 which is a passage of comfort, comfort.

And the point he's making is that through the gospel God's living word has given us new birth into a living hope. So even though all the pomp and puny glory of men will fade away like grass, actually God's people will not fade away because God's word has done something miraculous inside of us. Remember that God's word is how God shares his light and his life with us and he has done that. That's what the gospel does. So listen to what Peter says. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart since you have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God.

For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

In other words empires and emperors will come and go. Dictators and dynasties Babylonians the Persians the Romans have all faded away now haven't they like grass. But God's people will have everlasting comfort everlasting life by the power of God's word within us.

[41 : 12] There is something now within us stronger than death. The word of God. The simple truth of the gospel. When someone comes to believe that Jesus is Lord and comes to obey him as God's word they don't have to be afraid of God's wrath anymore or his fierce storms because God's strength is for his people and God blesses his people with peace.

Let's pray. Mighty God you are powerful and glorious. You deserve all our worship for you are holy, holy, holy.

we thank you so much that one day you will judge the world in righteousness that nothing will stand in the way of your word and that your people will have peace and blessing on the other side.

We thank you that your word has already walked among us and that the gospel has gone out to the ends of the earth and given us new birth into a living hope. We pray Father that you'd help us to hold on to your word to treasure your word and love your word to put our faith in your word and obey your word that you might keep us for eternal life through the mighty power of your word.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.