

Psalm 135: 5-9; “God – The Author of the Weather”, A Sermon delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on May 29th, 2011, in the Morning Worship Service. This subject was chosen after hundreds died in the tornadoes of the last two months.

These verses of this Psalm that I just read to you tell us, without any doubt, that the Lord is completely sovereign over the weather. “Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and in the earth.” Nothing happens in the heavens or in the earth; in the seas, or in all the deep places unless the Lord ordains that it is so. He is the One who causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He is the One who makes lightning for the rain; He is the One who brings the wind out of His treasuries. God is the author of the weather. This past week we have had a massive visible demonstration of the power of God in His bringing an EF-5 tornado into the city of Joplin, Missouri. At the last count, 132 people died in that city and 15 others in Kansas and Oklahoma were killed. In April there was a very destructive tornado which passed through Alabama which killed around 330 people. So there have been around 500 people, or more, who have died in tornadoes this year alone, and there have been thousands injured, and many billions of dollars in property damage; loss of homes and businesses. Certainly our sympathies are with those who have been so ravaged by these storms. Many people have been afflicted with great losses, both in terms of people whom they love, and homes in which they thought that they would be secure; and so this is not something which should be taken casually by anyone listening to me here today. It has been a great encouragement to hear of some people who have heroically come to the rescue of others both during and after the storms. I hope that Christians will be involved in praying for those who have lost so much, and also thinking of how they might personally help people in need, when situations like this arise.

But the issue that I would like to focus on this morning is how God is thought of and viewed, by people, following a disaster such as this. How should we think about God, and how should we think about what He does in bringing these natural disasters and calamities upon us, or upon others whom we love? How should we view not only this disaster of the recent tornadoes, but also the tsunami that recently came to Japan which took 15,000 people out of this world in a wave of water over 50 feet high? Is this simply “Mother nature” on the rampage? Do these things simply happen because we live in a fallen world, and once in awhile things get out of control? And if God is this sovereign, what should I do in response to His bringing disasters like this? Just how sovereign is the God that we worship and adore? Seeing that so many people in our day have come to believe that the weather is something which just happens and that God does not sovereignly control the weather from day to day, I would 1st of all I would like to take a few minutes and show you that God is the One who created the weather and who gives us our weather every day. 2^{ndly}, I would like to show you from the Bible that God is the One who brings weather disasters as well. And then 3^{rdly} I would like us to think about what God is doing when He brings tornadoes in particular. We do not need to fear the whole man-made concept of global warming, or climate change if we understand that God is in control of the weather. But we do, indeed, need to fear the One (that is – God) whom after He has killed people, by means of a storm or some natural disaster, has the power to cast into hell, as Jesus says in Luke Chapter 12, verse 5. My hope is that if you don’t presently know just how sovereign God is over the weather, that you will come to believe it after you hear this sermon. And if you do believe that God is sovereign over the weather, that you will be able to see what your responsibility is toward God, and also toward people who have been affected by calamities which God brings. It is to have compassion on them, and help them, and share the gospel with them.

1st - God is the One who created the weather and gives the weather.

Turn with me to Genesis Chapter 1, and verse 1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep."

"And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." "Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light." "And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness." "God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night." "So the evening and the morning were the first day." Now, notice here, that God created the heavens and the earth. His Spirit was hovering over the face of the waters because God was going to form everything in relation to this formless void; out of water, just as a potter would mold and shape the clay into a form. Verse 6 - "Then God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so." "And God called the firmament Heaven." "So the evening and the morning were the second day." You see how personally and how immediately God was able to do this. He had waters above and waters below all of this matter that He was to shape into a perfect globe. Verse 9 - "Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so." "And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas." "And God saw that it was good." Then look over at verse 14. "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to light on the earth"; and it was so. The creation of these things, by God, sets the stage for His creation of weather. These are the elements that He needed and all the components of weather are found in them. Sun for heat, the land for man, the waters to form all the earth with; the heavens to provide the atmosphere conducive to life.

Now I want you to turn over a page to Chapter 2 and we will see the first real step of God's creation of weather in relation to the man whom He created on the 6th and final day of creation. Look at verse 4. "This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown." "For the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground." Notice that it says, "For the Lord God had not caused it to rain...." This clearly indicates that God is the cause of the rain; it plainly states that it is so. It is a truth to be believed and received; not doubted or feared. He is the One who instead of rain, before He formed the garden of Eden, caused a mist to come up from the ground to water it. Although we are not told, I would assume that this mist continued to be in use only as long as it took for God to create the garden of Eden and then when He created man, it ceased; or Adam and Eve would have been hindered greatly in their simply walking around in the garden by these mists. I believe that God did cause it to rain after He created man and all during that time before the flood of Noah's day; there was rain when God caused it to rain. All during that two thousand or so years that men lived and worked and cultivated the ground and did so many things; they had weather that included rain and sun and seasons of growing time and harvest.

We must also see, however, that something happened back there in that garden which affects the weather; something that affects us to this very day, and it is related for us in Genesis Chapter 3. It was the Fall of man. The Fall of man was something that affected all of God's creation. Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and in the day that they ate of it, they fell under the curse of God. And this curse included some things which would affect the weather. Look at Genesis 3: 17. "Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.'" "Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field." "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." Now here we see that this curse

does indeed directly affect the way that God orders the weather. The way that God orders the weather is; that it is with some difficulty that he cultivates his fields. This has been evidenced throughout the whole history of man. Also, because of the fall, there would be occasional great storms and disturbances of the earth, sky, and sea by tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, and etc. which show forth God's great displeasure with man's sin and His judgment upon it. They are, I believe, the preludes and forecasts of the coming judgment of the Last Day when the storms of God's wrath shall fall upon the ungodly forever. But then after the storm, and the watering and cleansing which is so needed to bring about the nourishment of the crops, then God often brings sunshine and pleasant temperatures and good weather which allows the crops to grow and man to be blessed. Matthew 5, verse 43 says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" "But I say to you, love your enemies bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Most of the time, God is very gracious in the weather that He gives. His creation of the weather and His giving us the weather that will be good for us and which will help provide for our needs, is faithfully supplied to both righteous and unrighteous people. God created the weather to show forth His own glory, and to show man His goodness. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the earth shows forth His handiwork." "Day unto day utters speech; night unto night reveals knowledge." (Psalm 19: 1 and 2)

2ndly, I would like to show you from the Bible that God is the One who brings weather disasters as well.

Let's first take the aspects of God's giving rain or withholding rain as an example of how He uses it as a judgment upon man's sin and wickedness. He also gives it or withholds it as a blessing to man, but let's take the subject of judgment first. You see the greatest of these forecasts of eternal judgment in the Flood of Noah's day. Look at Genesis Chapter 6, verse 5. "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." "So the Lord said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.'" "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Verse 17 - "And behold I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die." "But I will establish My covenant with you." (That is; Noah) This is exactly what God did. He did everything according to His sovereignty in His purpose; which was to punish people who had sinned against Him. Verse 11 - "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." "And the rain was on the earth for forty days and forty nights." But, it goes on to say, Noah and his family went into the ark and they were saved. They were saved because they were in the ark which God had commanded them to make. It is a picture of Christ's finished work. If you are in Christ, you are entering into the ark. You will enter in by faith in Christ, to all that He has done by dying for your sins on the cruel and cursed cross. Baptism will now save you; that is being spiritually baptized into His death and believing in His resurrection; you shall be saved. You will ride on and over the waters of God's wrath against sin. You remember the good weather that the Lord brought when Noah stepped out of the ark. It is found in Genesis 9: 13 - "I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the water shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh."

But sometimes God does bring floods still; not to destroy all flesh, but simply to warn men that they need to repent. Sometimes He withholds the rain to remind them of this as well. Look over at Amos 4: 7 and 8. "I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest." "I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city." "One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered." "So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; you have not returned to Me, says the Lord." You can see here that God was very particular in how He gave this weather; on one city rain; and on another city, no rain. The issue was repentance; returning to God. It is when God is ignored and neglected and His word is not heeded, that these things take place. God is full of goodness, He is great, He is patient and He is kind in all the weather that He gives. But men must prepare to meet Him. Look at verse 12 and 13 of Amos 4. "Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" "For behold, He who forms mountains, and creates the wind, who declares to man what his thought is, and makes the morning darkness, who tread the high places of the earth--the Lord God of hosts is His name."

When God wished to establish the righteousness of Job in contrast to the way His friends had viewed him, as a hypocrite, He undertook to show both Job and his friends His sovereignty over all things through the words of Elihu. Turn with me to Job 36: 24 -- "Remember to magnify His work, of which men have sung." "Everyone has seen it; man looks on it from afar." "Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; nor can the number of His years be discovered." "For He draws up drops of water, which distill as rain from the mist, which the clouds drop down and pour abundantly on man." "Indeed, can anyone understand the spreading of clouds, the thunder from His canopy?" "Look, He scatters His light upon it, and covers the depths of the sea." "For by these He judges the people; He gives food in abundance." "He covers His hands with the lightning, and commands it to strike." "His thunder declares it, the cattle also, concerning the rising storm." "At this also my heart trembles, and leaps from its place." "Hear attentively the thunder of his voice, and the rumbling that comes from his mouth." "He sends it forth under the whole heaven, His lightning to the ends of the earth." "After it a voice roar; he thunders with His majestic voice, and He does not restrain them when His voice is heard." "God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which cannot comprehend." "For he says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth'; likewise to the gentle rain and the heavy rain of His strength." Verse 9 - "From the chamber of the south comes the whirlwind, and cold from the scattering winds of the north." "By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen." "Also with moisture He saturates the thick clouds; He scatters His bright clouds." "And they swirl about, being turned by His guidance, that they may do whatever He commands them on the face of the whole earth." "He causes it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy." There you have it. These are the 3 major reasons for God's bringing weather disasters; correction, or for His land, or for mercy. God is sovereign over all the weather, each and every day. He may establish patterns for weather, but He is able to break them, or to change them, as He pleases.

This brings us now to look 3rdly, for a few moments, at what God is doing when He brings tornadoes in particular.

There are reasons why God brings tornadoes and such devastation as we have seen in Joplin, Missouri this past Tuesday. We must begin by saying what Jesus said in Luke Chapter 13: 1-5, when He was teaching his disciples and others of their need to repent. It says, "There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." "And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things?" "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." "Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other

men who dwelt in Jerusalem?” “I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” One of the main reasons that God brings tornadoes is because they so well picture the suddenness and the destruction and the terrible loss that will come to people eternally, if they do not repent. The people in Joplin, Missouri, are not necessarily worse sinners than we are here in Tama. The same fate could have happened to us. We have received a warning, however. This tornadic judgment is a picture of a much greater judgment which is coming which every man and woman will be present at. Your repenting of your sins, when you hear of your need to do so, is most necessary to your eternal salvation. Your repentance does not merit your salvation, but it is necessary to show forth the reality of your change of heart which has taken place in you; your change of thinking; in how you think about the way that you have lived, and how you now view your past sins. If you are repentant it means that you have turned from your sins unto God to be saved from them. You have, and perhaps you are, experiencing grief and sorrow over those sins, and you now view your sins against God with hatred. You have confessed them and placed them under the blood of Jesus Christ, and you are now in the process of, and will finally forsake them by the grace of Christ. God wills to pardon all those who truly believe in Jesus. But He will never do it without also giving you the grace of repentance. You will not continue in sin that grace might abound. You may fall into it, but you will never justify it. You will confess it and forsake it.

“What if I don’t” you say? Then you will perish, Jesus says. All unrepentant people will perish eternally. All those who worship false gods will perish eternally. There is only one true and living God. And He is the God who has revealed Himself, and His will, in the Bible. Turn with me over to Psalm 78. Some people have a hard time believing that God sometimes kills people physically when they will not repent. But in verse 26 we find the truth. Speaking of the disobedient, unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness Asaph declares what God did to them. “He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens; and by His power He brought in the south wind.” “He also rained meat on them like the dust, feathered fowl like the sand of the seas; and He let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings.” So they ate and were well filled, for He gave them their own desire.” “They were not deprived of their craving; but while their food was still in their mouths, the wrath of God came against them, and slew the stoutest of them, and struck down the choice men of Israel.” “In spite of this they still sinned, and did not believe in His wondrous works.” “Therefore their days He consumed in futility, and their years in fear.” “When He slew them, then they sought Him; and they returned and sought earnestly for God.” “Then they remembered God was their rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer.” “Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, and they lied to Him with their tongue; for their heart was not steadfast with Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant.” “But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them.”

This is how Israel was under the Old Covenant after the Lord brought them out of Egypt. They were in many respects sinful and unbelieving towards God’s wondrous works. What was one of those works? It was when the Lord caused the Red Sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and waters were divided and the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, whereas when the Egyptians tried to come across, He let the wall of waters come back on them. Now you either believe these things or you don’t. The Egyptians didn’t and they perished. But sometimes even those who claim to be in covenant with God do not believe. Look at verse 40 of Psalm 78 – “How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert!” “Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.” “They did not remember His power, the day when He redeemed them from the enemy.” Look at what He then reminds them of concerning their history of what brought them out of Egypt. Verse 47 – “He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost.” “He also gave up their cattle to the hail, and their flocks to fiery

lightning.” “He cast on them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and trouble by sending angels of destruction among them.” I personally believe that this “band of destroying angels” were those who were given the commission to destroy the fields of Egypt and slay the first-born so that Israel could come out of bondage. God was the One who sent them to this work of judgment, but they carried out His word. But God is certainly able to send the winds of destruction, whether personally or by the agency of destroying angels. Psalm 148: 7 and 8 – “Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all the depths; fire and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind fulfilling His word.”

This leads me to the conclusion that God is not only the author of the weather and gives us the weather that He thinks is best for us every day, but that He is also the author of all natural disasters. But we must be very careful about judging God in relation to how He brings these disasters. He is infinite in wisdom and holy, and He cannot do anything sinful or wrong. If He chooses to take life in a storm, it is according to His perfect wisdom and justice, and perhaps even His mercy. Christians may die in the same natural disasters along with unbelievers. We may not understand it, and God will not have to give us an account of why He has done it, but it is for us to worship Him and not draw our conclusions until that Day which will reveal everything in its true light. In the book of Job, when Job came into his calamity and difficulty, it was because God had been boasting of his righteousness. “Have you considered my servant Job?” “There is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” Yes, Satan said, but that is because You have made a hedge around him, around his household, and all that he has on every side. God permitted Satan to tempt Job when he permitted Satan to take his children away in one fell swoop in a wind storm. It says in Job Chapter 1, verse 19 - “And suddenly a great wind (a tornado?) came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died.” God did not approve of this action of Satan’s, for in Chapter 2, verse 3, the Lord says to Satan – “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” “And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him with cause.” How did Job respond to the death of his 10 children in this wind storm which Satan brought? He worshiped God even so. Will you not learn that this is the right view of the weather? God has it all in His control. Satan, sometimes, will obtain permission to take power over the wind, to afflict righteous men with bad weather, but you should know that God has the greater power to overrule all of this for good and to make His face to shine on afflicted Job, and afflicted you; if you suffer in this way. He knows how to restore your soul, and your losses if it is His good will. And even if you die in a tornado; if you die, you will be brought immediately into the presence of God to live forever with Him. If you live, He knows how to restore you, once again, after the trial. He will certainly do these good things, bringing good out of evil, for any child of His who is trusting in Him to vindicate their righteousness and to bless them with good. God is kind and good in His nature. “He causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.” But with regard to all the things that He is intending to accomplish through these; His gifts of kindness in giving good weather; or matters of judgment and mercy in giving us bad weather; we only know but a part. Let us thank God today that He is in perfect control of the weather. May we be able to worship Him if He hits our house with a storm, or if we lose someone precious to us. Let us pray that great storms like the ones that we have witnessed this spring will lead many people to repent of their sins and trust in the Lord. Let us pray that we might be compassionate and show mercy to those who have suffered loss in these storms. Let us minister to their needs if we can. Let us pray that the Sun of righteousness will arise upon with healing in His wings for them. Let us pray that many people would turn to Christ and have God's spiritual light and favor shine upon them.