FBS “Unlikely Praise—In the Midst of Storms” 7-30-17

Joel Breidenbaugh (Psalm 29)

**Intro.** One of the most terrifying experiences anyone can have is to be stuck in a major thunderstorm, where the thunder rolls & shakes your surroundings & the lightning strikes & makes the hair on your neck stand on end—that’s too close for comfort! Listen to this thunder roll (play few seconds of audio). We are covering a short series entitled “Unlikely Praise” & today we look at Psalm 29 on “Unlikely Praise—In the Midst of Storms.”

Theme: Glorifying the Lord

Background: Psalm 29 is from David, who sees the awesome power of God displayed through even the most violent storms & He is still a God to be praised.

* Too many people these days want to serve a god they can tame—one they can predict & one who never works outside of their box—a god they can lead around on a leash (that’s part of the problem of the health-wealth-prosperity gospel—you tell God what you want & He beckons to your every wish, rather than the real gospel where God is in charge & commands us to do His will & empowers us by His grace to do it)—this psalm reminds us that God is beyond our control!
* In this text, we find 2 main responses toward the Lord (Who can be like a storm) when we find ourselves “In the Midst of Storms” & cataclysmic events. We also find a 2-fold gift from the Lord for those who offer Him praise—unlikely as it may be—“In the Midst of the Storms”:

**1. Value the Lord supremely (29:1-2)**

* Yahweh, the personal name for God, occurs 18x in these 11 verses—He is the main theme of this song
* “ascribe”—give
* “glory”—weightiness; value—when used for measuring common goods—grain, fruit, etc.—the greater the weight, the more valuable

Illus: If only that were true of us humans, we would be more valuable the more we weighed!

* Why should we give the Lord glory/value the Lord? Because it is due His name—His nature & character set Him apart (His holiness) from all other gods
* The phrase for “heavenly beings” (29:1) can mean angels but it may mean the “gods” of the surrounding nations—David calls for the surrounding gods & angels to bow down to Yahweh, the One True God

Illus: Foreign gods have bowed down to Yahweh in the past—do you remember when the ark of the covenant was stolen by the Philistines & they put it in their temple with their idol to Dagon & they found Dagon knocked over. When they repositioned the idol, the next morning, he was knocked over & his head & hands were broken off! (1 Samuel 5:1-5)

* Because the Lord Jesus Christ is far greater than anyone or anything else because of His resurrection, we must value Him supremely—value Christ above all else

**2. Listen to the Lord reverently (29:3-9)**

* The “voice of Yahweh” occurs 7x in these verses—His is a voice that must be heard & heeded
* The heart of this psalm is built around the Lord as a violent storm—David is like a meteorologist tracking a tornado or hurricane sweeping across to the north of Israel—though we may not feel like it, we are called to praise Him, however unlikely that may be, even in the midst of storms
* Just as a violent thunder storm can bring us fear & snap the mighty cedars of Lebanon (used for the temple) like matchsticks, so it is with the thundering voice of our Lord—but it isn’t a dreadful fear of being so frightened by Him that we never approach Him, because He has given us access to His throne through the grace found in Jesus Christ
* On the other hand, we must not treat the Lord so haphazardly that we don’t have a proper reverence & fear of Him, knowing His judgment is great & it is terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31; cf. Israel on Mount Sinai when God gave Moses the Law through thunder & lightning, cf. Exodus 19-24)

Illus: Let me provide a quick Hebrew lesson regarding v. 9—Hebrew was written with consonants only (22) & no vowels. Around AD 1000, a group of scribes called the Masoretes began placing vowel pointings to help future people know how to pronounce certain words. The only problem is certain words are completely removed when certain vowels are substituted over others (like our words for “love” or “live” when you remove the vowels)—the word for “makes the deer give birth” with different vowels points would yield “makes the oaks to shake,” which fits the context better

**3. Receive strength & peace from the Lord (29:10-11)**

 **a. Because He is great (29:10)**—He is sovereign

* No matter what storms & floods (the only other time in Scripture when this term for “flood” is used is of the universal flood in Genesis [12x]) & cataclysmic events come our way, the Lord sits enthroned above them all—He is still in control—He is large & in charge
* He is king forever—He isn’t stepping down from His throne nor can anyone topple Him from His throne (like the game King of the Hill or a paintball game where one team overthrows another)

**b. Because He is gracious (29:11)**—He gives strength & peace through a relationship with Him

* God both carries out judgment but also salvation—Jim Hamilton argues the central theme of the Bible is the glory of God in salvation through judgment (every time someone is saved, it occurs through judgment of enemies or sin) & in it all, God’s glory (weightiness) is supreme
* The Lord rages like a storm & brings destructive power but He leaves His fragile people untouched (like the plagues in Egypt where Israel was spared)

Illus: Many of you have heard about the Problem of Evil before & atheists try to use it to discredit belief in God. It goes like this, If God is all-powerful (great), then He could stop evil. But He hasn’t, so He isn’t all-powerful. Or if God is loving (good), then He would want to stop evil. But He hasn’t, so He isn’t loving. That is, they say God is neither great (all-powerful) nor good (loving) or we wouldn’t have evil in the world. But they fail to factor in the wisdom & grace of God. God is great & He is good & in His wisdom, He permits evil so we learn to rely on His grace, because without His grace, we could never have peace with Him. His greatness & His goodness don’t give us peace with Him, but His grace washes over our sins & brings us forgiveness & peace!

**Recap:** When you find yourself “In the Midst of Storms,” continue to offer praise, no matter how unlikely it is. Value the Lord supremely, listen to the Lord reverently & receive strength & peace from the Lord.

**Conc.** Even when some families lose everything in a storm, they find a way to praise the Lord. A storm has a way of either beating you down so you wallow in self-pity or pushing you to become fully reliant on the Lord. I know a man who told me he & his family had lost everything in a house fire when they lived in Texas. They were awakened in the middle of the night by a smoke alarm. An electrical issue with the oven caused a spark which became a raging fire & the family made it out & watched their house & all they owned burn to the ground. But even in that, they praised the Lord for sparing them. Though it may appear like “Unlikely Praise,” will you praise Him “in the midst of storms?” It begins by surrendering to Jesus as Lord.