

# **How to walk in Freedom from Fear - A personal testimony**

by Jill Southern

It was one of those cold, grey days. I hurried back to the office where I worked, after my lunch hour. I got into the lift and pressed for the sixth floor. I was alone and thinking about all that I had to complete that day when suddenly the lift stopped, the light went out, I was plunged into complete darkness. I nervously pressed the 'open door' button - nothing. I peered at the buttons in the darkness and pressed the red alarm button - nothing. I pressed to go up, to come down and then all the buttons - simply nothing. It slowly dawned on me this was an electricity cut and yes, even the alarm button worked by electricity and there was none. I banged on the door of the lift and shouted "Help, please let me out". I frightened myself because I could hear the terror and panic in my own voice but no-one came. I could hear nothing - I was alone, trapped and in the dark.

I slithered to the floor of the lift, my heart was beating so strongly in my chest I could almost hear it. I became breathless - I could die in here for lack of oxygen - I panicked, a cold sweat broke out on my forehead, wet rivers ran down my back and from my arm pits. I started to tremble and shake, my teeth started to loudly chatter and I began to shake deeply on the inside of me. I was paralyzed by panicky terrifying FEAR. I had experienced panicky feelings before when trapped in a confined space but nothing like this. I started to cry out to God. I was a born again believer, baptized in His precious Holy Spirit; I spoke with tongues; I loved the word of God and I knew Jesus, so what was all this about??

Then the enemy - you know, that 'accuser of the brethren' spoke to me, "Call yourself a Christian. Trusting God for your eternal security and safety are you? So how come you can't trust Him in this lift? He is not interested in you, not now in this moment of your deepest need - where is your God?" I knew this was the voice of the enemy but that did not help me. I was quite irrational by now and very traumatized.

Eventually I heard a physical voice, "Is there anyone in the lift?" I went to get up off the floor of the lift - help at last; but I couldn't move, my legs could not support my body. I shouted "I'm in here, please let me out". The lift started to move but I couldn't tell whether I was going up or down. <Picture: Finally the lift came to a halt and the door was pried open and a cheery voice said "Come, give me your hand and I'll help you". >I was still in the dark, so now even the movement terrified me. Finally the lift came to a halt and the door was pried open and a cheery voice said "Come, give me your hand and I'll help you". Several people gathered round, they helped me out. I was in emotional overload and I burst into tears. I felt greatly relieved at being released, but terribly guilty and ashamed of my irrational and phobic behavior both as a Christian and as an adult. My teeth were still chattering. I felt sick, my legs felt weak and out of control. I was given a cup of tea when they saw I was in shock. It was decided I should be taken home for the rest of the working day.

Back at home, I started to recover. I reached for my Bible and read Psalm 91 "You shall not fear .....". I was a bible believing Christian so how come then, the reality of my life did not match up to what the word of God declares. I was now more frightened than ever of being trapped in a confined space and I knew that if the same conditions prevailed I could be reduced to a gibbering wreck at anytime, and the additional fear that the symptoms were potentially progressive each time this happened. If Jesus had died on the cross to save me, and to defeat Satan and all his works, and Jesus had done a finished work on Calvary - there must be an answer in Jesus for me. So my quest for real freedom began.....

I started with a visit to my pastor - a good man, a conservative evangelical. I poured out my story and he prayed for me. "Dear Lord please take Jill's fears away". He encouraged me to avoid all potentially claustrophobic situations - this meant I would now walk up and down to the sixth floor each working day - well at least I'd keep fit! He told me that the truth sets us free - so I should read my bible more. So I started to read several chapters of the Old Testament and several chapters of the New Testament each day.

However a few months later I was in an underground train in the rush hour and it stopped in a tunnel and the engine was switched off. I started to panic. The train, which was very crowded, became increasingly hot and stuffy; I was standing pinned up to other commuters behind and in front of me. I felt the trapped feeling again - I must get out but all the doors were shut. <Picture: Immediately the doors opened I sprang out.>I pushed my way to the closed door, "I must get off" I shouted, "I want to get out". This was met by icy stares and patronizing looks. The cold sweats and the chattering teeth started, I felt terrible. At last the engines started again and the train rolled into the next station. Immediately the doors opened I sprang out. This was not my destination but I was far too frightened to continue my journey. I ran to the exit, avoiding the lift, I ran up the stairs in fear and panic and was glad to be out in the street but how do I get home from

here? I saw a bus stop, it took me 2½ hours to get home and I started to realise fear is a controller, it restricts and constrains your life and I was progressively becoming it's victim.

I now actively sought after answers for my fears - I could not believe that what I was experiencing was right for a Christian. I cried out to God. I wrote out, by hand, every scripture reference to FEAR. There are 366 verses which tell us not to fear - it is a command. I went to everyone who offered prayer and counsel that I knew. I carried the 'not to fear' scriptures in my handbag. When I started a panic attack I would speak them out loud "Perfect love casts out all fear", "I have not been given a spirit of fear" etc. There was only one problem - the truth did not set me free on it's own. I was still in bondage to panicky paralyzing fear. I was told I should love God more, read my Bible more, pray more, exercise faith instead of unbelief in fearful situations. I felt very ashamed of my behavior which was blind panic whenever I was trapped and I felt condemned by others who neither understood nor could bring freedom to me. I was told that if I was a Christian I certainly could not have a demon or a spirit of fear could not be on the inside of me.

One day I met as usual with my prayer partner and she very excitedly showed me an advert for a conference in the Brighton centre called 'The Battle Belongs to the Lord' with Bill Subritsky and put on by Ellel Ministries. Among other subjects being taught was 'Freedom from Fear'. We decided to go and June '91 found me at Brighton listening to Bill who was saying something like this, "If you are a Christian and you know that you are being controlled by a spirit of fear and you want to walk out of here fear free, please stand!" I was quickly to my feet but the surprising thing for me was that about 2,000 others also stood. This was extremely encouraging as I had started to feel very isolated and guilty about my FEARS. Bill led us in a prayer of renouncing fear and speaking to spirits of fear and telling them to leave. This was an entirely new concept for me especially as I had always been taught I could not have a demon or an evil spirit. However something inside me knew that this bondage to fear certainly did not come out of God's heart - so then where did it come from? I had consistently cried out to God to hear my prayer and to set me free - was this now my moment of God's answer?

Bill spoke about the possibility of things like FEAR travelling down the generational line and that it was unlikely that we were the first ones in our family to suffer from FEAR. I then remembered that my Grandmother had been terrified of being put in her coffin whilst still alive and had requested that her wrists should be cut after her death to ensure that this did not occur. My mother was claustrophobic and one of my earliest memories is my mother asking me to hold a public toilet door open for her when I was about three and to ensure it did not shut on her. More recently, while in a multi-story car park lift, my five year old grandchild said "I don't like lifts, hold my hand, I'm scared" - where did that come from?

Back at Brighton we stood together and confessed the sins of our ancestors and were cut off from all negative fear that we may have inherited from them. We then declared aloud that Jesus Christ was Lord of our lives and our hope was in Him alone, and then renounced every spirit of fear. It was quite amazing what happened. I felt a stirring within, something was definitely happening. The Ellel Ministries counselor spoke authoritatively to spirits of fear and told them to leave. I coughed, then I started to feel panicky fear, I started to tremble and shake, but this time I felt safe inside and then there was a loud scream - was that me? It couldn't have been, could it? A deep peace and sense of the love of Jesus for me filled my heart - I knew I was FREE. I was so deeply thankful to God. People all around the conference center were also getting FREE. The presence of God was very powerful. We went on into a time of praise and worship. I was experiencing a deep sense of release and relief, and a love response in my heart and spirit towards Jesus - I was so, so thankful.

The Ellel counselor drew alongside me and said, "Jill, I believe God is saying that you have been delivered to declare it. If God calls you into the healing and deliverance ministry would you be willing to be obedient?" This was new to me but my heart was open to God and my desire was to be obedient to whatever He truly wanted of me in the future.

The day after the conference in Brighton ended I was back at work. On this particular day I had to arise early to travel to Liverpool. I was to do a sales presentation in the John Moores building. I could not believe on arrival in this building I was to be taken to a lift to go up to the 12th floor! My first reaction was "I can't do this" - "O yes I can, I am free". I now learned that there were two stages to my healing - the first was to get rid of the spirits of fear and the second was a choice to walk in the good of what God had done for me. I got into the lift. "I choose to be at peace in this lift - whatever happens, I no longer have to fear anything". It was totally amazing. I chatted happily to my host and as I got out the lift, for the first time I could ever remember not experiencing fear. Yes I am walking in victory. I am free at last. Jesus came not only to forgive my sin but to heal me and to set me free.

**If the Son shall set you free you shall be free indeed!**

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