

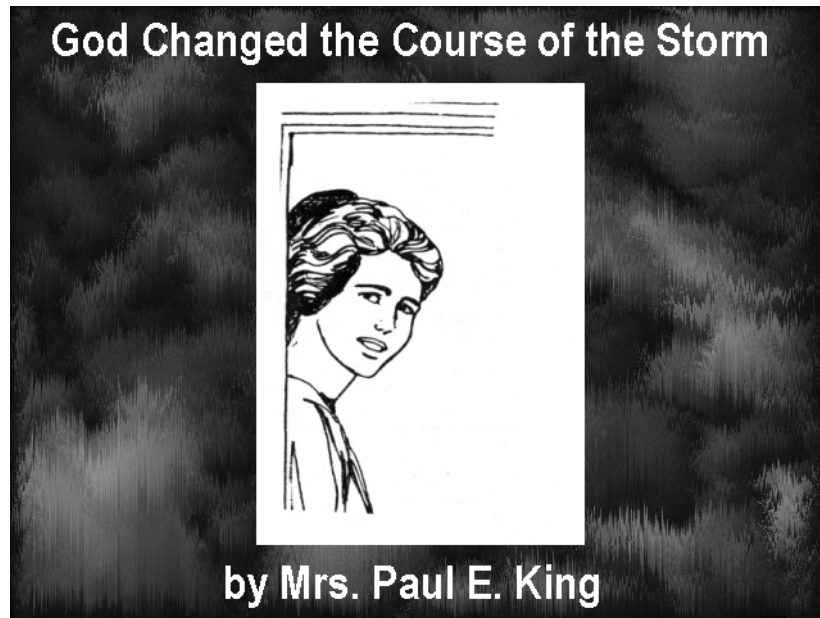
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**GOD CHANGED THE COURSE OF THE STORM**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

April came in like a cautious lady. Carefully she unfolded a new leaf here, a wild flower there, testing the water, so to speak to see if it was right. And it must have been; for everywhere one looked there was an explosion of verdant growth from ridge to valley, from field to forest.

"Honestly, Mother, this must be the most glorious spring ever!" Patricia Hall exclaimed to her mother as she came through the kitchen door and dropped her armload of books onto a nearby desk. "I just don't believe anything's ever been more beautiful. And so early, too, for all the trees to be dressed out in their most beautiful spring greens! Oh, my heart's overflowing!"

Mrs. Hall laughed softly. "I guess we all think each new spring is the most beautiful, Patricia," she stated. "After a long, cold winter especially. But this is a lovely spring. And unusually warm for our part of the country, dear. I only hope we don't get a freeze."

"O Mother, certainly not! Spring is here. The robins and song sparrows are busy building their nests, and I'm sure we have a pair of doves doing the same thing in one of our pine trees along the end of our lot. If they haven't begun to build they're scrutinizing and surveying the area for a possible building site, I'm sure. I've been watching them carefully. I love to hear them coo and sing to each other. Oh, I love spring!"

Again Mrs. Hall laughed pleasantly. "I suppose that can be said for all of us," she commented. "Solomon, in the second chapter of his Songs of Solomon, states it beautifully this way, Pat, 'For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

" 'The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle(...or dove...) is heard in our land;

" 'The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.' "

"That is beautiful, Mother. Now, what do you want me to do first? I know you and Daddy must leave for that meeting right after supper; so why don't you rest awhile and let me finish the evening meal? I love cooking and house cleaning."

"I know you do, honey, and that's really sweet of you, but I'm quite rested. I do wish you didn't need to stay alone though while we're gone. We won't be home until 12:30 or 1:00 A. M."

Patricia threw her arms around her mother's neck, and laughing she said, "I'm a senior in high school Mom; I'm not a babe in arms anymore. I'll practice on the piano my usual daily hour, then do what housework needs done and then settle down to concentrated study. Look at that arm load of homework I brought home, would you! Honestly, I do believe Mr. Gephardt's getting worse all the time with his homework assignments. Some of the fellows are talking of dropping out of school next fall if he's put in again as a teacher. A few of the girls may drop out, too, because of him."

"That would be a foolish thing to do," Mrs. Hall declared. "I'm sure he thinks he's doing the right thing by assigning the homework. But homework or no homework, I do wish you wouldn't have to stay here by yourself until we return. There are severe storm warnings out for tonight, or early this evening. I'm positive that this hot, unseasonably humid weather is spawning something less favorable. Like you, I really do enjoy it, but I know, too, that it isn't normal for our part of the country."

"Don't worry about me, Mother; I have the Lord in my heart, and He will send His angels to keep a good watch over me. I promise to lock the doors after you are gone and not admit strangers, as per your careful and wise instruction."

The two laughed together over Patricia's last statement then busied themselves with finishing the evening meal.

Alone after her parent's departure, the dark-haired girl cleaned the kitchen and put everything in order again then took her hour for practicing on the piano.

It was while she was deep in homework books that Patricia noticed the eerie, much-too-early darkness creep stealthily into the room. Jumping to her feet, the book clutched tightly in her hands, she opened the door and stepped out on the porch. In the distance came the low, almost incessant, rumble of thunder punctuated by lurid flashes of lightning. Clouds, of such strange color as to be eerie and weird, rolled and churned in the sky. It looked like a boiling mass of gray-green, yellow-orange something or other rushing across the heavens in a race to get somewhere fast.

Patricia gasped. Already she could feel the force and the power of the still-distant but rapidly approaching wind and storm. It reminded her of a wild horse, galloping madly and unrestrained toward her.

She rushed inside and locked the door. But not to study! This was no ordinary storm, she knew: "There are severe storm warnings out for tonight, or early this evening..." her mother's words played back on her brain like a tape on the tape recorder.

Laying the book down, she turned the radio on to a local station. The announcer's voice was urgent, appealing, as he exclaimed in animation, "A tornado's on its way here. No, rather, there are sightings of three. Already it has left a half-mile wide swath in the Ridge area, leaving many homeless and numerous fatalities. The path it is taking is to the north of town; Murdoc and Balfree Roads..."

Patricia turned pale. Their home was right in the path of the vicious thing! She heard the announcer say it...Murdoc and Balfree Roads!

"If you have a basement," the announcer was all but shouting, "get to your basement. Lie down near the wall, open all doors and windows..."

Basement? Well, their home just didn't have one, Patricia thought, as she looked through the picture window to the even more eerie gray-green darkness that billowed across their lawn now and wrapped the surrounding area and their house in a shroud of darkness.

Dropping to her knees, the girl raised her hands heavenward. "Father," she said trustingly and childlike, "please take care of this house and of me. You know this is all Father and Mother have. You gave this to them. It belongs to You; everything we have belongs to You. If You want this blown away, I say Amen to it. But I know You can change the course of the wind, and I'm going to thank You for doing it."

In the midst of her simple prayer, the announcer shouted, "It's veered! The tornado's veered! It's cutting two miles north of the afore-mentioned roads. I don't know what's happened. It's crazy. Crazy! It's cutting a clean swath..."

Patricia stood to her feet, watching. Praying, "O God! Have mercy on the souls who don't know Thee. Please! Please, don't let this beastly thing kill them and damn their souls in hell."

The wind hammered its mighty fists against the house, shrieking and whistling, whining and moaning around the corners, rattling the windows until Patricia thought they'd rattle out of their putty and crash. Noise, like a giant freight train ready to plow through the house, thundered incessantly nearby and rain fell in sheets. And always, there was that weird, eerie gray-green shroud.

By the lurid flashes of lightning the girl saw the giant funnels move in a deadly pattern, eastward. One only seemed to touch the ground. Like a crazed, demented thing with super-natural force, she learned later, it drove straws into telephone poles, sucked buildings off their foundation into the funnel and dropped them like splintered wood miles away, setting an occasional one down, whole, in a distant field or pasture.

Patricia watched till the eerie color faded away, moving rapidly with the storm; then she fell to her knees and had a praise and thanksgiving session. The wind died down, the windows no longer shook and rattled and that incessant whining, shrieking, moaning had ceased. It all reminded her of the storm that once raged inside her soul until Jesus came in, took control of her heart and life, and the inner storm and conflict vanished and was gone.

A wave of glory washed over her as she realized how carefully and tenderly her Heavenly Father had watched over her, taken care of and protected her in the storm. "Crazy!" the announcer had all but shouted when the tornado veered. But Pat knew differently.

She felt like shouting the answer from the tallest building, the highest tree top: God changed the course of the wind! She knew it; she had asked Him to do so and He had answered her prayer. It was wonderful. Wonderful! she thought, getting back to her homework.