

Free chapter from *AGAINST ALL HOPE UNTIL....*

by Kerry J. Lebrun

Chapter 8 ~ Our Safe Place

Fear is a tormenting affliction. Webster defines it as *a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, doom, evil or harm, whether real or imagined, and indicates that worry, anxiety and panic are all symptoms of fear*. According to Webster's definition, fear and its symptoms are due to *anticipating danger and harm*. No wonder why fear is defined by Christians as "*negative faith*".

Some threats of impending doom can be imagined. Nonetheless, the results are the same. If you happen to suffer from PTSD, classified as an anxiety and/or panic disorder, you undoubtedly know what I'm talking about! PTSD-related fear involves the fear of people, places and things that represent the *original* traumatic event, which is not currently taking place. Regardless, *it sure seems real at the time*, and the adrenal response acts the same as if it were!

I dealt with fear for most of my life, but when my PTSD symptoms began, it greatly intensified. Seemingly overnight, I found myself propelled into a dimension of debilitating fear I could never have imagined. Every time my past trauma was triggered, whether the trigger was conscious or unconscious, I went into sheer anxiety that quickly spiraled into all-out panic that I could not get myself out of. The only thing I knew to do was to hide, cover my head, take pills and let it run its course. When my healing process began, and my trauma material started coming to the surface, the fear only worsened. Finally, I cried out to God for deliverance from this torture! This chapter contains the insights that ensued, and which led to growing levels of freedom in my life.

God's answer for fear, no matter what type, symptom or level of severity, is *faith*: "**What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.**" (Ps. 56:3). Like fear, *faith* also creates a powerful sense of anticipation, except of the *good* things that *God* promises to do!

This was exactly the lesson Jesus was teaching his disciples when He led them into the direct path of a sudden, violent storm! When they began to panic, He said, "**Why are you**

so fearful? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:40, HCSB). Jesus's response reveals not only the answer for fear, but also the *root* of fear: *lack of intimate knowledge of God and His Word*, or outright *unbelief*. Regardless, the answer is always faith in God!

According to Romans 10:17, faith is acquired from hearing and internalizing the Word of God, which is *God's true reality*:

"Faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title-deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we do not see and the conviction of their reality], faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses." (Heb. 11:1, Amp).

In this verse, "*hope*" is not how we humanly define hope, as in, "*I hope so*". The Greek defines it as *anticipation or expectation of God's faithfulness to perform His promises*. Hope and faith are based on what we know to be more real than what we see or feel around us.

In other words, overcoming fear is about seeing and operating from *God's* reality and perspective, instead of from our *human* perspective based on the natural. It is a matter of learning to see with the eyes of our *heart* or, walking by *faith*, (*spiritual sight*), instead of *appearance* (*natural sight*): **"Consider and look not at the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen."** (2 Cor. 4:18, Amp).

To overcome *any* type of fear, or, for that matter, any type of *obstacle*, the first thing we must do is to realize that what we are seeing in the natural realm is *not the whole story!* The *spiritual* realm is also very real and, because it represents *eternal* realities, even *more* so! For example, when Elisha's servant woke up and saw that he and Elisha were surrounded by a huge army, he became panicked. Elisha responded by cluing him in to the reality of God's protective angels surrounding them, which were *far outnumbering* this army! Then he prayed, **"Lord, please open his eyes and let him see."** (2 Ki. 6:17). God did so, and the servant saw that the mountain was covered with horses and chariots of fire (angels), all around them!

Seeing through the eye of faith also enabled Moses to overcome Pharaoh's threatening intimidation and remain faithful to God's agenda: **"By faith [Moses] forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."** (Heb. 11:27).

According to Hebrews 5:14, the more we practice walking by our spiritual eyesight (*faith*) instead of what we see and feel in the natural, the stronger our *spiritual* senses become, and the less moved by our *natural* circumstances we will be. Living by our human perceptions and feelings alone keeps us terribly limited to our natural experiences!

Consequentially, to quote Dr. Ben Carson's mother in "Gifted Hands", we must learn to "see beyond what we can see".

At the root of PTSD-related fear is a *victim mentality*. Because of how the traumatic event (s) wired them, a person sees their self as small, powerless and defenseless, and people or situations that represent their past trauma, as looming dangers and threats. The way to overcome these fears, is to, well, *get free from a victim mentality!* Again, this comes down to a matter of *perspective*. When our perspective (reality) lines up with God's perspective (reality), we are on the road to freedom!

A perfect example of a victim mentality is found in Numbers chapter 13-14. At this point in Biblical history, Israel was poised at the border of Canaan, ready to take possession of this land that was promised to Abraham and his descendants. For four hundred years, the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt, where they suffered horrible mistreatment at the hands of their Egyptian taskmasters. In other words, they were *former victims*. Though this was now in the *past*, we will see that this victim mindset was still operating in their *hearts*.

God had promised the Israelites a bountiful land where they could enjoy peace, rest and freedom, to be possessed by *faith*: Before they arrived, God forewarned them that they would face significant opposition from Canaan's current occupants. However, God assured them that as they went forward, He would certainly drive them out from before His people! (Exodus 23).

As the Israelites were preparing to go into the land, the twelve spies that explored it, said, " **We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is the fruit. But the people who live there are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw the descendants of the Anak there...We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are. And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, 'The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them...Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder.'**" (Num. 13:27-28, 31-33, 14:3-4, NIV).

The spies saw that the land was good, just as God had promised. But they also beheld their opposition: *Giants!* So, what conclusions did the spies come to, based on what they saw? That they were too weak to fight the giants, that the Lord was bringing them into the land to be slaughtered, and that their wives and children were going to be taken as plunder! Based on what

they *saw*, they were pretty much anticipating *utter defeat!* The mistake they made, was leaving out the most important factor: *God's promise to go before them, fight for them, and drive the giants out from before them!* What was the result of their unbelieving perspective? *Extreme fear!* Furthermore, the people became bitter and depressed, and decided to turn back to *Egyptian slavery!*

Now, let's look closer at their faithless perspective: "**We can't attack those people: they are stronger than we are...We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.**" Now *that* is a *classic victim mentality!* No wonder they were so afraid! Granted, this was not an imagined threat. These were real giants. And, they must have been huge if the Israelites compared themselves as grasshoppers. However, if they saw the giants from *God's* perspective, they would have anticipated *victory* instead of *defeat*: "**It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.**" (Is. 40:23).

Compared to Himself, who fills the heavens and the earth with His glory, *all* the inhabitants of the earth are as tiny grasshoppers---*including the giants!* At the same time, being in alliance with *Almighty God* made the *Israelites* infinitely *larger* than their giant opponents! Had the Israelites viewed themselves according to God's *Promise*, they would not have seen themselves as grasshoppers (*victims*), but as *more than conquerors!*

There were two men who did not agree with the evil report of the spies: "**Joshua...and... Caleb...who [also] explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, 'The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.'**" (Num. 14:6-9, NIV).

Joshua and Caleb maintained a different report: Instead of measuring their circumstances by what they saw and felt in the *natural*, they aligned them with *God's Word*, declaring, "**We will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us.**" Unlike the men who viewed themselves through victim's eyes, Joshua and Caleb viewed the *giants* as the victims, and *themselves* as the *threats!* And, I might add, Joshua and Caleb were the only ones from that generation that ended up possessing God's Promised land! What an amazing difference *faith* can make, both in our *perspective* and the *results* it produces!

As Christians today, we have even more reason for prevailing faith than did Joshua and Caleb. Due to our knowledge of who we are in Christ and Who He is in us, a victim

mindset can be a thing of the past. I learned this first-hand one day.

As my emotional numbness waned and the PTSD became more acute, I began to feel the full brunt of my fears. Everywhere I turned, something or someone was terrifying me. Day and night, the anxiety and panic were unbearable. I was strongly tempted to allow myself to disassociate into a far-off place and never come back, if that were possible.

One morning while pondering this, Jesus spoke to me in a gentle voice, saying, *"You can run away and hide, if you want to. Or, you can hide in the safe place I have provided for you! My safe place will make you feel safe everywhere you go! The choice is yours."*

While He was speaking to me, in my spirit I saw a structure that was completely covered on all angles. His offer was very enticing to me, so I asked Him what this "safe place" was?

Immediately, He led me to Psalm 62:5: **"Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is a mighty rock, my refuge."** (NIV).

In this Psalm, David was describing his persecutors' attempts to intimidate him and topple his leadership as king, and how he handled it through his faith in God. He refers to God as his *"mighty rock, fortress, and refuge"*. As I did a word study on these three words, my life was changed!

In Old Testament times, during times of attack, the Israelite armies would hide in an enclosed, fortified place called a *refuge*. Likewise, a *fortress*, which was a stone castle, was also a strong place of defense they hid inside of during times of attack. God is also known as a *"rock"*. In Exodus 33:21 God told Moses to "hide in the cleft of the massive rock" while His glory passed by.

All three of these illustrations of God as our safe hiding place, are typology of our being "hidden in Christ."

The apostle Paul uses the phrase, *"in Christ"* and its other related forms, approximately 170 times in his New Testament epistles. According to Romans 6:3-6, this speaks of our being baptized into Christ by identifying with His death, burial and resurrection through faith.

One example is Colossians 3:3: **"For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."** According to Webster, *"Hidden"* means *"to be kept secret, hidden away from view"*.

Now consider the following two verses:

"You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance." (Ps. 32:7, NIV).

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God in him I will trust." (Psalm 91:1).

The "secret place" of the Most High, is Jesus. We appropriate this truth, releasing its sense of comfort and security, by *believing* and *speaking* it.

Psalm 61: 2- 4, another example of typology of Christ as our Rock, Shelter, Strong Tower and Hiding Place, says,

"From the ends of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will hide in thy tabernacle forever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings."

Again, Psalm 27:1 says, **"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"** *Strength* means *"A fortified place, a defense, force, fortress, rock, stronghold"*. (NSECB).

Though the Bible is packed full of similar references, a brief study of what it means to be "hid in Christ" was all it took to make me realize I was *already* dwelling in the safest place on earth! Consequentially, I was no longer tempted to retreat to some secluded place to feel safe! I knew that, by faith, I could feel safe no matter *where* I was, and no matter what the *circumstances!*

Already I was feeling a new sense of hope and freedom, and God wasn't even done yet! He then went on to teach me about the security found by means of *Christ in me*, leading me to 1 Samuel chapters 5-6. These chapters contain powerful insights concerning the "Ark of the Covenant", a type and shadow of Christ, and its faith-inspiring results in the lives of believers.

Though the first generation of Israelites missed out on the Promised land, the second generation made it in. Whenever they went to battle against the opposition, the Ark of the Covenant was to go before them, ensuring their victory. One day The Ark was stolen by the Philistines and placed in Dagon's temple, a false god that the Philistines worshipped. The next morning when the people of Ashdod got up, they found the statue of Dagon *on its face before the Ark!* This illustrates the fact that *Jesus is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, to Whom every knee must bow*: **"All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth."** (Mat. 28:18,

HSCB). The Philistines picked it up and set it upright, but the next morning it was *back* on its face before the Ark! Except *this* time, its *head and hands were broken off!* Moreover, the entire time the Ark was in the enemy territory, its very *presence* created havoc throughout the city, and in every one it was moved to! Finally, they got rid of it!

King David recaptured the Ark and gathered his men to bring it back to Jerusalem. God had already given specific instructions to Moses, as to how it was to be handled. They were to insert special poles into installed rings on all four sides of the Ark and carry it on their shoulders, preventing human hands from touching it. However, instead of following God's instructions they placed it on a cart. In the process of transporting it, The Ark started falling off. When one of the men reached out to catch it, he was instantly struck dead!

We, as believers, are *Arks*, so to speak, of *Christ in us, the hope of glory*. As earthen vessels filled with God's power and glory (2 Cor. 4:7), living inside us is the same conquering power that went before the Israelites to drive out the giants, caused Dagon to bow before it, and slew the man who touched it! **"The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."** (1 Jn. 4:4, NIV).

These insights about our Safe Place had a profound effect on me by producing a sense of courage and confidence I had never known before! Because I felt safe everywhere I went, I also felt more grounded, was much less likely to dissociate, and less apprehensive in venturing out into the world. Eventually, God set me free from PTSD, altogether, but in the meantime, I was mightily strengthened and sustained by faith!

Jesus overcame the world, the flesh and the devil on our behalf, winning our freedom from everything that holds us in bondage, including *fear!* Because we know that *God is for us*, instead of anticipating *harm and defeat*, we need only anticipate His power, love, faithfulness--and ultimately, *His Victory*--manifested in our lives!

"For whatever is born of God is victorious over the world; and this is the victory that conquers the world, even our faith." (1 Jn. 5:4, Amp).