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July 17, 2018

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*Christianity Today, October, 2004*

# Wind of Terror, Wind of Glory

We cannot know God's majesty without his terrible holiness.

BY DANIEL TOMBERLIN / POSTED OCTOBER 1, 2004

Not long ago, I stood by the bedside of a dying saint. This man had been a member of my church for 50 years. He was known throughout the community as a kind and gentle man. He never lost his temper or spoke ill of anyone. For the last six years, he had spent his life in a nursing home, suffering from one ailment after another. As I stood by his bed with his family, his son-in-law looked into my face and asked, "Can you please tell me how God gets any glory for this?"

Our spirituality encourages us to proclaim our victories, but we lament in silence. We have room for a God who is active in our affairs. We even have room for a Satan who is active in our affairs. But we have little or no room for a God who seems indifferent to our suffering. Certainly, we have no room for a God who moves to afflict. But the Scriptures give us such a testimony.

## Great Wind

In the first chapter of the book of Job, we are introduced to a man who is a saint in every way. His flocks and children are among the many blessings of God in his life. But one day a dreadful storm blows into Job's life. A messenger brings the news to Job: "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine ... and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died" ([Job 1:18-19](#), NASB).

The Hebrew word for wind is *ruach*, also translated into English as "spirit" and "breath." This same word is used in Exodus, where we are told that the Red Sea was parted by a blast from the nostrils of God ([Ex. 15:8](#)). The great wind of God plays a significant role in the life of Job.

Many will protest, "It wasn't God who sent that great wind, it was the Devil!" In general, that's the witness of Scripture: Good things come from God, and bad things from his adversary. When bad things happen to good people, it would be presumptuous, as Job's friends learned, to guess why. Yet Job seems to know the source of his suffering. "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away," he says ([Job 1:21](#)). Later, in reply to his wife, he

asks, "Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" ([Job 2:10](#)). For Job, God is the source of blessing and adversity! When Job begins his lament, he does not address or rebuke "the Devil," he addresses his lament to God.

Consider these words: "For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, their poison my spirit drinks; the terrors of God are arrayed against me" ([Job 6:4](#)). Suddenly, we are faced with a God with whom we are unfamiliar. We are accustomed to speaking of "the flaming arrows of the evil one" ([Eph. 6:16](#)), but Job presents to us a view of spiritual warfare in which God is the antagonist. "He breaks through me with breach after breach; he runs at me like a warrior" ([Job 16:14](#)).

Job cries out toward the heavens, "But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue with God" ([Job 13:3](#)). Job is at a loss to understand why God has brought such affliction into his life. But neither his affliction nor his lack of understanding causes him to hide his face from God. To the contrary, he is in God's face! This may seem irreverent, but it's actually a sign of daring faith. Job demands God's attention; he demands that God explain himself. "Though he slay me, I will hope in him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before him" ([Job 13:15](#)).

In the midst of Job's lament the winds began to blow again. It seems that another storm is brewing. The dark thunderheads are low on the horizon, and they are blown quickly across the heavens. In their midst are loud claps of thunder and bright lightning. Then suddenly, "the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind" ([Job 38:1](#); ). A great wind that was the source of Job's afflictions is now the place from which God speaks.

## A Stunned Silence

Job has demanded an audience with God, but now that God has granted it, Job can only remain silent. "Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to you? I lay my hand on my mouth" ([Job 40:4](#)). Job is silenced because he has been overwhelmed by the presence of the almighty God. Suddenly, his afflictions are not his primary concern. He proclaimed, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees you" ([Job 42:5](#)).

Later, another man of faith, the apostle Paul, would write that his sufferings "are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" ([Rom. 8:18](#)). This is not to suggest that Job and Paul's afflictions were not intense. But standing in the splendor and majesty of God is an experience that transcends the sufferings of this corrupt age.

Some might say that Job's lament was out of character for a man of faith. But I think that it was Job's lament—his reckless and daring challenges—that brought him face to face with God. He experienced what can be called the dark side of the glory of God. This does not suggest God's absence, or even his displeasure. It does suggest his presence in such a way that leaves us feeling abandoned. It is during these times that we truly experience the utter holiness of God, realizing that he is wholly other, beyond human scrutiny. During these times, lament is the only proper human response.

One of Job's friends, Elihu, offered words of counsel that we should consider. "There are times when the light vanishes, behind darkening clouds; then comes the wind, sweeping them away. And brightness spreads from

the north. God is clothed in fearful splendor” ([Job 37:21-22](#), New Jerusalem Bible). The winds bring the storms, which hide the splendor and glory of God, and the winds cause the storms to pass again, revealing the brightness of his glory. The story of Job reminds us that the winds that bring the storm and the winds that blow away the storm belong to God.

The story of Job ends with his wealth and posterity restored. So then, what is the point of the story? Are the rewards of Job’s faithfulness and integrity to be understood in terms of the restoration of his fortunes? Are all things as they were? Not at all! The Job of the first chapter was perfect, blessed, and without adversity. But he had never seen the splendor and glory of God. The Job of the last chapter has been sorely afflicted, and those times cannot be forgotten. Job has been deeply wounded. But he has survived warfare with God; he has seen God.

The Spirit (*ruach*) of God moves in the lives of believers in a variety of ways. He draws us into God’s presence so we may receive the blessings of salvation. He continues to move in our lives, sometimes in a gentle and restful breeze, and at other times like the winds of a great storm that disrupts our lives. The Spirit’s work in our lives is to draw us into God’s holiness so we may experience his glory. We prefer to experience his glory rather than his holiness. But as Job testifies, we can experience his glory only after we have been confronted by his holiness.

As Spirit-filled believers, we must make room in our theology for a God who is utterly free from our sentimental caricatures. We must make room in our spirituality for profound lament. We should recognize that true victory does not come without intense struggle. We must give room for the Spirit of God to blow mightily through our lives and through our churches. In doing so, we may find ourselves wounded, but whole, and, prayerfully, holy.

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