



IN THE

But He said, "You cannot see My face,
for no man can see Me and live!"

Exodus 33:20

STORM

FROM HIS EARLIEST DAYS, man has wondered about God's visage. Is He an old man with long, white beard? Is He handsome, stern, inviting, frightening? Or is God a shape-shifter, presenting Himself to each person according to that individual's desires or needs? Is it correct even to think of God as a "Him," some wonder; could He really be a "She," or even an "It"? Or is God something in appearance not yet recognizable to humans, such as a mysterious entity of pure, blinding energy? Is that what would have killed Moses?

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Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!" And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" Then the Lord said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there on the rock; and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."

Exodus 33:18-23

It is not good enough to say that such musings are simply academic. For it is in man's heart to desire relationships that are face-to-face—even with his God. Moses wished for it, and so do many of those who have followed after. It is in man's heart to look upon the face of his adored. What sort of God would leave His adherents bereft of His visage?

But our God has not. For His face is there, in the storm.



He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him,
Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.
From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds,
Hailstones and coals of fire.
The Lord also thundered in the heavens,

And the Most High uttered His voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire.
He sent out His arrows, and scattered them,
And lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them.
Then the channels of water appeared,
And the foundations of the world were laid bare
At Your rebuke, O Lord,
At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.

Psalm 18:11-15

In the storm we see the face and hear the voice of our God.

The black, churning clouds are the face of His wrath. The jagged white of the electric pulse is His quick, fearsome might. The thunder echoes His rumbling, intimidating strength. Before His face flies the fierce, gusting wind—the fear of the Lord. His beard—the angry, pounding downpour of rain—is life, but it bruises along the way. It strips branch and leaf, it beats against window and roof, it flattens the bush.

Were we to leave it there, the face of our God would be yet unfinished. For God's wrath has been assuaged. God remains who He always has been. He is still power and might, unapproachable holiness, fierce wrath. What has changed is that His wrath has been satisfied, and His holiness instantly became approachable, at the cross. In the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, we need no longer fear His wrath or terrible might, for they are not directed

at us—we who are His children in Christ.

And there, too, He is in the storm. For the storm finishes not with the dreadful gale, but with the cooling breeze; not with the bruising downpour, but with the gentle, sustaining shower. The wind of the Spirit indeed brings a “fear of the Lord,” but it brings as well comfort, consolation, wisdom, and encouragement. It does not drive away, as the gale, but strengthens with His sweet breath.



While there is always the potential for damage from a passing thunderstorm, more often than not we welcome it. Living things require moisture, and nothing can replace rain from the skies. We know that the benefits will usually outweigh the possible liabilities.

What benefits do we gain by welcoming a supernatural, all-powerful God into our life? Should we not tremble at the prospect of His coming? Should we not quake outside the door to His throne room as we contemplate His terrible might?

No. For we cannot enter His presence at all—we cannot step inside the storm—save by the blood of Christ shed at the cross. And that same

blood has satisfied the enmity between God and man.
We need not fear the storm.
It is power.
It is life.