

Works in Nature as God's Words (Psalm 147)

Several times Psalm 147 refers to the "word of God" in ways we don't normally use the expression "words of God."

"He is the One who sends His Command throughout the earth. His Word runs very swiftly."

"He sends out His Word and melts [the snow, the hail, and the frost]."

Remember that when Jesus was being tempted by the Devil, He quoted a verse from Deuteronomy, that man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Usually when we think of God's word, we think of what He spoke to the prophets in various ways, and His word that has been written in the Bible. Here the expression "word of God" means God's control over nature and the universe, and His ways of ordering and controlling our lives, to teach us to depend on Him for everything. This psalm mentions a wide range of aspects of the weather: clouds, rain, cold, snow, frost, and hail, icy winds and warm breezes. We think of some of these as associated with storms, and sometimes the Lord did use storms to deliver His people against their enemies. When the sun and the warm breeze melts snow, hail, and frost, they are at the Lord's direction. We should think of them as words from the Lord. God "sends out His command to the earth, and His word runs very swiftly." The aspects of the weather are treated as persons who carry the Lord's messages, as the angels also do. This is not the kind of unambiguous word that we have in the Scriptures, nor is it a direct revelation that some people absurdly claim, when they say, "The Lord told me to do so and so." These words of the Lord affect everything on earth, the grass, and food for all kinds of animals and birds, the finest wheat for human food, and the affairs of nations. We depend on Him every moment, and if He were to withdraw His sustaining hand for only a moment, we would all come to ruin. We delight in seeing in God's creation His "word" at work.

So we must not see the forces of nature that affect our lives so much as mere mechanistic forces that operate blindly. God is sensitive even to the needs of both domestic cattle and the young of wild ravens when they cry in need.

This "word" of God in nature reveals God to a point, but does not reveal His whole nature to us, or His love and grace that provide for our spiritual needs and rescue from sin and death. That revelation comes in His revealed Word, and His redemptive Word makes His plan of salvation and His will for the holy lives of His people known. This is His greatest gift to Israel. It is mentioned as the end of this passage:

He declares His word to Jacob,

His statutes and His judgments to Israel.

His Law and Gospel declare His wrath and grace, and what He has done in His Son to provide for our spiritual needs. So the thought of harvest, and our daily concerns about the weather should direct our thoughts to the spiritual harvest that the Lord is preparing through this special redemptive word. That is why we also pray the Lord of the harvest to send out workers in this harvest.