

# The Voice of the Lord in the Storm

By Walter Beuttler

IN PSALM 29 David describes a thunderstorm sweeping over the Palestinian countryside in a fury of lightning and thunder, accompanied by heavy rains and resultant flood and destruction. Read it through and you will see that the Psalm as a whole is a graphic setting in which God seeks to instruct His children when they find themselves in circumstances comparable to such a storm—for example, the flames of the fire of testing, the rumbling thunder of fearful events and floods of unexpected reverses and innocent sufferings.

Notice the Psalmist's eloquent language:

The voice" of the Lord is upon the waters.... The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness....The voice of the Lord . . . discovereth the forests **Psalm 29: 3-9**.

In these turbulent circumstances of life it is of paramount importance that we be properly oriented. A Christian who is not sure of his position in the storm in relation to God is open to additional though unnecessary difficulties. He becomes an easy prey to the wiles of the enemy and a possible victim of the counsel of ignorant advisers. In order to preclude any such eventuality one must turn to the repeated use of the phrase, "the voice of the Lord," which occurs seven times. This might appear to be mere meaningless repetition in the eyes of the casual reader, yet this very repetition constitutes the heart of this remarkable Psalm and provides the key to the whole problem namely, that the storm is "the voice of the Lord". God. wants us to know that He speaks in the storm., by means of the storm.

Now it might be rightly asked, "What does God say in the storm?" In answer to this question another repetition must be observed. The name "Lord" is used eighteen times. The meaning of the name "Lord" as used in this Psalm is said to be, "He (who) is." This is very suggestive and so appropriate because the enemy of our souls will seek to defeat us in the storm by casting an aspersion on God as regards His promises.

The, enemy, will endeavor to\_ make us believe that God is the God who isn't. But this Psalm declares God is "He who is." "He who is divideth the flames of fire" (lit.,

"sendeth forth the lightnings"). "The voice of the He who is breaketh the cedars." "The voice of the He who is upon the waters," etc. This repetition of "Lord" leads us to the primary cause of the storm – God, who seeks to reveal Himself as "the He (who) is."

It must further be noted that there is a reference to God, not merely in every verse, but in every statement. Altogether there are twenty-two direct and two indirect references to God. The entire Psalm is saturated with God, so to speak. What is the meaning of this? That God is in the storm; that He is He who is when it seems He isn't. That He is in the lightning, in the thunder, in the water, in all. The Psalm, we repeat, is saturated with God; so is the experience. The believer in the storm, must see and believe that He who is sent it; that He who is is in it; and that He who is speaks by it.

Not only does God send the storm; He comes with it. "The Lord sitteth upon the flood" (v. 10). This verse begins to throw some light on the purpose of the storm. Since God is pictured as sitting upon the flood, He evidently uses the flood as a means of conveyance, so that the flood of the storm which comes into the believer's life brings God with it. This remains true, whether God's purpose is to bring us more into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, as mentioned in **Philippians 3:10**, or God seeks to teach us lessons in order to give us a ministry of help and comfort to those in distress, as stated in **2 Corinthians 1:4, 5**. This remains true, whether God needs to demonstrate to Satan that we serve Him because of what He means to us (and not merely because of what He does for us ) as illustrated in **Job 1:1 to 2:10**, or whether His purpose is to Enlarge our capacity and desire for Him.

The storm will often effect this by tearing us loose from encumbrances that retard our progress, and from preoccupation with things that compete with God for our attention and affection. Thus the storm becomes a means whereby we are conditioned for a closer walk with God, as well as a medium of conveyance, bringing God with it. "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet" **Nahum 1:3**. After the sky has cleared and the flood has subsided, the trusting believer \_will be conscious of a fresh deposit of the reality of the presence of God in his heart, for "the Lord sitteth upon the flood."

"The Lord sitteth King forever" (v. 10). Hallelujah! Not only does He who is come with it and sit upon it; He sits upon it as King, as Ruler, as Sovereign. In other words, He controls the flood. The same Lord who uses the storm as a vehicle, who thus conveys Himself into the believer's heart by a means and in a manner which probably could not be as well accomplished in any other way, exercises such a providential control that the flood, while it is great enough to accomplish His

purpose, is not so great that the believer would be engulfed beyond his ability to stand it. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able," the apostle assures us. He who is is completely Sovereign of the flood. He sits upon it, so He comes with it. He sits King, so He holds it in control. He sits King "forever," so He is always in control. This is the believer's assurance in the storm.

"The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless His people with peace" (v. 10). Strength and peace is the believer's provision for the storm. God who sends the storm also grants the strength to endure it. He "will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" **1 Corinthians 10:13**. This way of escape is not so much a deliverance from the storm as it is a deliverance in the storm. The grace and strength of God enables us to bear the storm while the purpose of God is being accomplished.

This strength will be imparted as we wait upon Him, not as we wait for the sympathy of the people. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" **Isaiah 40:31**. Waiting upon God is as indispensable (and as delightful) a Christian exercise as it ever was. There is no substitute. Israel complained in **Isaiah 40:27** in the same manner in which a Christian might be tempted to complain in the storm: "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." In other words, they complained that God does not see, God does not care; and as another version has it, "the justice due me is passed away." This questions the justice of God. There is great danger in such an attitude. The context uses the words "faint," "weary," and "fall."

As far as the passage in Isaiah goes, this fainting, wearying and threatened falling is due to lack of confidence in the attributes of God **Isaiah 40:28**; failure to realize that God provides the ability to walk with Him **Isaiah 40:29**. We are doomed to failure, even at the height of our own resources **Isaiah 40:30**, unless we wait upon God for enabling by His strength. "The Lord will give strength unto his people."

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles. . . ." It has been said that in an approaching storm all the birds will scurry for cover in fright, except the eagle. He will face the storm, with wings spread, and will allow the howling, contrary wind to carry him to great heights. This is the Christian's privilege in the storm. Such an achievement takes the strength which only God can give; it requires spending time in waiting before Him.

"The Lord will bless his people with peace" (v.11). This is the promise of a tranquil mind and heart in the middle of the storm. Peace not just after the storm, but during

the storm. The kind of peace that Christ had when "he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow," during a storm that filled the ship with water and threatened their lives (see **Mark 4:38; Luke 8:23**). Let it be noted that these disciples were in the will of God, despite wind, waves, and danger; for they had obeyed His command, "Let us go over unto the other side of the lake." Our very obedience to God may lead us into a storm which we would not otherwise experience, but it also leads to a compensating revelation of His power which we would not otherwise experience either.

The peace of God is not something negative, not a mere absence of disturbance. It is something positive —the conscious presence of a supernatural calm produced in our hearts by the Spirit. This peace is "not as the world giveth"; it is not dependent on favorable circumstances. In fact, it is independent of both favorable and unfavorable circumstances alike. In short, it is truly His peace, the peace of God.

This peace acts as an insulator, as a defense against, the disturbance of the storm. The strength of the Lord enables us to bear the pressure of the storm, but the peace of God which passes all understanding (and all misunderstanding too) keeps the disturbing elements of the outer storm from penetrating our being.

This twin provision of strength and peace logically leads to the consideration of our activity in the storm.

"Give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (vv. 1, 2). This then should be our activity in the storm— to give unto the Lord worship, to give Him glory. The angels are doing it. ". . . And in his temple doth every one speak of His glory" (v. 9). In the storm God calls for worship; we owe it to Him.

"Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty," Who are the mighty in the storm? Those who know that it is the "stormy wind fulfilling His word" (Psalm 148:8); those who see God in the storm and wait upon Him for strength. They are called upon to give Him strength, to attribute and contribute, to give Him the fruit of the strength He gave them, even praise in the midst of the storm, and despite the storm— and even because of the storm. The mighty in His strength will give Him glory and praise while they behold the effects, of the storm, the broken cedars of their fondest hopes. They, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness without charging God foolishly, though their hearts are oppressed with a terrible sense of loneliness. They may feel as bleak within as is the desolation without.

Though the spirit may 'be crushed, and the will may falter because the future may seem empty, God calls for worship with repeated emphasis. "Give unto the Lord," He calls, "Give unto the Lord." Faith will respond and say, "It is the voice of the Lord in the storm; therefore will I join the angels giving God glory!"