

“Presence”

Reading once again through the OT, I am awestruck imagining what it was like when God would manifest His presence to the Israelites, like in Exodus 19:16-19a: *“On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently...the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder...”*

Wow! It's hard to fathom how incredibly intense that must have been! But then consider this - the Lord led His people through the desert with a pillar of cloud during the day, and a pillar of fire by night - that would've been pretty impressive and awe inspiring as well! What a comfort to know He was with them 24/7/365!

As many of you know I turned 80 this year, and many things inevitably change as we age. As I walked the dog the other evening I was talking to the Lord, and telling Him I am not as confident or adventurous as I once was, in fact in some areas, I'm occasionally a little fearful, but Dt. 31:6 says: *“Be strong and courageous. “Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

Today we don't have visible evidence that He is traveling through life with us that the Israelites had, but what encourages me, assures me, and gives me hope and confidence is knowing God is still WITH us through His Spirit living IN us. My old Unger's Bible dictionary describes the pillar of cloud and fire as the visible representation of the Invisible God, a symbol of the zeal of God, who guided and directed their path and protected them from the elements during the day...

...and at night the pillar of fire lit up their path by its SPLENDOR and defended them from terror and calamity! It is one thing to KNOW about His presence, but it is an entirely different scenario to EXPERIENCE it! Next week I'd like to dive a little deeper into what the difference is between being in His presence vs. experiencing His MANIFEST presence in our midst.

In the meantime, do what this old song says: *“Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full, in his wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of his glory and grace”* “Practice the Presence of God” like Brother Lawrence did! Amen!