

My Bout With Panic Attacks
“A Testimony in Progress”

By: Jennifer Sides

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“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!”

- Philippians 4:6-7

Introduction

Although it has never been easy for me, I have found that when I make myself vulnerable by sharing my innermost thoughts and trials with people, as embarrassing as those thoughts and trials might be, it almost always blesses someone in one way or another. I would say that most of all it consoles those who hear and myself to know we are not alone. It is in this book I have simply been given the desire to tell of my own personal trials in the sense that I hope if you can relate you might somehow benefit from them. That you might behold some words of wisdom to strengthen and encourage you enough to achieve some peace of mind no matter what trial you might be facing whether it be panic attacks, depression, cancer, etc.

With that said, it is my prayer that as you read the following pages of this book you will be blessed in ways that touch and heal your heart, renewing your mind with wisdom, restoring your soul and strengthening you to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12) that is found only in the arms of Jesus. For it is with such faculties we become encouraged and empowered to love the Lord and achieve His perfect will in our lives. If you happen to benefit from anything you read in the following pages, know this book goes out to you.

I hid my problem with panic attacks from as many people as possible in the beginning. I would have to say the main reason I did so was due to embarrassment along with being totally in the dark as to what was happening to me. When I did tell people, it was reluctantly and only because I knew it was better to say something than to have one and no one know what was happening. I felt that having a panic attack without anyone knowing what was going on would have been even more embarrassing. So, I felt stuck wondering who all I should make aware of my situation.

Then, one day I realized all of a sudden I was no longer apprehensive to talk about it. It dawned on me how Satan came to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10) and that as long as I was embarrassed he had a hold on me. It was at that moment I was set free to tell people without hesitation or embarrassment. So, to

prove to myself I had been set free from such a stronghold, I began to share my struggle with all of my friends. Sure enough, people could relate and were commenting, sending emails and even wanting to talk to me on the phone. I saw many more people suffering like me than I would have imagined, and although I have only been dealing with the frustration of panic attacks for a short season it seems for some reason they have been a life long struggle. Perhaps in a sense it is because looking in hindsight and up to this present day I can see where my struggles may have brought me to this point.

So before I get too far into this book, I believe I should try to make it as clear as possible that I am not saying you should not go to the doctor if you are having panic attacks. Not all panic attacks occur just because of anxiety. There are severe medical conditions that cause panic attacks and need to be examined under a physicians care as soon as possible. The additional title of this book, “A Testimony in Progress”, has been added due to the fact that during the time of this writing I continue to have panic attacks. Although I have not yet overcome these attacks, I am committed through this testing of my faith to count it all joy (James 1:2) and it has been evident that the Lord has been using this struggle as an avenue to minister to people already despite the fact I am in the midst of crawling out of these trenches in which I have found myself surrounded.

This publication is in no way or by any means intended to promote a self-help book. For Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” So, it is now and only with His help, I am lifting myself up out of this pit of despair, and it is my hope and prayer that as I do so you will join with me in doing the same. Let us therefore go boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

CHAPTER 1

And So They Begin

My panic attacks began the first week of December 2009 and have continued for a little over a year now. It had been just another ordinary day or so it seemed as I was standing in the check out line of a major retail store, when all of a sudden I thought I was going to pass out followed by the urge to want to run away. I started talking to this girl in line behind me to alert her that I thought I might be about to pass out. The girl seemed very concerned and was talking to me about how I was feeling. I noticed that after we started talking that I had calmed down and was able to get my merchandise checked out. Then, I went to my truck and sat there a few minutes to make sure I would be able to drive. I was fine at first, but then I felt like I was going to pass out again. So, I sat there a while longer until I thought it was safe to leave.

There have been many more panic attacks since that time. I can't even recall them all. I can only speculate as to how they started in the first place. As far as why they still continue, I am not sure I will ever be able to pinpoint the root cause on this side of Heaven. However, I do believe the Lord is showing me some things about myself. Areas of my life where He has been trying to get my attention for years along with areas I have not really given much thought about until recently. He has also been showering my spirit with scripture and Bible stories that I have not thought of in a long time in order to give me hope, joy, strength, courage, wisdom, peace of mind and confirmation of His glorious attributes as I ponder upon such things.

I just need to say one more thing before I continue. I can only speak for myself, but when I have a panic attack I feel and sometimes act out of control. It concerns me at times that people will think I am crazy. I have no doubt that I am not, but on the other hand I also know from the outside looking in that does not always appear to be the case. However, I will say this without shame or embarrassment and at the risk of sounding crazy; I hope you will at least finish reading this after you read the following

statement even if it is just to amuse yourself. I believe that I am under an attack from Satan himself. With that said, please bear with me, as I would like to make you aware of what the Lord has been sharing with me as clear to you as I understand it. As clearly as I've felt His outstretched hand reaching down to me during the darkest times of my life.

CHAPTER 2

Could This Be My Thorn?

One of the many things we can appreciate about the Bible involves stories of people who help us to know we are not alone in our suffering. For the greatest time of growth and fellowship with the Lord and others can come through suffering. When it comes to sharing about ones sufferings, I can't help, first of all, to think of Paul who was definitely no stranger to them. In 2nd Corinthians 11:25, he referred to those trials and tribulations and how he had been shipwrecked, beaten with rods three times, stoned once and much more. As terrible as all of that had to have been, Paul became all the more strong enough to endure the path that was set before him which ultimately lead to martyrdom. I do not know about you, but I am strengthened when I read of all that Paul went through yet he still had the faith to follow Christ even unto death.

Then in 2nd Corinthians 12:7-10, Paul tells of the thorn in his flesh which was a messenger from Satan to buffet him. The thorn sent from Satan was placed there in order to keep Paul humble. That was not Satan's intention, but Paul was wise enough to know that if he looked at it the way the Lord intended it would be a blessing in disguise. Satan sends his messengers out to destroy every soul in his path. The Bible does not make it clear what the thorn in Paul's flesh was. There are study bibles that say Paul had a physical ailment or a temptation he was fighting. I am not saying I am right, but it is my personal belief that Paul was struggling with a specific sin. Pride is sin and maybe that is the overall sin that Paul was struggling with, but no one really knows for sure.

Here is an explanation as to why I believe Paul may have been struggling with the sinful nature when he had a thorn in the

flesh. The first time a thorn is mentioned in scripture is found in Genesis 3:18 when Adam and Eve were thrown out of the garden because they had sinned. One of the things the Lord did to the ground was to curse it with thorns. Now, we can look at the crown of thorns placed on Jesus head by the soldiers who were mocking Him in Matthew 27:29. When Jesus was crucified, He was wearing a crown of thorns. I see those thorns as a representation of the sinful nature, which began with Adam and Eve. However; Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, took away the sins of the whole world being crucified in the flesh and rising again on the third day.

Whether Paul's thorn in the flesh was a sin issue or not is not known, yet he did happen to share his struggles against overcoming the sinful nature in Romans 7:13-25. A couple of verses that really stand out to me are 18 and 19 where Paul says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice."

With that said, could these panic attacks be my thorn the Lord is using as a way to humble me so that I will not become prideful? For example, I know for a fact that I do not seek the Lord for His infallible wisdom and guidance, as I should. Scripture tells us in Proverbs 3:5-6, "To trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." That was in fact what Paul was doing. We have a free will to either look at the thorn as a curse or to look at how we can allow Christ to be made perfect in our weakness because His grace is sufficient for us no matter what we are going through. (2nd Corinthians 12:9) I need to come to a place where I am humble enough to trust that the Lord will do just as He says. If the thorn in Paul's flesh does refer to sin and I was to compare my panic attacks to that thorn then I guess there are areas of my life where I should examine myself. That is just what I have been doing as you will see throughout the pages of this book. For Galatians 6:4 says, "But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load."

In 2nd Corinthians 12:7-10, where Paul mentions how the thorn in his flesh was sent by a messenger from Satan to buffet him. Did Paul see the messenger sent by Satan? No, but he was grounded enough spiritually to see the wiles of the devil. Ephesians 6:10-18 refers to the previous statement and the majority of this paragraph. He knew that to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might that he must clothe himself with the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:14-17) with as much wisdom the Lord had given him to be able to do so. Although Paul did not see the messenger, he knew there was a greater force at work against him than meets the natural eye. In Ephesians 6:12 he refers to the greater force when he says, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Then he warns us in the next verse of how we need to take up the whole armor of God in order to be able to withstand in the evil day having done all to stand. I will be covering the armor of God in more detail later in this book. In 2nd Corinthians 10:3-5, Paul also refers to the spiritual war when he says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God."

In 2nd Corinthians 12:8, Paul pleaded with the Lord three times for the thorn to be removed from him. Since the Lord would not remove the thorn He realized that he was in the most perfect position to take pleasure and boast in His infirmity in order for the power of Christ to be magnified. He knew it was the Lord's grace, which would provide the power for him to endure whatever the hardship. Paul also said in 2nd Corinthians 11:30 that, "If he must boast he will boast in the things which concern his infirmity." In 2nd Corinthians 12:10 Paul stated that when he is weak, then he is strong. It reminds me of John 3:30 which says, "He must increase, but I must decrease." With that said, I believe the Lord wants me to come to a place such as Paul and boast in the things which concern these panic attacks through the writing of this book. For we have all been put on this earth in hopes that we might give

glory to God and that is what I choose to do now rather than later after it is to late!

CHAPTER 3

Overcoming the Darkness

As a believer in Christ I am bewildered as I recall my B.C. years and how the Lord rarely crossed my mind. In hindsight it is painstakingly obvious that I was totally and completely in the dark as I now find that He consumes my thoughts on a daily basis. I have been confronted with the truth and now I have no excuse to walk in such darkness. Through the truths found in the light of His word I am comforted to know He is changing me from glory to glory through the countless trials I have endured throughout my lifetime.

This brings me to the story of Daniel Chapter 10; which should encourage you to know that if you are a child of God you are not alone. It illustrates where the angels fight against the powers of Satan on Daniels' behalf. Daniel was a mighty man of God who received visions otherwise known as revelations from the Lord about the future. Although many of those visions have come to pass, there are still several that have not occurred to this day. But Daniel had prayed to the Lord and in verse 12 an angel appeared to him saying, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia." Further down in verses 16-17 Daniel expressed how overwhelmed, weak and out of breath he was because of the vision he had received after those twenty-one days. In verse 18-19 the angel touched Daniel and strengthened him saying, "O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!"

In the past year these panic attacks I have been struggling with have caused me to be overwhelmed, weak, fearful, and out of breath; just as Daniel. It is in knowing the story of Daniel that I have to believe my prayer has been heard and answered in a

similar fashion in order for me to eventually feel the healing touch of the Lord. Although I am still struggling with this trial I already know that through it the Lord has given me a testimony and my faith has increased. I have also been strengthened in a number of ways, which are helping me endure and overcome. It has been a rough journey but it has been worth it for several reasons. Overall, I see the narrow way in front of me more clearly. It has been freeing and refreshing yet at the same time I am so burdened for those who do not stand fast in such liberty. As I wrestle with those thoughts it is my desire to encourage those who are falling away from the faith and catch them even if it is by the wayside.

Since around 2003 I have been studying and doing research on the end times. I do not receive visions like Daniel, but I do believe that the Lord has given me some wisdom on end time events. I want to be a watchman like Ezekiel warning people of what might possibly happen in our day. So, that hopefully those I have warned will recognize something I discussed with them and not be blind to what is happening. I even started a blog on the topic at www.jennifersides.com/blog.html based on current events related to scripture.

Do you know that Revelation 1:3 says, “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it for the time is near.” My personal translation is this, “If you do not ever read about such things do not expect for the Lord to show you much when the time comes. You will not be blessed. You will be spiritually blind as to what is going on around you when the world starts to go dark. You will be no different from the people who crucified the Lord Jesus on the cross and did not realize what they had done until the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last. So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous Man!” (Luke 23:45-47)

Don't you think it was kind of late for the Roman soldier to realize Who Jesus really was? Jesus Christ the Son of God was

hanging in the flesh right there in front of Him and he had no clue as to Who He was. So much that he played a role in having Him put to death. The Lord is also in our midst and it is clearly defined just by the simple fact that man exists. Did you know the day is going to go dark again and by that time it will probably be too late? When the fourth trumpet from the book of Revelation Chapter 8:12-13 sounds a third of the sun, moon and stars will be darkened. In that moment countless people will finally begin to realize Who Jesus is. It will be as much of a revelation to them as it was the centurion.

The final revelation as to how omnipotent the Lord is will be breath taking as everyone who has ever walked on the face of this earth stands before the Great White Judgment Throne. (Revelation 20:11-15) Such an illustration brings to my mind a wedding ceremony. As the bride is walking down the aisle the groom turns to look and she takes his breath away. He has never seen her look as beautiful as within that moment. When judgment day comes we will see the Lord adorned in all of His glory and splendor. He will be a sight to behold! Although it will be too late for those who denied Him they along with the bride of Christ will then fulfill the prophecy of Philippians 2:10-11 which says, "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." In this world we are accustomed to a judge walking in the courtroom and the bailiff saying, "All rise for the honorable Judge Judy or whoever else it might be." However it is my belief that on Judgment Day everyone will bow down before the Lord in unison and reverence without anyone having to say a word!

As far as the future goes I have heard many people say that they do not want to know about the outcome of events based on scripture because it is so depressing. I understand because I felt that way at one time myself. But the book of Revelation does not say you will get depressed. It says, "You will be blessed!" There was a time I thought I would never understand anything about the book of Revelation, but now that I have been diligently studying it I feel blessed! Sometimes what I study in scripture does overwhelm me as it did with Daniel yet he understood far more

than I do and he was still quite devastated. But remember, Daniel was told by the angel, "Not to fear!"

As I look back and think about Noah and the flood I get overwhelmed. Thinking about how there were only eight people in a boat and how everyone else who was left behind on the earth was drowning in the flood, which surrounded them. It consumes me, as it should to know that the fires of hell await all who do not repent and trust in the Lord. Such a thought should consume me to the point that I obey the words of Jude verse 22 which instructs Christians to save people with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. I am not saying that I am having panic attacks because I am seeking revelation from the Lord about the end times. At the same time I do not put it past Satan to use a deterrence of some kind as he did with the Prince of Persia against Daniel in order to keep me from understanding and also being able to share my faith no matter what the subject.

Jesus told a parable in Matthew 24:43 saying, "If the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into." I have no doubt that if I knew someone was going to break into my house I would call the police alerting them of the tip in which I had received. As a Christian I have also been warned far in advance concerning Satan's tactics. Not only is he conniving, he also transforms himself as an angel of light (2nd Corinthians 11:14) I mentioned earlier in this book, John 10:10 informs us that Satan came to steal, kill and destroy. Because the Lord has given me such divine knowledge, He wants me to call upon Him with even more determination than I would the police. With the hope of knowing that my very soul is far more valuable than any earthly treasure. One of the most powerful characteristics of the Lord that Satan tries to lure his children away from is the very truth upon which we are to base our entire faith. Without it we sit in fear of the darkness instead of appropriating the truths found in God's word. Yet, because of the revelation of His divine knowledge He gives me the freedom to call upon Him from the mountaintops in order to not lose sight of Him in the valleys. Eventually, in due time, I must believe I will find myself on level ground no matter what the circumstances.

On the other hand there are consequences for a lack of such knowledge. As Hosea 4:6 says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” In Revelation 3:3 Jesus warned the “Dead Church” 3:3 by saying, “Remember therefore how you received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. We must overcome the darkness. John 12:35 instructs us to, “Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

The most valuable treasure Satan can rob anyone of is his or her soul. Although it may seem like I am over reacting here; it is the worst form of rape. However; when someone chooses to follow the father of lies they are allowing him to do grave damage to the soul. What’s ironic are the majority of people let their guard down and welcome his tactics. When in all reality falling away from the Lord is far more fatal than falling out of an airplane without a parachute!

In the natural realm no child wants to be a victim of abuse. Yet in the spiritual somewhere along the way they lose their innocence and begin to let Satan have his way with them. They believe a lie such as Eve did and for some reason after that they believe more lies. Not only that, after telling a lie it becomes easier to tell another one. Eventually the adult who was once a child becomes so demoralized that the behavior has become acceptable and is even encouraged. They may pretend to be happy on the outside but on the inside do they not recall the innocence maintained in childhood to the point it haunts them. The tragedy is that the majority of people in this situation do not regret the path in which they have chosen enough to allow God to change their hearts and lives.

On the other hand when someone has lived their life proclaiming Jesus yet they never cultivated a relationship with Him allowing Him to possess their soul then ironically He will return to that individual as a thief. In Revelation 16:15 Jesus says, “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches. And

keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” In the case of both parties in which I just described the people did not fear the Lord enough to depart from evil. (Proverbs 3:7) They chose to be unrighteous and follow the path of darkness. For Matthew 20:16 says, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Many are called but few make a conscience decision to take up their cross and follow the lover of their soul.

As I sit here and ponder upon the darkness I sense the understanding that each and every one of us has some form of hope. Our behavior no matter what the attitude; bears witness to the fact that we do not question while in the midst of darkness the approach of daylight. As we have all awakened in the middle of the night to find that it is not yet daylight while at the same time restless and unable to go back to sleep because of the anxiety of what it might bring. Praying for a miracle but burdened by an expectancy of gloom. Maybe hoping it will not be the disaster we wish to avoid. Sometimes the excitement of big plans causes an adrenaline rush to take charge and we are able to jump out of bed ahead of time but even still we just have to be patient and wait. While on the other hand there are times we hope to sleep through the night in order to avoid daylights impending arrival. But through it all the darkness just like our trials are not going to get in a hurry to go away just because of our feelings. I can't even count how many times in my lifetime that I have gone to bed depressed only to wake up revived and refreshed. I have to believe that once I have overcome these panic attacks my soul will be renewed in the same fashion as I reflect upon scriptures such as Psalm 30:5, “Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning!”

When reading Ephesians 5:8-11, I am reminded that I was once in darkness but now I am light in the Lord and should walk as a child of light. I am to no longer have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather I am to expose them instead. As I relate this concept to my sinful nature I have to believe that as I seek the truth in my circumstances that the Lord will expose my depravity in order for me to be made righteous. This also applies to the purpose of trials when receiving revelation of the lessons to be learned. Entering His gates with thanksgiving, glory, honor and praise makes for a much smoother transition from

the mountaintops to the valleys other than grieving the Spirit of the Lord.

It is always wise to check yourself first to make sure there are no areas in your life where sin has overtaken you. Do not be like the people in 1 John 1:8 who claim to have no sin and deceive themselves because the truth does not abide in them. If there is sin in your life find a way to get rid of it. If you are a child of God you are not on your knees alone. He hears your cries for help. There is more than one realm of spiritual warfare. It might take twenty-one days for your prayers to get answered. It could take longer, but rest assured they have already been heard. Sometimes one of the hardest things to do is to just be patient and wait. If you believe the Bible and what it says to be true then you will believe that angels are fighting on your behalf even unto the death. We even have the Spirit of God working with us. Romans 8:26-27 tells us, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

When I am having a panic attack and can't breathe the Spirit of God knows what my mind is thinking and knows what to pray even if I am not physically able to. And when I am overwhelmed, weak and out of breath with panic attacks I must know that like Daniel the Lord is with me. Although I have not had an angel of the Lord touch and strengthen me as it so happened with Daniel I do have the promises found in God's word. (Daniel 10:16-19) I have also discovered that when I am short of breath during an attack I often feel as though I barely exist. It is through this process I can't help but come to terms with the fact that life is but a vapor. It is a humbling experience to be confronted by truths such as found in the book of James 4:14 which states, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away." I can only determine through my beliefs that the Lord is calling me to cling to Him ever more tightly.

And how can one who believes forget the honor and privilege of being prayed for by the King of kings and Lord of

lords. Jesus is not simply just standing by in the shadows but we are in Him and as our mediator we can come boldly before the throne of grace knowing the hope of Romans 8:34-35 which says. “It is Christ Who died, and furthermore is also risen, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword?” When I am in distress while having a panic attack I can rest in the hope of knowing that Jesus loves me and is making intercession for me.

Here is something else I would really like to share that blessed my soul recently. I received a wonderful phone call the other day from my niece who told me her family had just put my great-nephew to bed. He had just turned two a few days before. She told me how he had recently started saying his prayers before bedtime. It was obvious he was praying for me because he said, “Jen” a few times. If I had no idea that the Lord was watching out for me before, I knew it at that moment. It was what I needed to hear and continued to confirm these things the Lord has been speaking to me about. This is yet another spiritual realm in which the Lord is mighty in power! For Luke 18:17 states, “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”

CHAPTER 4

Satan Attacks With Panic Attacks

The Lord has also led me to the book of Job during my attacks. Sure enough while I was flipping through the pages I spotted the title of the beginning of Chapter 2, “SATAN ATTACKS JOBS HEALTH.” If Satan can attack Job’s health then he can certainly attack mine with panic attacks but that does not mean I have to let him win. Not only have my panic attacks affected my physical health but they have also affected me emotionally, mentally, and most importantly spiritually as well. Yet, the Lord has made provision for me to endure this trial through His promises just as he did Job. It is up to me whether I choose to believe it or not.

In verse 2 of Chapter 2, Satan told the Lord, “He had been going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” In verse 3 the Lord asked Satan, “If he had considered His servant Job?” He pointed out how Job was like no one else on the earth. He was a blameless and upright God fearing man who shunned evil. Then it happened in verse 6 where the Lord handed Job over to Satan giving him permission to do everything to Job except put him to death. So, it was after Satan had just taken away Job’s property and children that such a scene of evilness continued to escalate as he then struck Job with painful boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. Job’s wife told him he should curse God and die, but Job told her that she was speaking foolishly. He continues on speaking to her in verse 10 saying, “Shall we indeed accept good from God, and we shall not accept adversity?” It ends by saying that Job never cursed the Lord with his lips.

This story of Job is just a glimpse of the havoc he endured in his lifetime. As this trial was only the beginning of a long series of events, which would eventually confirm what the Lord had said to Satan, “that Job was indeed a blameless and upright God fearing man.” He had presented himself a workman approved to God with no need to be ashamed of his response to his great misfortunes. In return, the Lord blessed Job more in the latter part of his life than the first. He ended up seeing children and grandchildren for four generations living one hundred and forty more years after all his trials had ended. (Job 42:12-16)

So, Paul was possibly dealing with temptation from a particular sin yet on the other hand Job was blameless and upright. Paul and Job were both great men of God. Satan is held accountable to God. Satan can’t do anything the Lord does not give him permission to do. Paul and Job both knew that Satan was behind the scenes. Even if they could not see him with the natural eye he was obviously in their mist. I believe everyone would agree that evil exist in the world yet not everyone chooses to fully see the damaging affects of it as Paul and Job yet most importantly they chose to trust in the mighty power of the Lord. They knew the detriment Satan was capable of but they also knew the Lord was ultimately in control and would rescue them. As I stated before, “Paul served the Lord even unto death.” Paul’s human sufferings

were many and yet he still lived to serve for the sake of the call of Christ. He saw the bigger picture clearly. He is the one who stated in 1st Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you might be able to bear it.”

I know I am not near as blameless and upright as Job. The Lord sure can't say of me what He said about Job when He proclaimed, “There is none like him on the earth.” I will say that I have proclaimed my Christianity for twenty years, but it has not been until about the last five that the Lord has been revealing to me the necessity of being righteous and holy. Before that time I was often stagnant in this faith I claimed to possess. On rare occasions I would wake up as if I were a bear coming out of hibernation to pick up where I had left off. I wasted precious time in the realm of spiritual suicide while wondering in the back of my mind if such behavior would be considered lukewarm?

So, it was not that the Lord did not want to show me the state I was in. I was just doing my own thing more than I happened to realize until I found myself in a valley of decision that seemed to be getting deeper and deeper. That's when the Lord directed me to a book on a teaching called, “The Way of the Master.” It has really opened my eyes in a way like never before as to how unrighteous I was and continue to be for that matter. Now, I am striving to be as blameless and upright as possible as I work out my salvation with fear and trembling while allowing God to work in me to will and to do for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13) knowing because of God I am in Christ Jesus, Who became for me wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1st Corinthians 1:30) when God chose me for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. (2nd Thessalonians 2:13) Hallelujah!

There is an organization called, “The Way of the Master” who I have been ordering merchandise from in bulk for a few years. Their website is www.wayofthemaster.com. During this time I have seen all of their merchandise at one point or another. I

had been noticing a book on their website entitled, “Overcoming Panic Attacks” written by my favorite teacher on evangelism, Ray Comfort who is the founder of The Way of the Master. So, one day out of curiosity I decided to read about the description of the book. I was shocked to read that Ray had suffered with panic attacks. At the time I had no need for the book because I was not having any problems with panic attacks. Being that I buy stuff from the website on a fairly regular basis I had come across the book quite often. It will come as no shock to you by now that I eventually began to have panic attacks. After having them for about four months, I finally broke down and bought the book. The book helped me to know that I am not alone. The fact that Ray had suffered from them before was also encouraging to me. If you were to see and hear him teach you would know what I mean. Quite a bit of the book confirmed what I believed the Spirit of the Lord had already been showing me with recommended tips on ways to deal with my attacks as I had already been trying to put such ideas into practice.

Ray Comfort was convinced that like Paul he was suffering from a thorn in the flesh. Ray believes it had been placed there to humble him. He said, “That a man must be broken before he can be fully used by God.” He suffered from Panic Attacks in the 1980’s. The attacks lasted for twelve months. He and his family had been having daily devotionals for a long time. His attacks had gotten so bad he could no longer participate in the devotionals. He could not even sit at the table with his family to eat a meal. From what I have gone through this past year, and when also referring back to Paul and Job I am not surprised at the struggle he faced anymore. I bet there was a time in which Ray would have never thought he would have written a book about panic attacks just like I never expected I would be writing this one.

When it comes to my debilitating panic attacks, my mind races with various thoughts such as: Is the Lord trying to humble me? As a matter of fact I truly believe He is. Is Satan trying to discourage me because he knows I am striving to be more blameless and upright? Yes, I have no doubt! He knows I really want to follow the “Great Commission” as the Lord commanded and I have no doubt these attacks began to occur not long after I

began to share the gospel more boldly than ever before. Is Satan just hoping I will curse God as Job's wife suggested? I have no doubt he is! Satan is the author of confusion but I should not be so confused that I do not know this much!

I have no doubt that Satan has been using these attacks as another tactic to try and keep me on the sidelines. For example, I have never been claustrophobic in my entire life and I still do not believe that I am. Although since I began having these attacks it has been extremely hard for me to ride in an elevator. It is not the closed in space that bothers me. It is the not having control over the situation that does. I can't stop the elevator and open the door at any given moment like I can when I am driving a vehicle.

I also battle the same difficulties while standing in the check out line. Now really, how many times have I been in a check out line in my lifetime before these episodes? Countless! That is all the more reason for what I am going through to seem ridiculous, embarrassing and quite humiliating! I can't make the checker check out groceries any faster. As a matter of fact most of the time I know the checker is checking out the merchandise as quickly as possible. In my mind I am patient but my actions look as if I am about to explode because I have to wait. That is not the case. I am trying to keep myself under control in order to avoid exploding. It is very hard to do when I am feeling stuck in a line or riding in an elevator, etc. I do not think it is a matter of my lack of patience so much as it is that I am standing in line and feel stuck in it until my items have been checked out.

When I am with a group of people I have a hard time sitting still. I am not necessarily hyper. I am just uncomfortable in the situation and am trying to stay in control. I also feel as if I am trying to hold my breath the whole time, which adds more symptoms of edginess to the equation. Most of the time there really does not even have to be a so-called "situation" except for the one in my mind. I know I sound crazy but I am not. I am determined to believe what the scripture says in 2nd Timothy 1:7, "For God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

As a Christian there are times when I need to learn how to be bolder when it comes to being the person on the outside that I am on the inside. In order to be more of an example and encouragement to others I need to reveal more of the person that most people rarely see unless they really get to know me. In other words I need to get out of my comfort zone and show the passion for the reason why I have chosen to follow Jesus. It is just much easier for me to get to know someone one on one than to hang out with large groups of people. It takes me quite a bit of time to get comfortable conversing one on one with someone I do not know but overall it is not near as challenging as several.

When someone accepts Jesus as Lord of their life they have also taken on the most renown and unselfish responsibility ever bestowed upon humanity. A Christian must not only talk the talk but walk the walk in many different areas of their lives. A Christian must repent and trust in the Lord Jesus to be clothed in Him. And upon doing so they must also believe that the Lord has strengthened them with His power to be able to restore and transform lives. When that is truly understood it is a vital necessity to step outside of the comfort zone to be fully effective.

Here is a perfectly good example of the point I am trying to make. There was someone who used to work at the same place I do. I had never gotten to know him on a personal level whatsoever due to the fact that all of our conversations were work related. One night I saw him sitting by himself in the break room. Although it is not out of the ordinary for someone to sit by themselves in the break room I had a really weird feeling about it. He just seemed so out of place at that moment. Although I could not place a finger on it something just did not seem right. I thought about saying, "Hey" or something but I just kept quiet. He was not doing anything out of the ordinary but I just felt a dark presence in the room. Just a few hours later someone called me and told me that he had committed suicide. I had no idea but right after I had seen him in the break room he left work saying, "He was sick." He was found in the parking lot of a church having shot himself in the head with a pistol. You know that while we were both sitting in the break room that the demons had to have been playing with his mind for him to go to such extremes. Now I have to live with knowing I said

absolutely nothing to him for the rest of my life when in fact I had the words of life, which could have possibly revived his soul. I told myself I would listen to what I believed to be the Spirit of the Lord next time and step out of my comfort zone!

The previous example is proof that this life is too short to get acquainted with someone before we share the “Good News.” There are several instances in the Bible where the disciples walked all over different areas such as the city of Samaria, Antioch, Cyprus, Lystra and many other places just to preach the gospel. There was no way they could have gotten to know each and every person they came across before sharing the Word of the Lord.

Sometimes the Lord will send someone else as He did with Moses. In Exodus 3:7 the Lord told Moses that He had seen the oppression and sorrows of the people and had heard their cries. Then the Lord went on to tell Moses how He would deliver His people from the situation they were in. The Lord told Moses He would send him to Pharaoh as the one who would bring the people out of Egypt. But Moses asked the Lord in verse 11, “Who am I that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” Moses and the Lord continued the discussion but Moses kept questioning the Lord about being chosen to speak to the people. Finally the Lord gave Moses an assistant named Aaron who would deliver the messages given to Moses by the Lord. Moses just kept coming up with all kinds of excuses as to why he could not be the one to speak before the people. We must come to a place where we realize that if He has called us to serve Him that He will also equip us in whatever way necessary.

CHAPTER 5

A Season of Doom

The one and only time I had ever suffered from panic attacks prior to the check out line episode had been about six and a half years earlier when I had just found out that my mom had liver cancer. It was a season of doom in which I had been anticipating for many years. Not that I had ever really sat back and dwelled on it. In fact it was quite the opposite. As soon as the thought of ever

losing my mom entered my mind I would quickly push it as far back as possible. But the moment of truth came when Satan like a thief in the night plunged from out of the darkness in pursuit of stealing my joy and every other source of all that I considered good. The bottom line as far as I was concerned was that the timing would not have ever been right. Now, I was wondering where the time had gone as I came face to face with the agonizing fate of her existence. She had only been given three months to live. Soon in the not so distance future, the memories and material objects would be all that was left, but even they would fade away with time in one way or another. And it was at that moment upon receiving her diagnosis that I saw my mom's life flash before my eyes and the final chapter of her fate being sealed.

It was due to receiving such disturbing results that a few weeks after getting the diagnosis I was at work one night when all of a sudden I was not myself. It was as if I just wanted to run as far away as possible from where I was standing. It was a pretty strange feeling to want to literally run away from something that could not visibly be seen by anyone but me. It reminds me of how someone walks into a spiders' web that can't be seen or felt until they are all tangled up right smack dab in the middle of it. Although I could see this obstruction vividly even if it was only in the back of my mind and it was rapidly approaching to destroy me.

Although I had never had a panic attack prior to that time, I knew instantly what it was. I just knew that my life and my emotions were more out of control than ever so it made sense to me that I could be having one. I am not really sure if I had one or two attacks. I have heard it said that if you have multiple attacks in just a matter of minutes then it is considered as one. I felt like I had two within thirty minutes of each other, but maybe I had not fully calmed down between each of them. It all happened so fast and out of nowhere that I really have no idea. I did not hesitate and I do not regret that I went to the doctor and got a prescription to hopefully keep that from happening again. My mom was already not working and we could not really afford for both of us to not be working any more than necessary. After I went to the doctor and started taking the medication prescribed to me, I did not experience any more

panic attacks. I took the one prescription until it ran out and did not need to go back for more.

I may not have regretted going to the Dr. for my panic attacks at that time but one thing I do regret now is that I was not as spiritually stable as I should have been to deal with the circumstances. After all, I did say I had been anticipating the dreadful day for years. Yet it was because of His mercy, He was using my past experiences for my benefit long before I became a Christian. By the time my mom had become ill I had been claiming my Christianity for thirteen years. Although I was not a newborn Christian, I was also not quite as mature as I should have been by that time. Therefore, I had no excuse. Remember when Job said in Chapter 2:10 “Shall we indeed accept good from God, and we shall not accept adversity?” I was expecting the worst long before the moment came but I refused to accept it. I only wish I had stopped wrestling with the Lord much sooner. Because of my pride, it took that much longer for me to receive the peace, which passes understanding than it should have. Besides, who am I to even begin to think I can take on The One Who created the heavens and the earth?

You see, because at that point in my life although no one could see it on the outside; I was mad at God. I was going through a, “Why has thou forsaken me?” season, falling apart while no one else was around. You know how you have someone whom you really love and you get mad at them but you still continue the relationship despite the fact you just do not understand why they do the things they do? That was the case with me. This was not just something that hurt. This was devastating. I did not really understand God and I really did not want to. Ironically as it might seem, despite that fact I was determined for the Lord to be magnified in me to minister to others during the most painful time of my life. I wanted them to know that it was the Lord Who was giving me the strength I needed to endure even if I was just hanging on by the hem of His robe. In time that tiny step of faith followed by a few more would eventually be all it would take for the Lord to restore my soul in the same manner in which he had touched the men who were physically sick and begged to only touch the hem of His garment for healing in Matthew 14:35-36.

It had been a while since I had written any songs, but in the seven months my mom remained on this earth the Lord blessed me with ten songs through my grief. Although she was only given three months the Lord knew how much time would be sufficient enough for me to know His outstretched hand had been there all along. I believe He gave me those songs because although my whole existence seemed to be in shambles I was giving Him whatever I had left to give Him glory. It was through the desire of wanting Him to use me in spite of my feelings that I became a willing vessel to receive His words of comfort as they began to flow like the tears, which had steadily been streaming down my cheeks. Most of the songs were written at the hospice place where she spent a few of her final days. I would have never guessed before that moment I would be inspired to write any songs during such a time and at such a place.

There was one song in particular that came into existence after I happened to throw a temper tantrum one night while I was at work. I was having technical difficulties that were causing my patience to wear thin. I wasn't getting my job done in the timely manner nor as effectively as I would have liked and that is a very hard thing for this perfectionist to deal with! So, there I am stressing over this situation along with having the illness of my mom continuously on my mind. I slammed my fist on the table beside me and raised my hands to God while saying, in a very sarcastic tone, "Well, this is the life!" I might as well have been lying face down on the floor kicking and screaming! Although I had not raised my hands in praise or gratitude towards God I knew as soon as those words came out of my mouth I was going to write a song entitled, "This is the Life" but I also knew it could not be written in that same sarcastic tone or mindset. After the smoke had cleared from the ignition of my short fuse I began to ponder out of conviction what this life is really all about. I got a blank sheet of paper and wrote at the top of it, "This is the Life." Despite the way I felt and the direction my life seemed to be heading I knew that in order to glorify the Lord in my circumstances I would have to write what this life should be about as a Christian. When listening to or reading the words to the song no one would ever guess it began with anger towards God and ended with a greater love for Who He is in my life. Choosing to respond to Him the way I was

intended to was drawing me closer to peace although I had not quite seen that far into the future just yet.

I would like to try and explain how I believe I came to the point where I no longer needed to take the medication. When I found out my mom had cancer the one thing that really grieved me most of all was that she had not accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. I was in such turmoil over the situation. I had been hoping she would give her life to the Lord for quite some time. I knew she must repent of her past sins and trust in the Lord if I were to ever have the hope of seeing her again in heaven some day. It was as if I were Moses in Exodus 32:31-32 who asked the Lord to forgive the great sins of the Israelites and to blot him out of the book of life if necessary so that the Israelites could be forgiven. Paul through his grief had also made a similar gesture such as this in Romans 9:3 when he said, "For I wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh." It took her facing death to finally answer His call, but nonetheless, I finally had the hope I would see her again in heaven although I had still had not yet received the peace that I would need to be able to carry on.

I still remember like yesterday when I realized I had finally received His peace, which passes all understanding. (Philippians 4:6-7) It was the same weekend my mom passed away. I knew ahead of time what to expect. I had been told that when someone in her condition had stopped eating they would pass away in about seven days. My mom had stopped eating at this point. I was driving home from work one morning with my music on and just singing away. All of a sudden I was very ashamed of myself as I quickly turned down the music and stopped singing. Then I began to interrogate myself as I said, "What are you doing? Your mom is about to die any day now and you are singing away like you do not have a care in the world!" It was at that very moment when I have no doubt the Lord had spoken to me although I did not hear an audible voice. He immediately replied saying, "You have peace and not only do you have peace, you have My peace which passes understanding. Satan does not want you to have My peace. He wants you to feel guilty." Then there was a brief pause as I had realized in that moment that the heaviest load I have ever endured

was lifted from my downtrodden soul and I have not wavered since. I immediately turned the music back up and began singing again as if I had never doubted myself.

So, the question is not if there will be trials and tribulations, but when? I need to face the fact that this life is literally a rollercoaster ride and I have two choices on how to perceive it. I can sit in the front and rejoice as it both ascends upon the highest of mountains and descends into the lowest of valleys, or I can sit in the back with my hands over my eyes and never know the fullness of an abundant life. If I claim to be a follower of Christ and can never seem to be able to give God the glory in any of my circumstances then there is a problem. If I can't seem to dig deeper into His word for answers then there is a problem. If I can't kneel before His feet and give Him praise there is a problem. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!" Therefore, I am learning that I must commit my problems to the Lord and trust He will provide deliverance! I must look past my problems and focus on the Truth.

Looking back to that most difficult time in my life I have no doubt the Lord was with me even when I felt as if He was not. Not only was He with me, I received His peace which passes all understanding when I did not even ask for it. It just confirms to me all the more just how powerful His mercy is and how the Lord sent His one and only son Jesus Who demonstrated His own love toward us in while we were still sinners, He died. (Romans 5:8) I did not see Him die on the cross nor did I feel the pain He endured. But when I was convicted of my sinful nature, I realized He was there all along waiting for me to ask Him into my heart. Longing for me to repent of my sins and trust in Him completely. Romans 1:20 says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." When I look out at the stars, moon, sun, trees or feel my heart beat I have no excuse not to give my whole being to The One who gave me the senses in which to acknowledge such

things. It reminds me of Helen Keller who was both blind and deaf. The first time someone ever told her about God she already knew of His existence. She never even had to see all the things the Lord has made. She had never heard the sound of music or the birds of the air singing in the morning sun or most of all the sound of her mothers' voice but somehow she had heard the voice of the Father despite her handicaps and frailties.

CHAPTER 6

Recognizing the Enemy

So, it was later in the day after my attack in the check out line of the major retail store when I realized that what I had experienced was very much like the panic attacks I had experienced six and a half years earlier after receiving the devastating news of my moms' illness. It kind of freaked me out at first, but I dismissed it. Maybe it was too hot in the store and I had actually been standing there for quite a while waiting for the lady in front of me to get checked out. After all she had over \$1000.00 worth of groceries and needed to be checked out on two separate occasions. It was not too much longer after that day I realized my experience in the check out line was not going to be the only one. I was convinced there was nothing wrong with me and I was determined not to go to the doctor. The reason why I felt this way was because it did not make sense to me. Yet, it had made all the sense in the world why I was having them when my mom was sick. Physically I had not been feeling any different than usual. There had not been anything going on in my life that I felt should be causing such attacks. As far as I was concerned, going through the illness of my mother and her passing away would never compare to anything else I would ever have to endure. With that said, I was pretty convinced from the beginning that the only thing it could be was an attack from Satan. Now that I had recognized the enemy, I knew the only choice I had would be to fight back with the Lord's artillery.

I had joined a bible study group about three months before my attacks started. I had not been involved with a bible study group for a few years so it was an answer to prayer. It consists of

people from all different walks of life and denominations but with the same Spirit. It got to where I was fighting panic attacks during the bible studies yet I told no one. Then one day I was asked to read some from the book we were studying. After I got started I was having a hard time catching my breath and my heart started beating fast. I did not think I was going to be able to finish. By the time I had finished reading the whole room around me was dark and I could barely see the words I was reading. I had no doubt it had to be obvious to everyone although no one said a word. I was quite embarrassed but I did not mention what had happened to me at that moment. After I left it seemed like that was all I could think about. I really wanted to go to this bible study and it was obvious that Satan was wielding his fiery darts at me. Finally I realized that I needed to email everyone in the group to let them know what was going on. It was one of those times when I was reluctant to do so as I mentioned earlier. I knew I had to though if I was to keep going. I did not want to take a chance of having one worse than I already had and no one know what was happening. During a few of the bible studies I have caught myself thinking, “Why do I bother to keep coming if I am just going to sit here and fight these attacks the majority of the time?”

The week after I had emailed everyone in the group and informed them of my attacks the group prayed for me at the next bible study. After most everyone finished praying for me the last person was praying things such as, “How I would be stronger when I stopped having them, etc.” When she stopped praying she said, “You are thinking, “I already know this.” She was correct. The whole time she was praying it was about everything that I believed the Lord had already been confirming to me. I was saying to myself as she was praying, “I already know this, I already know this!” When she told me what I was thinking I just believed that to be even more confirmation that Satan had been attacking me. Then her mother said, “About three months will go by and you will realize you are no longer having attacks.” I had just thought earlier that week that I could not wait until the moment when I realized I was no longer having attacks. I have no doubt it will be a moment similar to when I realized the Lord had given me His peace. I will not question it yet I will undoubtedly know it in the depths of my soul.

There were a few bible studies after the day the group prayed for me where I did not have any attacks. Overall in my every day life they were not near as severe nor as frequent for a while. Looking back it seems as if the angels had heard the prayers of the group and were fighting on my behalf as they had for Daniel. I am sure it also helped to know that everyone was aware of my situation. It was also good to know I was not the only one in the group who had suffered from such attacks and who would be able to relate. I still have my moments though. One example would be the day I was glad that I was not asked to read because I could not even concentrate on the words well enough to even begin. I was barely doing good enough to even be on the right page.

My best friend was over on vacation for a week and she prayed for me every morning after we got up for the day. She told me a few weeks later when I was having a bad day with panic attacks, “that she just wished she could pray for me and I would be over them once and for all.” I told her, “I wished the same thing but that I do not think it is going to happen like that.” It is not that I do not believe in prayer. I just do not think these attacks are going to stop all of a sudden because someone has prayed over it. I feel like this is a spiritual battle that is being fought and once I have overcome it I will be restored and refined. I believe the Lord is using this as an avenue for me to see myself more clearly in the light of His word.

CHAPTER 7

Out of Control

Then several weeks after the group from Bible study prayed for me I ended up going to the emergency room. I had not been to the emergency room since I had food poisoning when I was a teenager. Not only did I go to the emergency room one day, I went two days in a row! Here I am more than twice as old as I was when I went to the emergency room last. Does that seem like someone who is a hypochondriac to you? Of course I would have had to be pretty out of control to end up in the E.R. just once but to go two days in a row! Talk about frustrating and discouraging!

My friend who took me to the E.R. ended up having to leave to take care of some prearranged personal business. I was warned before I even got to the hospital that I would be left alone. There was just no way around it and I did not expect my friend to stay. I just considered it a blessing to know someone was even available to be able to take me to begin with. If you had seen the way I was acting you would have thought I should have been dropped off at an insane asylum instead. On the inside I knew why I was acting the way I was but from the outside looking in I am sure my behavior had to have seemed quite bizarre. I could not calm down no matter what I did or how hard I tried. I could not sit still. So I started pacing and that did not work. Then I tried lying down. Nothing worked. While I was lying down I was asked if I was having a heart attack. I said, "no" because my heart was not hurting. I was then asked if I was having a stroke to which I responded, "I don't know" only because I did not really know anything about strokes to be able to answer the question.

On the way to the E. R. my friend said something funny. I laughed and asked him if he would keep saying funny stuff because it seemed to help. He did and after a while I was like, "alright I can't listen anymore because I was struggling again." On my way to the E. R. I had a cold drink in my hand. I am already a very hot natured person and when I am having a panic attack there is another surge of heat that comes upon me on top of the one I am already experiencing. I started pouring this drink on myself because I couldn't take the heat. At this point I really did not care how crazy I looked. After arriving to the E. R., I found the most available place where I could lay down on the floor. In the meantime I continued to pour the rest of my drink on myself. After my friend talks to the lady at the window she tells me I have to get off the floor so she can check my vitals. I am like, "Can't you come over here and do it?" But for some reason I am supposed to get up and come over to her so she can do it. She asked me why I could not get up. I responded with, "I just do not feel like I can function enough to get up." So she came over and helped me.

After she took my vitals I did not look at the time because I was not quite sure I wanted to see how high my blood pressure was. I waited until quite a bit later after I thought I had calmed

down enough to see that my blood pressure was slightly elevated. I am already on blood pressure medicine and it was higher than my normal high while on the medicine. At this time I wanted something, anything to knock me out so I would not feel anything but “Go Figure” they would not do it! I understand why now but at the time I did not, and to tell the truth I did not really care. My friend had to fill out the paper work for me while in the examination room. He wrote down my information a little at a time because one minute I could handle giving it to him and then the next minute I couldn’t. Then after he finished filling out the paper work I signed it.

This next paragraph at one time would have been totally embarrassing to me. However I got over it much quicker than I expected I would. The person who brought me to the E. R. is a friend of mines husband. The moment I began having my vitals checked I was feeling so helpless, scared and vulnerable. I told him, “I knew that what I was about to do would be embarrassing to him and normally it would be for me but I was to overwhelmed to really care and that I was sorry.” I did not give him much of an option as I pretty much made him hold my hand until he left. It is really not a good feeling to be that out of control! I can understand when someone is sick and they are dying to be in that predicament. Other than occasionally feeling as if I might die I can’t say that I will ever be able to understand or explain why I was so out of character in that situation.

After my friend left I was in the room by myself. That just made my panic level soar another couple of notches or two due to the fact I was scared to be alone. So, then I was not staying in my room. Every other nurse was telling me I had to go back to my room. I kept saying, “But I am alone.” If a nurse followed me to my room and tried to close the door when she left I would not let her. I was so afraid that I might pass out and since I was alone no one would even know if I had or not. There were a couple of times I had thought I was going to fall out and never wake back up again. At least if someone were to see me fall out I would have a better chance! Then I walked down the hall to a nurses’ station where two nurses were sitting. I told them that I knew I was supposed to be in my room but that I was having a hard time staying in there

alone. Then I said, "Why do I have to stay in my room?" Although I already knew the answer; I guess I just wanted them to humor me. One of the nurses said, "It was so I would be in there when someone came to check on me and they would not have to look for me." I told the nurse, "That my room was right there and that I could see if someone came to my room or not." So that worked out fine. I got to stand there as I waited. I was not by myself anymore!

Then one of the nurses (Patsy) came and spent as much time with me as she could between patients. I was so thankful for that. I was so vulnerable by this time I talked about my personal life with her like she was an old friend when she asked me questions. That is so not like me. Remember when I was in line at the retail store and started talking to the girl who was standing behind me when I thought I was going to fall out? I am not one to talk to a stranger in a supermarket or any place else if I can help it. I mean, even when I give my order to the waitress in a restaurant I just point at the menu. That way she will think I am deaf and not stop by my table to many times. Just joking but usually you have to pry my guts out with a crowbar even after I have known you a while. Patsy, the nurse, not the waitress hugged me several times. I can't even begin to tell you how many. I do not even let people who know me hug me very often if at all yet here I was accepting hugs from a total stranger and welcoming every single one. Then she asked me before it was all over with, "If I was a Christian." I said, "Yes" but at the time I was convicted and I had no idea why. We talked a little about my Christianity and that was that.

I was finally given a shot to see if it would calm me down and if it did I would then be sent home. It began to work some and then I was given a prescription to go get filled and take as soon as I got home. My friend whose husband brought me to the E. R. had made arrangements for her mom to come and pick me up to bring to her house and stay the night. I had seen her mom before but not enough to remember what she looks like. She had to be told what my room number was so she would be able to find me in order to know if she was picking up the right person. Otherwise it would have been like at the airport when someone is holding up a sign with a name on it. This really worked out for the best though

because I was not at all in the mood to talk to anyone about what I had been going through.

Several hours later even after I had gotten some sleep I still did not feel like myself. It was also obvious to friends that I was not as calm as I normally am. Later the next day I had to go back to the E.R. because I had not been given enough medicine to make it to the doctor for the following week. Thankfully there was a different doctor on duty who was far more thorough. She made sure I had enough medicine to get me to my regular doctor.

Two days after I had originally been to the E. R. I went to my regular doctor. I had blood work drawn and there were no signs of anything that could be causing me to have panic attacks. The doctor even said he believed I was not going to have to take medicine for panic attacks for the rest of my life. I already felt that way but it was good to hear the doctor confirm it. After I picked up my medicine that day at the pharmacy I decided to wait to take it because I was not sure how it would affect my driving. I was going to the Dallas area on vacation because my niece had very recently had a baby and I was going to go spend a few weeks with her. When I got to town I decided I needed to go to the store. I had started shopping when all of a sudden I could feel a panic attack coming on. I immediately called my best friend. I was very relieved to find out she was home. She talked to me and helped me to calm down until I was out of the store.

The hardest part came when I had to stand in line. Since my first episode at the retail store standing in line was not something I had been handling very well. Finally I could not take anymore. I found a customer service manager and asked if there was any way I could get checked out without having to wait any longer? Then I explained how I was having a panic attack. I was as delighted as I could have possibly been while in a state of panic to find that my request was going to be more expedient than I had expected, which was a true blessing! Otherwise, I think I would have had to leave the shopping cart full of merchandise behind and walked away empty handed. She led me to a register and got me squared away in no time! What a relief!

CHAPTER 8

I Am Not Alone

After a few days went by I began to think back to my time spent in the E. R. and Patsy who ask me if I was a Christian. I was wondering why I got convicted when she asked me if I was a Christian. Then it was as if the Lord spoke to me and said, “You are not alone, I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5) While in the E. R. I had been freaking out and feeling overwhelmed because I felt so alone when in fact I was not. No one could have ever been as close to me as the Lord had been at that moment. I was just choosing not to see Him. I have no doubt that Patsy asking me if I was a Christian was the only thing I got out of my E. R. experience. I could have just shrugged it off and dismissed it but I knew deep down that I couldn’t shake the way I felt when she had asked me if I was a Christian. That was yet one more sign to add to my collection, which confirmed that Satan was indeed attacking me. I have no doubt that if I had not been acting the way I had she would have not been spending the time with me she did. I had been practically begging someone anyone to spend time with me. Otherwise, that subject would have never come up.

In the end, I have no doubt that in the natural all I really have to show for my E.R. visits are the bills. This is not necessarily a bad thing. I was not helped in the physical at all but in the spiritual it has caused me to examine the areas of my soul where I am weak. Remember where Paul said in 2nd Corinthians, “Christ is made perfect in our weakness because His grace is sufficient no matter what we are going through?” Although I remember the verse having the faith to believe it is something I must intimately get familiar with if I plan to live it!

Then I thought back to my initial panic attack in the check out line at the retail store. Do you know what one of the first things that crossed my mind was after that episode was over? “Oh no, I am all alone and if I was to have an attack it will be forever before anyone I am close to finds out!” What was my response when I was in the E.R. waiting room when I was left alone? If you do not remember just refer back to the third sentence of this paragraph.

The Lord has been trying for years to get me out of that state of mind. It is a feeling that runs deep from early on in my childhood. I actually thought that I was finally beginning to accept my circumstances in the natural but when I got in what seemed like a hopeless situation I crashed. And when Patsy had asked me if I was a Christian it was as if she had grabbed the defibrillator off the crash cart and held the paddles against the very depths of my soul jolting me into the spiritual awareness of just how miserably I had fallen short.

It began in the fifth grade when I had a sister who was killed in a car wreck on Christmas Day. Before that time I had quite exceptional grades but the second half of that school year my grades had slipped. I had not even realized it. As a matter of fact my grades never really improved from thereafter. I was in another world at that point. I seriously look back and wonder how I never failed a single grade. I simply did not care. The following year I lost my dad to lung cancer. All that really seemed to be left in my life was my mom. I began dwelling on it knowing the odds were not good. Sure enough the day came (Easter 2003) and I hated the fact that I would be left alone from that moment on. As a matter of fact I felt abandoned. Not only did I feel abandoned I felt like an orphan at the age of thirty- three. Maybe just maybe because the Lord loves me so much He has been trying to show me once and for all that I am not alone.

I have been so disillusioned with the concept of being alone for the majority of my life that I am just now beginning to realize the truths of the promises in His word such as the following. The Lords love is so powerful for me that, "I have been blessed with every spiritual gift in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose me in Him before the foundation of the world, that I should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined me to adoption as a child by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." (Ephesians 1:3-5) All I have to do is glorify God in my body and spirit knowing that I was bought at a price (1st Corinthians 6:20) when God sent His son to die on the cross to redeem me so I would no longer be a slave to sin but a child, and if a child, then an heir of God through Christ. And in doing so, God also sent forth the Spirit of His son into my

heart, crying out, “Abba Father!” And it is the Spirit, which guarantees such an inheritance. (Galatians 4:4- 7) Now, because of His wonderful mercy and grace I am eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redeeming of my body (Romans 8:23) knowing that Jesus is preparing a place for me in my Fathers house and will come again and receive me to Himself.” (John 14:2-4)

Although hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. (Romans 8:24-25) I can't help but think of my nieces' newborn baby. After he has slept, been fed and discovers the comfort of a clean diaper he only wants to be in the arms of his mother. There is by no means anyone else good enough for him! It still gets under my skin! Everyone else is a stranger to him. If he is crying in the arms of another all that my niece has to do is take him and hold him and in an instant the crying ceases and he is at peace. She never even has to say a word nor does he even have to see her to know she is the one holding him against her chest. Although he may not see or hear her he has the hope of knowing he is in a safe dwelling place. It is blatantly obvious he has hope even in what he does not see. When he is out of his dwelling place and does not sense her presence he is bound and determined for her to assume her responsibility as he waits. He knows the sound of his mothers' voice just like the sheep know the shepherds voice and follow it wherever it goes. He does not know the voice of strangers but rather flees from it. (John 10:3-5) It just broadens my thinking and believing when seeing the bigger picture as to what my relationship with the Lord should be like. As a Christian I am to strive to come to a place in my relationship with the Lord that it is as involuntary as my heartbeat. This is obviously the case with a newborn baby and its' mother just as I described. A newborn baby cannot fend for itself. As an individual I must come to a place where I realize that I should become as dependent upon the Lord as a newborn baby is upon its' mother because I can't do it on my own. I need a Savior!

As far as being alone I am not saying I will never get married. I have no idea what the Lord has in store for me. It has just been in the past couple of years or so that I think of it on occasion. I go back and forth on the subject sometimes as quickly

as a tennis ball can bounce back and forth over a net. But through the previous experiences in my life which I just mentioned I can't help but think of 1 Corinthians 7:34-35, "The unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world – how she may please her husband." Then it goes on to talk about pleasing the Lord without distraction. I think about how I have lost so many people in my life I was close to. If I ever get married my husband would become another attachment. I have found that the less attachments I have the more I am able to say with Paul as he did in Philippians 1:21-23, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what shall I choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

Through my circumstances it just seems that the more I have lost in this world the easier it has become to want to leave it behind. You know how sometimes every day life seems to become so mundane and you want to do and go somewhere different? A vacation would be the perfect way to be able to get away and relax in order to come back refreshed. Well, upon the losses I have endured sometimes I feel that way to a much larger degree. And to tell you the truth I believe it is quite rightfully so and very healthy thinking in the spiritual. For Revelation 21:4 says, "And God will wipe every tear away from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." You can't get any better than that on a travel brochure! The best part is you get to stay. It is a ticket that is only punched once and by one person (Jesus Christ) as He is the only way!

It is hard to admit as a Christian but nonetheless it is true that due to feeling terribly alone I struggle often with depression. I keep thinking if my circumstances change that it will go away. What I need to soak down deep inside of my spirit is that the Lord is always constant and He never changes no matter what my circumstances may look like. It is not a question of mind over matter but the spiritual over the natural.

Martyrdom and Panic Attacks

As I pondered upon Patsy asking me if I was a Christian I received another answer to my question as to why I was convicted. For the past several months I have been reading books on Christians who have suffered extreme persecution or have been martyred for their beliefs. Did you know that eleven out of the original twelve disciples were martyred for their faith? Did you know that hundreds of thousands of Christians are martyred every year? You are probably wondering where in the world I am about to go with all of this. Well, stick with me as I hope to make what I am about to say as clear to you as it has been made to me.

After the Lord spoke to me about how He would never leave nor forsake me I started thinking about the books I have been reading recently on martyrdom. For example, in the book of Acts 7:54-60 Stephen became the first disciple to be martyred as the people of Israel refused to hear the words he was speaking from the Lord. Verse 59-60 says this, "And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Stephen knew he was about to face death. He literally accepted this to be his fate in the natural realm. He died with the name Jesus on his lips and he had no regrets. When I was in the E. R. all I was thinking about was me, myself and I. There was not one time I called upon the Lord in my crisis. As I stated earlier there were a couple of times I thought I was possibly going to die but ultimately I had no excuse as to why I did not seek the Lord during my episode. Overall, it was not any different than when I am sleepy and had rather go to bed instead of reading my Bible, eat instead of fast or talk to a friend on the phone instead of pray. For the most part I thought I was going to be alright while in the E. R. Stephen however knew without a doubt that his final moments were upon him and the following response is evidence of his unwavering faith: 1. He was not thinking about himself. 2. He

called upon the Lord. 3. He was still consumed with the sins of the lost. Something tells me that Stephen was clothed in the full armor of God. (Acts 7:54-60)

Paul was not one of the original twelve disciples. As a matter of fact he was the one who was giving his approval to the people while Stephen was being stoned. Paul was on a mission to persecute the church in whatever way he saw fit. (Acts 7:54-Acts 8:3) He was eventually converted into Christianity in the book of Acts Chapter 9 and became a very bold and faithful follower of Christ. His name was then changed from Saul to Paul. (Acts 13:9) Although Paul lists many of his trials in 2nd Corinthians 11:25 I believe there are far more details to those encounters than what appears in his writings. In the end he simply met the same fate as that of Stephen. It seems ironic that after Paul persecuted the church the way he did that he would go on to write thirteen books in the New Testament.

The reason I mention a lack of details in the trials of Paul has to do with a book I have been reading called, "In God's Underground" by Richard Wurmbrand. He was born in 1909 and died in 2001. In 1948 Richard was arrested and imprisoned by Romanian Communists for fourteen years. There is no way Hollywood could ever be able to duplicate such a sadistic and horrifying testimony. I am not even half way finished with the book but there are some things in it that I just do not know if I could ever repeat. His unjust punishment was just too cruel and unusual. During that time he was subjected to medieval torture. A doctor would be kept in the room to check his vitals. If the doctor thought he was too close to death the torture would be put to a stop until he was well enough to be tortured some more. Three years out of those fourteen Richard spent in solitary confinement.

During that time his wife Sabina was arrested and put to work for three years in a slave labor camp on the Danube Canal. I encourage you to read the book sometime if you are able to get through it. I guarantee you that Richard Wurmbrand had to of had the hope of 2nd Corinthians 4:9 to help him endure. It says, "We are persecuted but not forsaken." He had also read 2nd Timothy 3:12 which says, "Yes, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus

will suffer persecution.” Yet when the Communists seized Romania and attempted to control the churches Richard organized an underground church. After his release he started the organization called, “Voice of the Martyrs” so that the voices of those who are suffering around the world from persecution and who have been martyred can be heard even beyond the grave such as Paul still is to this very day. Revelation 6:9 says, “For they are the souls under the altar who have been slain for the word of God and for the testimony, which they held.” The Voice of the Martyrs website is www.persecution.com

I think about stories such as Richard Wurmbrands and I realize how weak I am. Richard had no idea if he was going to live or die from one minute to the next. When I was facing the panic attack that brought me to the E.R. it was a good hour before it crossed my mind that I might possibly die. I should have been looking to the one Who gave me my life to begin with. Even if I had been out of breath or felt faint I could have at least lifted my hands to Him in a trustworthy manner while thinking, “Here I am Lord, let your will be done.” He does not have to hear my audible voice just like there are times when I do not have to hear His although I know he is there. It is just like the times my niece is right there and her baby knows. If my nieces baby did not have such an awareness I guarantee you he would be crying!

I can only speak for myself but compared to Richard Wurmbrand and Stephen my panic attacks are really not that bad. I am even referring to the ones I suffered from while my mom was sick. I apologize if you are having panic attacks and are offended by my comment but I encourage you to stick with this book so you will really get what I am trying to say. I care about your panic attacks or I would not be sharing this book with you. If I did not believe there was any hope in this book the second part of it would be called, “A Tragedy in Progress” and I doubt that I would have ever considered writing it. Yet, the Lord encourages us to bear one another’s burdens in order to fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

The Lord cares about you and wants you to know that if you are His child you are not alone. I care about you or I would not

be sharing my innermost thoughts and struggles. After all, it would be so much easier to keep them to myself. The Lord hears your prayers. Your attacks concern Him but the way you deal with them concerns Him the most. He does not want you to walk around as if you are defeated. Stephen, Paul, and Richard Wurmbrand were facing death while being tortured and stood the test. How much more can we stand the test through our panic attacks or other struggles knowing we are clothed with the armor of God? I think back to Richard Wurmbrand and his wife. Neither one could pick up a phone to call the other to discuss their terrible circumstances much less let the other know if they were dead or alive. They also had a young son whose whereabouts they were not certain of. They could not check on him.

As I look back at Stephen, Paul, Job, Richard Wurmbrand I can't help but think of the terrible tragedies they endured. They are the ones who saw the picture clear enough to sacrifice their lives for something far greater than anything that can be seen in the natural. One of the things I keep reminding myself of is how there are other people in this world who are suffering far worse than I am. Can you imagine what it must be like for those who are going through the worst? Through a conversation with a friend it hit me who those people are. It is not people like Stephen, Paul, and Richard Wurmbrand who are viciously and unjustly put to death. Although these people may not realize it until it is too late they are the ones who face trials without the hope that only comes from Jesus and who are also persecuted and die without Christ and for causes unrelated to Him. Ultimately the worst awaits those who never accepted Jesus in their heart by repenting and trusting in Him.

Matthew 5:45 says, "He makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust." In other words everyone will go through trials and tribulations in their lives. If you are good and just you will keep your eyes on Jesus and be blessed afterwards. Sometimes those who are good will be weak but they must not lose focus of the truth. Those who are children of God will hear His voice when He calls. For John 10:27-28 says, "My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life; and they shall never

perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” If you are evil and unjust you will not have the hope that comes from Jesus. For in John 10:25-26 Jesus described those saying, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe because you are not My sheep.”

CHAPTER 10

Stuck in Traffic

The same day in which the Lord spoke to me and said, “You are not alone, I will never leave you nor forsake you” I thought it might be a good idea to start writing scripture verses down on index cards to read as a distraction during an attack. All the more reason to do so would be so I could fight the enemy with the word of God. There were many scriptures I had in mind to write down in order to accomplish overcoming a panic attack. I had been weak and barely hanging by the hem of His robe long enough and it was way past time for me to stand and fight with the two-edged sword. For Hebrews 4:12 says, “The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. Why would the word of God say such if I am not ever going need it in order to fight spiritual battles? After all, Jesus had done so against Satan in the wilderness. (Matthew 4:1-11) How much more shall I also have to do the same? After the devil had left from tempting Jesus He was ministered to by the angels. (Matthew 4:11) I am also being ministered to or I would have never heard the call to write this book.

At that point I was still taking the medication the doctor had prescribed to me. As a matter of fact I am still taking it. I have a little over a month left of the medicine but I am determined to stop taking it when it runs out. The medication seemed to be working in the beginning. The doctor said that it usually takes two to three weeks to really start taking affect. I had not encountered any incidences until I was headed into the fourth week. I had just come in from out of the heat to eat at a restaurant. I am not even sure if I might have just been overheated or if I was actually fighting an attack. As I mentioned earlier I get overheated very

easy. Since I was on the panic attack medication I dismissed it after a few minutes once I had cooled down some. However I was not able to eat at the restaurant. I had to wait for everyone else to eat and then take my food home and eat it. It is not out of the ordinary for my appetite to be as such when I am overheated. So once again I just tried to dismiss the fact that it could have been an attack.

The very next day it was time for me to leave my nieces house to go back home. I really did not want to leave because my niece and her kids are the closest family I have. They are big part of my life and are the only remnant in regards to my sister and my mom. After all, going to their house seems like the greatest place on earth. I know I can be myself and I feel loved, wanted and needed. Who in their right mind would want to leave such a place? So, finally with a heavy heart I dragged myself away along with only the memories of a wonderful visit.

Once I got on the road all that was on my mind at that point was stopping to get something to eat and drink to take my medication with and to get back home in a timely manner. During that time while was sitting in my truck at a red light I was in full view of the place where I planned to get my food. There was a long line of traffic beside me to my left. In front of me was a van and behind me was a long line of traffic. To my right there was a turning lane with no cars in it. So I am just sitting there waiting along with everyone else for the light to turn green. All of a sudden it was as if someone poured diesel fuel on me and lit a match. I felt as if I was on fire in my truck in the middle of Dallas traffic! This attack came upon me much quicker and far more powerful than the attack, which sent me to the E. R. I was trying so hard not to lose it. First of all, I had to make myself stay in my truck and not get out and run around like some crazy lady that people might wonder would start foaming at the mouth at any second. Oh yes! Laugh if you must. To tell you the truth it is even funny to me at the moment. However, at that time I was very terrified! I kept watching the lane to the right of me to see if any cars were coming as I tried to work my way out from behind the van in front of me, and the car behind me. I was so afraid I would hit one of them but I had to keep trying and just hope for the best. I never attempt to drive in congestion like that on a good day. I do not trust my

judgment enough to pull out from between two cars like that. It was as if I was boxed in a parallel parking spot but in the middle of traffic, which could take off at any moment. I do not like to park in parallel parking spots unless I have assistance. Yet here I am trying to do it alone and in a state of panic at the same time!

Finally I made it out and turned right onto a street I had never been down before. I was trying to find a place where I could pull over and maybe get a drink or something to hopefully help me to chill out but the only way for that to happen was for me to get back on the road I had just come from. I was very concerned if I did find a place to go into they would think I was nuts and call the police. I was shaking my head and saying, "There is no way that I am going to go back to the E. R. again because it does not do any good. The only way I was going to go back to the E. R. was if I fell out and someone called and ambulance!" All of those thoughts were rushing through my mind very quickly. I realized there was no way I would be going back home that day. I knew I had to go back to my nieces but here I was going down back roads I had never been on while hoping I was going in the right direction. I knew to look for a water tower with the name of the town on it. I saw one that I had never seen before and it was the right town so I was feeling pretty good about the direction I was taking. Then in the distance I finally saw the tower I had been looking for.

I called my nieces house and told her husband that I was on my way back. He asked me if I had forgotten something and I told him, "No, but that I had just had another attack." After I arrived I walked up to my niece and took the baby so I could hold him. I needed a distraction to try and take my mind off of myself. I was so happy the baby fell asleep and was not upset that I was holding him. My niece walked into the room and we talked for a while. I told her how I had felt like such a failure because I had no doubt the Lord had been showing me so many things recently as to how to deal with an attack if I felt one coming on. The thing is; this one had come upon me like a flash of lightning. I was too overwhelmed from the get go to think clearly enough. After my niece and I talked she prayed for me and then left me to be alone because emotionally I was done talking at the moment. Looking

back I don't recall any other point in time in her thirty-two years when she had ever seen me so distraught.

I stayed behind in the bedroom lying down as I tried to stay calm. My niece was expecting friends over that night and since I was not much company I just stayed in the room by myself. Little did I know, my five-year old great niece wanted to spend some time with me. When she found out it would be all right she came and sat on the bed with me and we just talked about all kinds of stuff. Although she was not saying any of this I could see clearly that she did not want me to be alone and it was also quite obvious that she was taking it upon herself to keep an eye on me. I had never seen this sensitive side to her before, and at the age of five! You would have thought by the way she was handling it that she was a grown adult. It was very heartwarming!

I asked her why she was hanging out with me instead of the house full of company who had even brought over other little kids! I mentioned how I was just lying on the bed and how boring that was compared to hanging out with company. She was saying things like, "Oh Jennifer, you are not boring or I just want to." Then she asked me, "If I was going to go eat?" I said, "I was not really sure." Usually when she goes to eat she takes a while but not this time. This time she was out of the room for what did not even seem like five minutes. She offered to bring back some food but I said, "No, that's alright." Finally I asked her one last time why she had rather be hanging out with me. She never would look at me but she answered this time and said, "I just feel like I am supposed to be sitting in here with you." That is when I said to her; "You know that God probably has you in here with me right now, don't you?" Still not looking at me she was shaking her head yes with a definite mannerism, and said, "You are probably right" in a very matter of fact tone. It was so sweet and I cherish the fact she was thinking about me. I would have to say that out of everyone who has dealt with me while having a panic attack, that my little five year old great niece was more in tune with God than the majority. I am still in awe but yet at the same time not surprised. I also have no doubt she showed me more compassion than the Dr. on my first visit to the E. R. who was paying more attention to Spongebob

Squarepants on the television set than he was to me as I was speaking to him.

At this point in time I had been on the panic attack medicine for four weeks. It had been long enough to know if it was going to work or not. My latest episode had been proof enough that the medicine was in fact not working. There was no doubt I had just had the worst panic attack I had ever experienced in my life and in Dallas traffic of all places! As I stated earlier in this book I am still taking the medicine. I am not going to lie. I admit part of me is hesitant to stop taking it since I had my worst attack while on the medication. How much worse would it get if I were to stop taking it? In just a few more weeks I will be out of pills and I am determined not take any more. I am holding on to the hope that all of these things the Lord has been speaking to me about the past few months are renewing my spirit and giving me strength like I have never known before in order to overcome the attacks. Since pretty much the start of these panic attacks I have been saying, "I believed the Lord was going to give me testimony and I would have never guessed it was going to inspire me to write a book. I did not ask for this story. If I had then I would have also had to of asked for the panic attacks which I most certainly did not! It is just that the Lord started speaking to me about so many things during this season of my life that I felt I needed to write them down. I really had no idea the Lord had laid so much on my heart until I put my pen to the paper and it began to flow in such a way that I knew the more that I wrote the more that it was meant to be. As I write I feel a boldness coming upon me that I believe and expect to carry me through this journey even if it is on my knees right in the midst of the battle.

CHAPTER 11

Armor of God

Another amazing moment in scripture takes place in Daniel 3:23-28 with the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. King Nebuchadnezzar had been urging them to worship other gods instead of The One true God. But they would have no part of the kings' demands and were thrown into the fiery furnace. The king

began to question whether or not only three men were in the furnace because there appeared to be actually four men who were loose, walking in the midst of the fire. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were not hurt and the fourth man appeared to be like the form of the Son of God. King Nebuchadnezzar called them out of the furnace. He and his people had seen with their very eyes that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were obviously servants of the Most High God because the fire had no power over them. Not a hair on their head was singed nor were their garments affected, nor was the smell of fire on them. Finally Nebuchadnezzar confirmed that the Lord had sent one of His angels to deliver His servants who trusted Him. When I am having a panic attack and feel as if I am engulfed in flames I want to come out of it as unscathed as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

This finally brings me to the armor of God, which I have referred to a few times now. It is found in Ephesians 6:14-18. It says, “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with the truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” I believe the only way the saints I have mentioned in this book could have endured the stories I have referred to has much to do with them being clothed in the armor of God with all the faith they could muster. I hope that you will also take the time to study the following for yourself.

First and foremost a believer in Christ cannot serve the Lord without wearing His armor. The armor is received through believing with a faith, which causes someone to confess with his or her mouth the Lord Jesus and while believing in their heart that God raised them from the dead. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10) Upon making such a confession there must be repentance. A sorrow for sins; which have been committed against the Lord. 2nd Corinthians 7:10 describes such Godly sorrow by saying, “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to

salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

In the natural realm when someone becomes a police officer they take an oath to serve and protect their fellowman. Upon being entrusted with such a responsibility they are to maintain the laws of the land in which they claim to defend. Once a police officer assumes the responsibility of the task at hand he is now clothed with his uniform which is a symbol of the example of the duties he is required to fill. In the spiritual it is the same for that of someone who has just made a profession of faith. Once they have done so they are to become clothed with the armor of God. The armor would be Jesus Christ. Romans 13:14 says, “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provisions for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” Just as the police officer is to make sure he now upholds the laws of the land we as Christians should uphold the law of the Lord. The police officer has become a unit with other officers as his backup and the sergeant as his leader. As stated in Romans Chapter 11, we as Christians through our belief have been grafted into the vine Who is Jesus being our King of kings along with other believers who are to encourage and stand with us in battle.

If someone has truly repented and is seeking the truth they will come to an understanding, which will make them want to know Him instead of continuing to believe the lies of the enemy. Just as we were born of the world and are in it so we also can be brought out of it and into the spiritual by recognizing such: 1 John 5:20 says, "And we know that the Son of God is come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him Who is true, and we are in Him Who is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and Eternal Life." Because of the sins of Adam and Eve we were born into the natural. Once we receive Jesus as Lord we are born of the spiritual and Jesus has become the armor. It is now that we live and move and have our being in Him for we are His offspring. (Acts 17:28)

Just as a policeman has different parts of his uniform, which protect him in the line of fire the weapons of a Christian are far more powerful and trustworthy. With Jesus as our armor we have received the understanding of Ephesians 6:10 which says,

“To be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!” Many of the Lord’s marvelous attributes of His armor can be acknowledged as it is worn properly and in doing so it radiates His character through us and towards others as a testimony beyond what humanity can fathom.

When a policeman takes off his uniform and tries to enforce the law he is not taken as seriously. It is the same as when he himself breaks the law or decides to follow a new way of thinking. It is the same for the Christian. If we put our focus on something else we are making it out to look as if the Lord Jesus is not good enough to be clothed in. If a Christian (believer) does not follow what he or she claims to believe it looks as if they do not take Jesus seriously and neither will they be taken as such. With that said, knowing that Jesus is our armor we know the truth which is Jesus, we are righteous because we know He is righteous, we are at peace because He is our Prince of Peace, He is our shield of faith because the Holy Spirit is working in our lives, He is the helmet of our salvation because He became our salvation through His death on the cross and He is the Sword of the Spirit the Word of God because Jesus is the Word. For John 1:14 says, “And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

1. GIRD YOUR WAIST WITH THE TRUTH – Knowing Jesus is the truth Ephesians 4:22- 31 says, “The truth is obtained as we put off the old man and become renewed in Spirit of mind, and as we put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. We were sealed with the Holy Spirit of God for the day of redemption. We are instructed to not grieve the Holy Spirit. Therefore we are to let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away along with all malice.”

If we believe Jesus is the ultimate truth knowing that His Father God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16) then we will walk in Him towards the light. John 3:30 elaborates on that by saying, “He who has received

His testimony has certified that God is true.” Our deeds will be clearly seen, and it will be evident they are done through our faith in God.” (John 3:21, paraphrased) The truth is not in him who does not accept His word. (John 1:8)

After it seemed as if I had been walking around in a fog for a while, I finally got to a place when I realized the Lord wanted me to write scripture verses on index cards to keep handy for when I was having an attack. I thought that if I would be able to read them it would be a good way to keep myself distracted and focused on the truth of His word. It would also be essential in fighting the enemy just as Jesus had spoken the truth against him in the wilderness. (Matthew 4:1-11) Writing scripture verses down for such a purpose may seem like a pretty good idea and it really is. Although on the other hand I really shouldn't have to write scripture verses on index cards. As I have already stated, “I have proclaimed my Christianity for twenty years.” Now I know the word of God but after twenty years I should have His words on the tip of my tongue for whatever the occasion. I should know what the enemy is capable of. I simply cannot let trials come from out of nowhere as if I have been struck by a Mack truck. I must remember that Satan is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1st Peter 5:8) no matter what the circumstances and at any cost. I must not allow him to gain a foothold but rather I should use the word of God just as Jesus did to put him under my feet where he belongs. Just the fact that he was cunning enough to even consider tempting Jesus in the wilderness should be a warning that he will all the more tempt His children! Also with the understanding that Jesus is my armor and that He already overcame Satan in the wilderness I should cling to Him even more tightly!

Warning about the persecutions upon the earth Matthew 10:19-20 says, “But when they deliver you up, do not worry how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak, for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father Who speaks in you.” Psalm 119:11 says, “Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you.” Have you hid His word in your heart? Remember my translation of Revelation 1:3 which says, “Blessed is he who reads and those

who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it for the time is near?" I basically believe along the same lines in this situation as well. If you do not hide His word in your heart you will sin against Him. Therefore He will not bless you by giving you the words to speak when you are in distress because you did not bother to come to the knowledge of the truth. For Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." When it comes to knowing and preaching the word 2nd Timothy 4:2 says "Be ready in season and out of season."

Basically, I need to have His word hidden in my heart so that whenever the time comes, and it will, I will be ready to stand and fight. I must have my waist girded with the truth if I plan to overcome. 2nd Timothy 3:12 says, "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." It does not say, "they "might" be persecuted." The thing is trials and persecutions face everyone on the face of the planet. Do not think you are above persecution! For goodness sakes! If you think you are now is the time to wake up! Jesus Who is above all who ever walked on the face of this planet died on the cross through much persecution! He was beaten until He was unrecognizable! (Isaiah 52:14)

There are also people who get persecuted every day all around the world for many reasons other than the cause of Christ. You have a choice on whether or not you are going to fight the good fight of faith (1st Timothy 6:12) and walk in the truth. (2nd John 1:4) The truth shall set you free. (John 8:32) What is it Christians have been set free from? Romans 6:18 & 22 says, "We have been set free from sin." Verse 23 of that chapter ultimately says that, "The wages of sin is death."

Richard Wurmbrand was unable to literally have the word of God to console him or to witness to his cellmates while imprisoned and I would imagine neither did Paul. They also did not have it while being persecuted as they spoke to and against their adversaries. Because they were looking to the Lord and clothed in His armor the Holy Spirit was able to reveal to them the testimony in which to give and they received it as it had been written on their hearts. But how did it end up on their hearts? They had read it and meditated upon it. They chose to see the glory of

God in the light of the truth instead of the darkness in which Satan was attempting to surround them with. Knowing and understanding the word of God does not come by osmosis. One more time: “GIRD YOUR WAIST WITH THE TRUTH!”

2. BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS – This does not refer to our own righteousness. It refers to God’s righteousness that comes through faith in Christ. Because of such unspeakable righteousness Paul exclaimed that he hoped to know the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, he might attain to the resurrection of the dead. (Philippians 3:9-11)

Did you know that Noah became an heir of righteousness? Hebrews 11:7 says, “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with Godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” Therefore those who are not righteous will not know the truth. As I said before, “This does not refer to our own righteousness.” Isaiah 64:6 says, “All of our righteousness are like filthy rags.” We must receive God’s righteousness that comes through faith in Christ. Romans 11:17 says, “The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” When Noah built the ark it was because of his faith and at that moment he was declared righteous.

Someone who has faith in Christ will continue to exercise it on a daily basis no matter what the circumstances and therefore remain clothed in Him. When facing trials and tribulations they will not disgrace the armor which sustains them yet they will remain faithful causing them to endure even if it means passing from death to life in the natural realm. It will have ultimately been a conscience spiritual decision. In 1st Corinthians 15:31 Paul informed us of how we should live with the statement, “I die daily” and his testimony is just one example of many as proof of such.

The Bible is the inspired word of God and I have no doubt there is a spiritual realm that stretches to the highest heavens and ascends into the lowest depths of hell. Everyone sees this to an

extent but not just anyone can place a finger on the source. After all, everyone sees the good and evil upon the earth. Only those who desire and strive to live holy and righteous with a desire to know the truth can discern the real difference between the two. Because of His righteousness and the testimony we received we are to exercise our faith with such discernment on a daily basis first of all by:

a. REPENTENCE - Confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, in order to be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10) 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. When exercising this particular act of faith one must have the godly sorrow which is explained in 2nd Corinthians 7:10. It says, "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." 1 John 1:10 says, "If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. I remember when I hoped I was good enough to get into Heaven. One day I understood that I will never be or do anything good enough to receive salvation. I realized that it was what Jesus did on the cross, which redeemed me from the curse of the law. (Galatians 3:13) Now since I have repented and trust in the Lord Jesus as my Savior I should walk according to the Spirit. In Romans 8:2 it says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

b. BAPTISM - In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead. (Colossians 2:11-12) In Matthew 3:13-17 John baptized Jesus. If we are to be like Jesus and He was baptized then that would be all the more reason for someone who professes Christianity to be baptized as well. John 13:16 says, "Most assuredly I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than the one who sent him." Getting baptized is first of all an honor and a

privilege. It is one of the easiest steps of exercising ones faith upon first accepting Jesus as Lord. It illustrates how upon receiving Him the person has put off the past life and intends to walk in the fellowship and truth of His word.

I personally can't help but think if someone will not do something as simple as get water baptized they might as well say, "I am above Jesus" and they will not get very far in the walk they are proclaiming to have just begun. Mark 16:16 says, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." It is not only water baptism but also other simple things new believers are instructed to do. For James 2:20 says, "Faith without works is dead." It continues to say in the following verses how "Abraham believed in God and was justified by his works and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Abraham was going to sacrifice his own son Isaac on the altar. Because of such faith James 2:23-24 says, "He was called a friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." James 1:22 says, "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." Believing in the Lord is simply not good enough because James 2:19 says, "Even the demons believe – and tremble!"

After someone is truly saved they are going to want to be baptized in the first puddle of water they are in the vicinity of! When it comes to baptism a conversion experience should be much like that of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40. Philip had overheard him reading from the prophet Isaiah and ask him if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch said, "How could he understand without someone to guide him?" Philip then preached to the eunuch from the scriptures in which he had been reading. Upon hearing the message Philip had preached the eunuch confessed that he believed Jesus to be the Son of God. As Philip and the eunuch were going down a road they came across some water. The eunuch asked Philip, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" So Philip went down into the water with the eunuch and baptized him. The eunuchs' response was that he went away rejoicing!

c. FELLOWSHIP – And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25) Most importantly fellowship with the Lord comes first so that we might have words of wisdom and encouragement in order to build one another up. Galatians 6:2, says, “Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.” The law of Christ can’t be filled without associating with fellow believers.

I have no doubt that using index cards with scripture verses on them to read as a distraction has helped me through several of my panic attacks. What is also very encouraging is when a fellow believer prays the word of God over me or gives me a scripture to read. Playing scripture songs on my guitar is also very soothing when I am calm enough to pick up my guitar and play them.

d. WITNESSING – “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” (MARK 16:15) Paul said in 1st Corinthians 9:16-16, “Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.” The only way to attain the fullness of an abundant life is by having a right relationship with Jesus Christ and in doing so 1st Peter 2:9 says, “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him Who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Ephesians 5:8-10 says, “For you were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of the light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth) finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. If we are walking in the light we will be able to do as Colossians 4:5-6 says, “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, remembering the time. Let your speech always be full of grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one. In other words, if you walk in the truth people will be drawn to you. They will know by your fruits that you are in this world but not of it.

I used to think that because I went to church it made me a better person but all it really did was just make me someone who went to church. It is no different than someone who goes to work everyday. In all seriousness I am also not impressed when someone tells me that they go to church. What impresses me are the fruits that person bears from the relationship they share with the creator of the universe. The truth is that it is not what I have done or will do but what Jesus did on the cross through which I am now more than a conqueror. As a result of such knowledge my gratefulness and appreciation will be manifested through the fruits I bear.

e. LOVE ONE ANOTHER – 1 John 3:14-15, “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” 1st Peter 4:8, “Above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.””

The previous examples are just a few of the basics on exercising ones faith. If those steps cannot be accomplished how then will one walk any further in their so-called belief and faith in Christ? Some day the Lord could ask you to sell everything you have and give it to the poor. Such a request was made by Jesus when the rich young ruler approached Him to ask what good thing he must do to receive eternal life in Matthew 19:16-22.

Are you ready to be hated by the world for the sake of the gospel? It is even quite possible your own family will turn against you for following Jesus. Mark 13:12-13 says, “Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents putting them to death. You will be hated by all for My names sake, But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” This happens far more often than we wish to realize, especially within the Muslim religion.

What it all boils down to is exercising your faith as such: “Jesus said to the five thousand whom He had just fed with only five loaves of bread and two fish, “If anyone desires to come after

Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.” (Luke 9:23-24)

When I really sit back and think about it I can understand why Patsy asked me if I was a Christian when I was in the E.R. because my faith level at that moment was zero, zilch, and nada. I really wasn't expressing the slightest hint of faith in my situation. It was correct to assume I was lacking in my spiritual walk. If I can't have a panic attack and have the faith He will see me through then how will I ever be able to endure persecution for the sake of Christ? Just look at Peter who denied Jesus three times just so he would not have to suffer persecution. He claimed he did not know who Jesus was. I do not have to come out and say that I do not know Who Jesus is for people to think I have no clue. I can either say it in other ways or by my actions. However, during this test my spiritual tank was running on empty and that is contrary to how scripture instructs me to respond to such. James 1:1-4 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”

3. SHOD YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPERATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE – We are clothed in Jesus as our peace because He is the Prince of Peace. Romans 10:15 says, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace.” “The Great Commission” in Mark 16:15, commands all who believe, “To go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” If you really know the truth then you are going to want to tell as many people as you can. But if you are not righteously walking in the truth you will not be a faithful and credible witness to the gospel of Christ. I must be as effective of a witness as possibly while I am having a panic attack. I must display a sense of trust in the Lord. After all if I trust the Lord to deliver my soul from the second death; which are the fires of hell; then what kind of excuse do I have to respond as if I have been defeated during an attack? When unbelievers as well as fellow believers see someone who is suffering yet enduring it encourages them to want to overcome in their struggles all the more!

On the other hand another disheartening scenario is when the word of the Lord is preached and those who hear choose to harden their hearts against it. Sadly the one preaching the good news has to learn to discern when it is time to shake the dust off their feet against them. (Acts 13:49-51) Another verse to support that fact would be Luke 9:5 which says, “And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them. Hebrews 3:12-13 says, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called, “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

SHIELD OF FAITH – Take the shield of faith in order to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. I can’t help but think about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace. In the case of my panic attacks I can’t help but think about the intense heat that engulfs me from what feels like the inside out. Although when I am tested by fire; I am determined to be refined by it and not consumed by it. Here is a perfect scripture to reflect upon when facing various trials. 1st Peter 1:6-7 says, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” When I think about it I had much rather be refined by fire than to end up in the fires of hell for eternity.

4. HELMET OF SALVATION – We are clothed in salvation through Jesus Christ because He became our salvation through His death on the cross. I believe the following verses are significant in acquiring the full proof helmet of salvation. First of all, 1st Corinthians 2:16 says, “Who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.” As I previously pointed out, when someone receives Christ they begin to put off their old nature. The book of Romans in verse 12:2 goes hand in hand with the process. It says, “And do not be conformed by this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” 2nd Corinthians 10:5 says, “Bring every

thought into the captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Also, Colossians 3:2-4 reveals the reward for setting your mind on things above. “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ Who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Amen!

When I am having a panic attack I need to remember that God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2nd Timothy 1:7) But most importantly I must also remember that in order to acquire a sound mind I must allow the Lords instruction to guide me towards attaining the mind of Christ. While doing research on panic attacks I came across an article that said, “People who have panic attacks need to learn how to change their way of thinking.” I was not on a Christian website but a secular medical website. The statement is so true but yet at the same time it lacks understanding. Philippians 4:8-9 sums up how we are to think and what we are to meditate upon. For it says, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Notice where it mentions the things you have learned? We must hear and receive His instructions to learn and know what to meditate upon. Otherwise you might fool yourself into believing that your thought process is normal and healthy when in fact it is shallow and vain. Colossians 3:1-4 says, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on the things on the earth. For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ Who is our life appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory.”

5. SWORD OF THE SPIRIT – The sword of the spirit is the word of God. Hebrews 4:12 states, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. We have got to know the word of God to be able to encourage

ourselves before we will ever be able to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ. If we can't do either of those tasks then we have no chance of the Lord using us to reach a lost and dying world. Not being clothed in the armor of God by allowing His word to dwell within our hearts gives Satan several different angles at which to devour our souls.

Don't ever forget that Satan came to steal, kill and destroy. I can't stress enough how crucial it is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and totally trust in Him alone for where your help comes from. After reading the stories of the saints who lived and died before us we should not be surprised by Satan's attacks. Hopefully I have weaved together the armor of God well enough to establish the fact it is the Christians greatest weapon in the daily combat zone. Without the shield of faith there is no hope of angels fighting on your behalf as they did with Daniel. Without truth there will be no trusting in the Lord to ever deliver you. Finally, once you see and know the truth "dear children, remain in fellowship with Christ so that when he returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in shame. (1 John 2:28)

CHAPTER 12

Spiritual vs. Natural

As a toddler after I began to start talking I eventually began to effortlessly speak the new words I had been learning. Likewise, in the spiritual as I learn the word of God it should begin to effortlessly flow out of my mouth as I speak which is also proven by the walk of course. After all, in the natural I do not crawl around through the house from room to room looking for my pacifier. I am forty-one years old for goodness sakes! I would like to think that I appear able to communicate in one way or another and maneuver around pretty well also. Although occasionally I get my words jumbled up but for the most part I've got the lingo down pretty good and am able to get whatever point I am trying to make across to whomever it is I am speaking. But when it comes to getting out of bed or off the couch what was once an easy task has now become more of a struggle. My foot is not in as good of shape as it used to be and sometimes I have to brace myself in order to avoid the pain and a possible fall. My weight however is another

issue. I would imagine it is quite possible that my foot suffers due to my weight. Therefore, after I first get up from sitting or lying down I have to get situated in the right position before I am able to get up and hobble around for a few minutes until the pain goes away.

That same exact concept can be applied to the spiritual man. Do not let the weight of this world drag you down. If you do you will not be situated in the right position to be able to stand up for the truth! You will be a fallen soldier in the midst of the battle. Hebrews 12:1-2 says, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." It is hard to run with the weight of chains around my ankles but as I look to Jesus the weight will fall off and no longer have me bound and it is through this process I am set free. Free to not only know the truth but to walk in it. And if there does happen to be an area of sin in my life that is weighing me down then I need to lay aside that weight in order to be set free from my bout with panic attacks. The bottom line is that the things that weigh us down distort the truth.

As a mature Christian I should question the areas of my life that might be weighing me down. There are so many weights to examine when seeking the root cause of spiritual oppression that the list might seem endless. Now I know that it is not possible to walk in the flesh and the armor of God at the same time. The same concept applies while speaking. A good example to explain this concept is applied to taming the tongue which it is described in James 3:8-12. "But no man can tame the tongue, it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh."

It is in knowing the word of God with scriptures such as the previous one that can help me to seek answers to find out if the root cause of my panic attacks are linked to any weight (such as

my tongue in this case, not my foot) that is holding me down. Also, if I am wearing the armor of God I will not be interested in the lusts of the flesh. Galatians 5:19-21 refers to the ‘lusts of the flesh’ by naming things such as adultery, idolatry, selfish ambitions, outburst of wrath and more. That verse does not mention others such as unbelief, fear, covetousness and unforgiveness and the list continues. Also, another place to look would be Ephesians 4:31 which is in the same chapter of scripture which mentions the armor of God.

Another way of looking at it would be like this. If I were going to the Dr. for test results I am going to want him to give me the truth along with how to treat the condition. Why else would I even bother to go much less pay for such services if I do not want to get answers? However, this time there were not any answers. Yet, I was not surprised because in my case, although I sometimes feel as if I am falling apart, I do not believe the panic attacks I am suffering from are related to a physical condition but a spiritual one. In the natural, I can apply the same concept to my every day life. I am going to seek answers in order to make things as easy on myself as possible. I am certainly not going to hope for panic attacks in order to make myself miserable! The only thing left to do would be to humbly examine myself in the light of the truth of God’s word and act upon the results once they appear.

It is mind boggling to comprehend that as we grow older in our earthly body it fades away but with the spiritual man there is always room for growth. It is far more important to place value on the spiritual man than the natural. Because I might go to the Dr. one day and get life threatening news that has no cure. So it comforts me to know I have the hope of 2nd Corinthians 4:16-18 where Paul says, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

When it comes to spiritual growth I always refer to Hebrews 5:13-14 which says, “For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are full of age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Think about what this would mean in the natural first. What if you lift weights at the gym and all of a sudden lose your job and upon hearing the news you get all bummed out and lie around as a couch potato for a year? If you ever go back to the gym you are not going to be able to pick up where you left off. You are going to have to work at it to get back in the physical condition you were in. 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 says, “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” I should know the word of God as well as I know how to do my job. I do not have to look at my notes every time I do something at work. Just like I should not have to look at scripture verses on index cards every time I have a panic attack.

CHAPTER 13

Hot, Cold or Lukewarm?

Now I would like to mention a group of people who failed miserably in every area of their lives because they were not clothed in the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact the Lord referred to them as “naked.” It is unfortunate that the vast majority of those who claim to be Christians characteristically resemble the Lukewarm “Church” of the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:14-22. I type “Church” in such a way because that is how they saw themselves. When in fact, they were totally the opposite of everything they assumed to be yet ironically totally opposite of everything the Lord had called them to be. They were missing the mark so much you would have thought there was no target.

In verse 17 Jesus told the Laodiceans that they did not know they are naked. I just felt I had to mention this first because I believe it ties in to the points I have been addressing on the armor of God. I believe the Laodiceans were naked because they were not

clothed in the armor of God, as they saw no need for it. In the same verse Jesus told them how they believed they were in need of nothing. If they had been naked like Adam and Eve they might have been hiding behind the trees but they had deceived themselves into believing they were fully clothed when in fact they were spiritually impoverished. It is pretty ironic how Adam and Eve realized as soon as they had sinned that they were naked. Since that time sin is running so rampant that people are naked in more ways than one. Not only are they naked in their “so called” spiritual state but the natural. In the spiritual state they think they are in need of nothing and better than others. In the natural they brag and flaunt it while exposing their selves to the point it is becoming more and more acceptable. Had the Laodiceans clothed themselves in the armor of God then more than likely they would have been clothed in the white garments, which portray the beauty of the bride of Christ. (Revelation 3:18)

In many ways the Laodiceans remind me so much of the Pharisees. In Revelation Chapter 3:17 Jesus told the Laodiceans they were blind. He told the Pharisees in Matthew 15:14, “They were blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” Speaking once again to the Pharisees this time from a parable in Matthew 22:11-14 Jesus said, “But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, “Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?” And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into the outer darkness, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Are you able to proclaim the testimony of Paul from 1st Corinthians 11:1 that says, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” or are you wallowing in a lukewarm state such as the Laodiceans? Perhaps you are so cold your unbelief cuts to the bone. It is imperative to know where you stand with the Lord and the consequences of your fate. Paul knew it was not His righteousness that gave him the strength to endure but the righteousness of God through Christ Jesus. The Laodiceans, unlike Paul were so blind they had to be told by Jesus how wretched they

were. (Revelation 3:17) Paul exclaimed what a wretched man he was in Romans 7:24. Paul knew it is God who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13) Once again the Laodiceans believed they were in need of nothing.

In retrospect the condition of the Laodicean church points out that there are three categories of people. (Revelation 3:15-16)

1. Hot - Those who are willing to lay down their lives for the cause of Christ and the brethren. (1John 3:16) A great example of that would be the fact that eleven of the first twelve disciples were martyred for their faith. Just for added measure, in case you are never faced with having to lay your life down, here is another sure way to know whether someone is a Christian or not. John 14:5-8 says, "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and my words abide in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, so you will be my disciples." The previous scripture is another perfect example of how Jesus is our armor if we abide in Him. Basically those who are not faithful followers will eventually be hotter than they ever thought possible. Yet Galatians 5:22-23 explains that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

2. Lukewarm – As much as I hate to admit it Peter fit into this category quite well in the beginning. I guess the reason why I hate to admit it would be that Peter walked with Jesus in person on a daily basis. He spent much time with him breaking bread, healing the sick and in fellowship. Peter was called a disciple; which means, "student." I also claim to be a follower of Jesus who spends such quality time with him. Yet I find myself in the same predicaments as Peter. My lack of understanding and unbelief get me into trouble. As far as a lack of understanding it reminds me of when was in school and the subject that I least excelled in was science. It was taught to me every single day of the week. I do not think that in all of those years of taking science that my knowledge of it ever increased. Although I do see proof all around me that

science exist I still do not understand it to this very day. At least I understand it enough to know better than to touch a hot stove. Although I see overwhelming evidence of the Lord all around me I really do not have a clue!

Peter was the one Jesus predicted would betray Him three times. (Matthew 26:31-35) Peter was also the one who Jesus called out of the boat during the storm. (Matthew 14:27-33) When Jesus said, "Come," Peter believed enough to get out of the boat but when he saw the wind had picked up he panicked. It reminds me of having my panic attacks except for in my case there are no visible signs of danger! How far off the mark is that? Fortunately Peter believed enough to call out to Jesus when he went under. I would say that is the state in which I am in right now. I am going under and sometimes it feels as if I am sinking fast!

I can't help but think of the verses of scripture found in James 1:22-24, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror, for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was." I need to look into the word of God and see what it says about me and read about His promises such as, "I am more than a conqueror through Christ Who loves me!" (Romans 8:37) The word of God describes the status of the human condition in every category. We should come to the knowledge of such and come to a conclusion of which one of these states we choose to be in. Once we understand these truths we will receive a clearer revelation for a proper response towards the Lord. Until then we are just out there wallowing in the valley of decision while on the brink of devastation.

It was in John 21:15-19 after he had denied Jesus three times that Peter finally saw the true condition of his soul. Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him. Peter responded that he did love Him. Jesus was not convinced so he asked Peter again and said that if he did love Him that he would feed His sheep. What I believe Jesus was basically saying is that if he believed in Him he would not deny him but instead he would be a bold and faithful witness. Peter came to a place where he needed to make up his

mind once and for all. Once Peter became a sold out believer he received a transformation so great that he went on in the book of Acts to be a bold witness for Christ. He even wrote the epistles of 1st and 2nd Peter. He was the only disciple in the scriptures to be personally restored by Jesus. He was one of the twelve disciples whose life ended in martyrdom.

Jonah was another prime example of being lukewarm. He was actually vomited out of the mouth of the whale for not going and preaching the word of the Lord to the people of Nineveh. (Jonah 2:10) In fact instead of doing as the Lord had instructed he ran away. (Jonah 1:1-3) In Jonah 1:9 he contradicted his talk with his walk by saying, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land." Yet the ship he was sailing on was in a mighty storm all because he would not speak on the Lord's behalf due to their wickedness. (Jonah 1:1-9)

Both the stories of Peter and Jonah are great examples of the Lord's grace as He was very patient with them. He gave Peter at least six chances that I know of and he also gave Jonah some. Many people fail to see that in the book of Revelation the Lord is very patient because of His grace. Even to the end of the age He gives people chances to repent but they will not do so. (Revelation 9:20-21) I personally know on my own account that the Lord has been patient with me innumerable times as I have been blessed abundantly with His mercy and grace.

Another reminder of the cost of discipleship is found in Luke 9:57-62 where Jesus told someone they must go and preach the Kingdom of God instead of staying behind to bury his own father. Another person mentioned wanting to say goodbye to those from their household. Jesus basically said, "To be my disciple you must go and preach the Kingdom of God and if you put your hand to the plow and look back then you are not fit to do so." When Jesus first began His ministry in Matthew 4:18-20 he called upon two fishermen who were two brothers, Simon called Peter and Andrew. All He said to them was, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." In other words He was making this statement from Matthew 28:19-20. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son

and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” Instantly they left their nets and followed Him. As you have already previously read; Peter walked quite a long way with Jesus before he surrendered once and for all. He had finally realized the risks were great but it was worth the sacrifice!

3. Cold – I see three types of people in this category although they all experience the same fate. It is the people who profess Christianity yet there is no fruit. Then there are those who proudly proclaim their atheistic ideology and also those who believe in God but simply do not accept Jesus into their hearts outright. Speaking of the “so-called” professing Christians, Titus 1:16 says, “They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” Of course the atheist follows the path of Psalm 14:1 which says, “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.” As far as those who believe in God but do not ask Him into their hearts James 2:19 says, “Even the demons believe and tremble.” These will all meet the same fate as that of 2nd Thessalonians 2:11-12 which says, “And for this reason God will send them a strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Here is a classic case of the blind leading the blind. In other words this is the case of those who profess to know God but do not yield any fruit. This reminds me of where Jesus told the Pharisees in Matthew 23:16 that they were “blind guides.” Matthew 7:15-16 says, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.” There are people who are tossed to and fro and get caught up in every wind of the doctrine and trickery of these men and in the cunning craftiness of their deceitful plotting. (Ephesians 4:14) Their followers do not know the sound of the Father’s voice because they do not know what they believe or why they believe it. They are not as wise as the Berean’s who received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether or not the words Paul spoke to them were actually the truth. (Acts 17:11) Then there are those who hear the right words and do not act upon them and in the end are deceived. For

James 1:22 says, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." This is how deceived they were. (Luke 13:24-25) Because they did not try to enter in through the narrow gate but in their own righteousness they will not be able to enter the kingdom once the Lord shuts the door as He did the boat as in the days of Noah. (Luke 13:25-28) They will then say to the Lord, 'Lord, Lord open for us,' and He will answer and say, 'I do not know you, where are you from,' then they will say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' But he will say, "I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." These are the ones who continued to sin so that grace might abound. (Romans 6:1)

Judas was the only disciple of the original twelve who did not die of martyrdom. As a matter of fact he killed himself (Matthew 27:3-10) after he turned Jesus over to a multitude with swords and clubs who came from the chief priests and elders of the people. (Matthew 26:47) Judas had know clue as to who Jesus was after spending all of that time with him or he would have never done such a thing. Although Judas was sorry for what he had done (Matthew 27:3) he had already been given over to the devil for his unbelief. (John 13: 26-27) I personally believe Romans 1:28 is a good description for Judas as it says, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind to do things which are not fitting."

Another example of lukewarm can be found in John 6:60-69) Jesus was speaking to His original twelve disciples and much of what He had said offended them. Many of them thought that much of what He was saying was too hard. It did not make sense to them that they would have to turn away from the beliefs of their youth causing many of them to not believe what they were hearing. So because of their unbelief verse 66 says, "From that time forward many disciples who had overheard Jesus speaking to the twelve went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus continued speaking to the twelve saying, "Do you also want to go away?" For we are to do as Philippians 2:12 instructs, "Work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God Who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Here is

something that must be kept in mind when discerning between the intellect and the spirit. Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”

There are many people in the world who have not come to a place where they truly see how much the Lord loves them. Then there is another group, which makes up a vast majority. This would be the ones who take the love of the Lord to extremes. They are so caught up in the lies of the enemy that they do not see the reality of hell. They remind me of Adam and Eve who were so deceived by the serpents deceit that they never considered the thought of being kicked out of the Garden of Eden nor the fact that everyone else would receive the curse as well. They had only been told not to do one simple thing. They were specifically warned not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Since that time the Lord has given us clear instructions on how we should live. They are not to be misinterpreted but many of those instructions that are so direct are twisted to fit the intellect instead of the spiritual. This causes many who are deceived into believing they are heaven bound to trample the Son of God underfoot, counting the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulting the Spirit of grace. (Hebrews 10:29)

CHAPTER 14

Call Me Wretched

When I hear the word “Wretch” I am reminded of three things. First of all I think of the song Amazing Grace where the writer referred to himself as a “Wretch” who had been saved by the Lord. Second I think of Paul who referred to himself as a “Wretch” in Romans 7:24. Last of all I think about when Jesus told the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:17 how wretched they were. There is nothing wrong with such things coming to mind when I hear such a word. There is only one problem. When it gets down to it I should really place my focus on the wretch that I am and only then should I recall the others.

I have no doubt you’ve heard of the infamous song, “Amazing Grace” how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like

me, which was written by John Newton. Somewhere every Sunday morning the song is sung in countless churches all over the world. I have no doubt it is also sung at funerals. Yet when you know the story behind the song you can't help but appreciate it more than ever. Although I can't help but wonder how many do not really understand and know the true spiritual condition of their soul? I have to admit I used to be one of those people. I thought I was heaven bound when in fact I was totally missing the mark.

In 1743, John Newton was making his way to go visit some friends. While on this journey he was captured and forced to serve in the Royal Navy. At one point, he attempted to flee only to be stripped to the waist and flogged with twelve lashes in front of three hundred and fifty crewmembers. Because he did not volunteer to join the navy his wages were lower than those who did volunteer. Unlike the volunteers he was often placed in shackles while the vessel docked and was to never be allowed to go ashore until he was released from the service. At one time during his years of service he contemplated suicide. Eventually and at his request he transferred to the "Pegasus" a slave ship headed for West Africa. The ship carried goods to Africa, and traded them to be shipped to England and other countries.

Since the crew saw Newton as a continual problem they left him with a slave merchant named Amos Clowe. Clowe took Newton to the coast and gave him to his wife the Princess Peye, and African Duchess. He was abused and mistreated along with the other slaves. He was eventually rescued in 1748 by a sea captain who had been asked by his father to search for him.

It boggles my mind to know that after Newton himself had become a slave that he continued his voyages as a captain of the slave trading ships upon his return. In 1754, after nine years of involvement in the slave trade he suffered a stroke and retired. In 1788, thirty-four years after his retirement from the slave trade, he broke a long silence and described the horrific conditions of the slave boats. He also apologized saying, "It would always be a subject of humiliation to him, that he was once an active instrument in a business at which his heart now shuddered." Newton later joined English abolitionist William Wilberforce,

leader of the Parliamentary campaign to abolish slave trade, and lived to see the passage of the Slave Trade Act 1807.

The conditions of those slave ships were indeed horrific as Newton had stated in his apology. Let me try to give you an idea of just how horrific they were. The slaves wore shackles about their wrist and ankles. A chain was used to connect those shackles. Now imagine the morgues you see on T.V. where they have dead bodies in the drawers they pull out. Except these bodies were alive and chained up like a bunch of wild animals. They were not in drawers but they were in sections side by side and layer upon layer. They were not fed adequately if at all and they were not allowed to go to the restroom until the end of the journey that took several days.

The weight of the ship would determine how long the trip back to England was going to take. So, the slaves who died on the journey back would be thrown overboard to lighten the load. As passersby on foot or by boat came anywhere in the vicinity of the ship as it was docked or on the open waters they could smell the stench of death even long after everyone had departed from it. It made people gag, sick to their stomachs and some could not help but vomit. How much worse do you think those who are Lukewarm smell to the Lord for Him to want to spew them out of His mouth?

Maybe it seems this book has gotten somewhat off track to you. Well, if you are still with me I am so glad and I wish I could see you there. (Smile) The slaves on the ship who died, what do you think they died of? I know I was not there but wouldn't you think they were so fearful for their lives that they were in sheer panic? They had no idea whatsoever as to the future that awaited them. They had no doubt the present did not look very promising! What in the world have I got to panic about? I can't even put into words how it must have been for those people who survived.

Believe it or not the slaves who were not believers of Christ along with John Newton suffered a fate far worse than this. For it was within their souls that they were also "Slaves" in another sense of the word. Overall the message of Romans 6:15-20 sums it up by saying, "Everyone who is unrighteous is a slave to sin." In Romans

7:24 Paul says, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?"
The slaves aboard the ship were most likely thinking along the same lines. Who will deliver me from this body of death?
Hopefully, the majority of slaves were pleading with the only one Who can do so. For our spiritual deliverance is far more pressing than that of the natural.

CHAPTER 15

Gaining New Ground

It was the day after I had my panic attack in Dallas traffic. I was still overwhelmed by the attack itself and also with the failure of not responding better to the situation after knowing the Lord had spoken to me on better ways to cope. I was on my way to work when I could once again feel a panic attack trying to work its way to the surface of my emotions. I started speaking against Satan, telling him that, "Even if the panic attack I was having caused me to have a wreck God was still in control no matter what." I told him, "Whether I live or die, God was still in control." I quoted scriptures such as, "Greater is He who is in me than he that is in the world." After making myself go into the building the first thing I did before clocking in was sit down in the break room and get my Bible out. I was not really sure where to begin reading at first. Then I remembered Ray Comfort talking about Psalm 51 being a good place to start. So I began reading it over and over again. After about the fifth time my attack was over.

The next day I was on my way to work and before I could even start having an attack I just told Satan straight up, "Do not even bother messing with me today because I am not having it!" It has been since around that time in which I have really only just begun to understand the intensity of spiritual warfare through these attacks. This is just one of the reasons I thank God for them. It has shown me so many things about Him and myself that I otherwise would not have known. It has revealed to me just how precious the time spent in His word is and how much more one benefits from starting the day off by doing so. It must be read on a daily basis in order to conquer the enemy and my own flesh for that matter. I challenge you if you are not doing so already to do the same. I also challenge you to begin memorizing scripture to fight the enemy on

more level ground. Those very same scriptures could be used to be a bold and faithful witness to an unbeliever or an encouragement to someone else.

Many people who have talked to me about my panic attacks try with good intentions to help me figure out what is wrong. It really makes me feel special when I know someone is genuinely concerned. However, sometimes it is hard to listen to the Spirit of the Lord as easily which could possibly do more damage than good. For example, I have been told not to feel ashamed for being weak or because I have to take medicine to make me feel better. I have no doubt many people I have spoken to do not see the full extent of this situation in the light of the truth. I can't even say that I do at this point. However, I do know that Paul stated just the opposite when he said, "When I am weak, then I am made strong." In other words, I am right where I need to be for the Lord to do a work in me that otherwise would not be done. Daniel also had to be made weak before He was strong. Peter had to see how miserably he had fallen short because of his weakness.

It is not easy to explain in just a few words that I feel this is an attack from Satan because so many people just do not get it. Even those who claim to be believers in the same faith shut me down before I can express my thoughts. For example, I was talking to someone about my panic attacks and they told me pretty much right after I said the words panic attack that they did not want to hear it and I just needed to stop claiming it. Part of me wishes I had that to do over again. I would try as politely as possible to say, "Something tells me if Paul was standing here beside you and said, 'Brother, I have a thorn in the flesh that is really bothering me,'" that you would shut him down dead in his tracks as well and tell him the same thing you just told me."

I think I would know for certain if I was standing in line at the retail store and said to myself, "I sure wish I would have a panic attack right about now." I am quite certain it did not happen anything like that. It is possible that I did bring this attack on myself through sin in my life. Even so, I do believe it could have been a messenger from Satan and I need to strive to overcome it somehow. I do believe the Lord has been revealing many things to

me in several different areas in a short time. Perhaps if I had allowed Him to get my attention much sooner it would have been in much smaller doses. I just can't believe Satan would want me to search my heart and examine myself to have a closer relationship with the Lord. That is how I ended up writing this book. I just could not put everything the Lord was giving me in a short time in perspective without writing it all down.

As far as other causes of panic attacks are concerned the fact is; there are several different physical conditions that can cause panic attacks. As I have stated I do not believe I am dealing with anything physical. If for some reason I find out after all this time that there is something physically wrong with me it is still more than anything else a spiritual problem. At one time I would have had a hard time with such a thought but I know what I am saying to be true. I know such because I saw my mom cope with cancer on her deathbed. I never would have imagined I'd have seen my mom so strong in the face of death. It truly inspired me and I hope that I only do half as well if I ever face the same fate. I also saw a very dear friend of mine who was all smiles all the way to the end. I never saw her character shaken. Both of those examples are still very much alive in my memory to this day. They were both very much an encouragement to me and made me deal with the consequences better at that moment and even until this very day.

I can't help but say, "Shame on those people who look down on others for having panic attacks." No matter what anyone thinks it is a spiritual battle whatever the reason. It could even be a symptom from something as severe as a life threatening disease. I bet the person who shut me down would feel really bad if they had found out I had some life threatening disease. Hopefully it would make the person think twice before going there again with someone else in the future. If you ever know someone who faces panic attacks try to make them feel as normal as possible. Just sit and listen to them if they need to talk. Sometimes that person just wants someone in the same room but can't deal with talking. It is really important when you are around someone having a panic attack to just be there in whatever way possible.

I would like to try and give you an illustration of what a panic attack feels like. You know how the street you lived on seemed really long when you were a child? The bike you rode on seemed bigger. It was as if the basketball goal was touching the sky. Oh, and don't forget the shadows on the wall that kept you up most of the night. Were they frightening or what? After you become an adult you saw those things so much more clearly. That is sort of how it is for someone who is going through a panic attack. You see the panic all over the person's face but it really does not seem like there is anything to get all worked up about. Even so the person suffering feels an extreme emotion of gloom that just can't be shaken on the spot. I have to admit that I have never liked the saying, "One day at a time," but I have found myself saying, "One panic attack at a time quite often," because I am determined to gain new ground.

When I first went to the doctor blood was drawn and one of the things that was checked was my Thyroid. During a doubting myself time I began to become concerned that it might actually be something physical. I thought it was possible I might have had something my mom was diagnosed with which deals with the Thyroid called, "Graves Disease." Fortunately I was told that I did not have anything wrong with my thyroid. I was not checked for the following conditions but here are a few others, which can also cause panic attacks. They can be linked to partial hysterectomies where the person has one ovary left. Also included in the list of possible causes of panic attacks are brain tumors, Rett's syndrome, Premenstrual dysphoric disorder, Hashimoto's Thyroiditis and more. However, if I was to research each one of these I am certain that Satan could convince me of having at least one of these conditions if not all of them at once because when he is given an inch he will no doubt take a foot if he can get away with it. I have also changed my diet. Although I have benefited from my diet as far as weight goes the panic attacks do not seem to have died down as a result.

There are a couple of other struggles I have been dealing with. One I have already mentioned from a different angle and the other I have not. Although I have two different names for these struggles they both boil down to the same fact. I do not trust the

Lord with this life He has given me. How off the wall is that anyway? When it is put that way it seems like it should be so simple. The Lord gave me my life and I should trust Him but I do not trust Him near enough. He even knew me before He formed me in the womb! (Jeremiah 1:5)

I have a terrible fear of the unknown. I would say that the number one thing I have feared for the majority of my life was the dread of something ever happening to my mom. She has been gone for seven and a half years now. Overall the unknown has turned out far better than I would have ever expected. Most of that has to do with the Lord and Him putting so many wonderful people in my life. In all reality there was a time I did not even think I would be able to make it without her. Much of those feelings were cultivated out of the unknown. For example, I have already mentioned in the book where I had been dreading the day for years long before it ever happened. Had I not become a Christian I have no idea how I would have endured knowing that it has only been with the Lord's help. It would seem that after overcoming that trial I would learn my lesson and not be afraid of what tomorrow brings.

Matthew 10:28-31 responds to my fear with wisdom and encouragement as it says, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do you not fear therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows." Also do not forget what Proverbs 3:7 says, "Do not be wise in your own eyes, Fear the Lord and shun evil." The only thing we are supposed to fear is the Lord." When Adam and Eve tried to be wise in their own eyes by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they ended up getting kicked out of the Garden of Eden. I think that should raise a huge red flag to people like the Laodiceans who think they are in need of nothing. As a result I must seek to break the curse in my own life by seeking the Lord's wisdom and letting Him lead, guide and direct my footsteps. For Psalm 37:23 says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delights in His way."

I have noticed that the majority but not all of the panic attacks I face are manifested in a situation where I feel stuck. Sometimes I actually want to be where I am at but I feel stuck because I feel I have to get out of my comfort zone. I can't quite pin point every scenario. Other times it seems as if I have gotten overheated. Regardless of the exact cause of each one, the point I am trying to make is that I sometimes wonder if I feel stuck because overall I feel stuck in my life. I know if I were to ask the majority of people that they would agree they feel the same way. I would also have to say that I doubt the majority deals with panic attacks. That would be yet another area where I do not trust the Lord very much if at all.

I kind of feel like I have been thrown into a pit like Joseph was in Genesis 37:23-24. The Lord had given him dreams while in his sleep. He had kept telling his brothers of a dream he was having. They were so furious because of what his dream meant that they threw him in a pit to silence him once and for all. My story is not so extreme but nonetheless I do feel as if I am in a pit. I have dreams and it seems as though they are stagnant. I feel like I have more potential in life with the Lord than what has yet to be seen. I just can't seem to find my place. I feel as if I am here for a greater purpose and I am seeking a place to belong. Every time I think I have found the right door I eventually end up trying another one.

Two things occurred to me about Daniel and myself, which coincide with my panic attacks and in the writing of this book. Although I saw one of them right away the other I did not see so clearly in the beginning. 1. Daniel was waiting for his prayer to be answered and it took twenty-one days for him to see the evidence. I have also been seeking the Lord during my panic attacks as I wait to see the evidence of answered prayers no matter how long it takes. 2. As I was seeking revelation from the Lord on what to put in this book I lost quite a bit of sleep making me tired and weak in a way somewhat like that of Daniel. There were several times when I would not realize I had not eaten until my stomach started growling and even then I would not stop to eat. It is not as if the refrigerator or bed were a mile away but when I am so consumed with what I am writing I have a hard time making myself stop.

The very day I began writing this book I had one of my worst panic attack days. I have also noticed that when I am in the state of being tired and hungry as I was much of the time while writing this book that Satan would also try to use that to gain momentum against me. I would have to say that he did a pretty good job but this book is now coming to a close and I plan to use what the Lord has revealed to me as leverage against the enemy. It is time to gain new ground and take back that, which is mine! A life in Christ that is the only one worth living!

I do not by any means claim to be a super Christian. As a matter of fact every time I feel as though I have got it all together I fall off my high horse and have to sit back down in a high chair to be spoon fed the basics. The truth is that I can't walk by my feelings but by faith in Christ. I must not think or feel as though I am saved but I must know because of the faith I received upon believing with a contrite heart. It is the basics of having such faith which continues to lead me to this conclusion.

I am the clay and the Lord is the potter. I have been made in the likeness of God but to reflect His character I must be refined with fire as precious gold and my rough edges must be smoothed out against the potters hands. Since the day I received salvation He has been shaping and molding me as I am being renewed day by day. (2nd Corinthians 4:16-18) From glory to glory He is changing me. Sometimes there are instant results as I pass the tests with flying colors. Then there are those tests where I just have to try things my own way as I wrestle with the Lord in a manner somewhat similar to that of Jacob in Genesis 32:22-32. Jacob would not let go of the Lord until he received a blessing from him. Sometimes I want to receive His blessings out of selfish motives. I should keep in mind that I am already blessed beyond measure despite how I might feel or what the scene looks like around me. There are also times I want to receive what seems like a blessing to me when in fact it is a curse. God knows what I need more than I do!

This is my story and I have been as open and honest as I could possibly be. It is with much gratitude that I thank you for taking the time to read it. I hope it has blessed you with great

insight and encouragement in such a way that you will also be honest with yourself before the Lord allowing Him to work in you and through you to will and to do of His good pleasure. So now I will close with this prayer from the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians in Chapter 1:17-19. "It is my prayer that the God of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you the spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Him, with the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of His glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power." Amen!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Sider". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'D'.

