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chapter one

COURAGE, DEAR HEART

*"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous.
Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed,
for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

JOSHUA 1:9

WE STOPPED DEAD IN OUR TRACKS as the lion began to roar. My toddler grandson was just a few steps ahead of us, closest to the huge animal. The majestic lion, with his gorgeous, black-tipped mane, towered above Liam, who had his nose pressed against the wall of protective glass. Liam was enamored by the animal's mighty roar echoing throughout the zoo that sat tucked up against a mountain in Colorado Springs.

Liam stood tall and brave, as he tapped on the safety glass with a challenging, "Hey, you!" as if to say, "Be quiet, you don't scare me!" The video we took of the brave little boy scolding the roaring lion will remain a family favorite.

Male lions use their mighty roar to "scare off intruders, warn the pride of potential danger and show off power among other males." The second largest in the cat family, it's the lion that has the loudest roar that can be heard from as much as five miles away.¹

THE LOUDEST ROAR

The lion's roar over Liam may not have been heard five miles away, but it was loud enough to make us stand in awe and wonder of that magnificent creature, and grateful for the protective glass between us.

The decibel of a lion's roar is relevant to what I believe God wants each of us to know about our victory and position in Christ and what we will be studying throughout this book together.

In the introduction, we looked at how Jesus is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah in Revelation 5. I assume that the depiction of Him as a lion is part of the reason author C. S. Lewis chose to make the Christ figure in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* a lion named Aslan. Most likely you've read that classic book or watched the movie adaptations. In an oft-quoted exchange between young Lucy and the Beavers when they first tell her about Aslan, Lucy expresses her fear of meeting a lion. The Beavers address the girl's fear by telling her that although Aslan isn't safe, he's good and he's the king.

Lucy is my favorite of the four siblings in the Chronicles of Narnia. Though the youngest, she seems the bravest and the one closest to Aslan, ever-aware of him and his love, protection, and sacrifice for them. Later in the series we find Lucy surrounded by danger in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. At one point she hears a voice that "whispered to her, 'Courage, dear heart,' and the voice, she felt sure, was Aslan's."²

May the truths in this book whisper (or roar) "Courage, dear heart" over you as you walk this groaning earth and face battles with fear, temptation, lies, and even doubts about God's goodness, protection, and faithfulness.

OUR ENEMY

God's Word tells us that we have an enemy intent on our destruction. He is likened to a lion that is far from good and definitely not safe.

First Peter 5:8 tells us: “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

My father, Mark Bubeck, teaches about Christ’s victory over the enemy’s roars in his books *The Adversary* and *Warfare Praying: Biblical Strategies for Overcoming the Adversary*. One of my favorite quotes from *Warfare Praying* is:

Satan roars to make us afraid and thus more vulnerable, but our purchased right is courage to resist him.³

Sadly, instead of courage, we often choose to live in fear and defeat, with little understanding of how to stand in the courage and victory Christ has already purchased for us through His death, resurrection, and ascension. We can get overwhelmed by the enemy’s roars to the point that we no longer hear the loudest roar of our mighty God and the truth of His Word. We can easily forget that God is our refuge, our mighty fortress, our strong deliverer.

Recently, I’ve heard some followers of Christ—even those who have known Him for decades—talk about how it seems that Satan’s power is increasing and he is winning. Many are living in defeat, as if the roar of the enemy is louder than the roar of the Lion of Judah. They seem to be forgetting all that Jesus has won for us.

There are others who haven’t thought much about the enemy’s roars or haven’t discerned his attacks on their lives. Some Christ followers choose to ignore the importance of understanding more about our position of victory over the enemy because they think if they ignore him, he’ll leave them alone.

Then there are others who doubt that

We can get overwhelmed by the enemy’s roars to the point that we no longer hear the loudest roar of our mighty God and the truth of His Word.

THE LOUDEST ROAR

the enemy even exists and view him as a silly fictional character in horror movies. That can be dangerous thinking. God's Word teaches us that the enemy is a formidable foe and that we need to know how to boldly stand against him. He wants to lull us into complacency or ignorance about his schemes and tactics and to not take him seriously.

I wonder if the apostle Paul had similar concerns for believers when writing to the church in Ephesus, a city steeped in worship of false gods. Paul wrote this victory cry for the Ephesians even while he was imprisoned in Rome for his teachings and his faith in Christ:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:10–13)

Though those words were written thousands of years ago, that victory cry is also for us today. As followers of Christ, we battle the enemy, our own sin, and this clamoring-for-our-attention world that can threaten to overtake us with fear, distraction, temptation, resentment, and even doubt about the power, protection, and nearness of our God. But our Most High, Almighty God is the Victor. He is the Lion of Judah with the loudest roar. And because of Him, we can “be strong *in* the Lord and in the strength of *his* might.” While we are not alone in our battles because God is with us, we do need to know how to “stand against the schemes of the devil” . . . and “take up the whole armor of God, that (we) may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”

My father began writing his first book, *The Adversary*, in the early seventies, right around the time when it seemed our culture was becoming more enamored with fortune-telling, séances, and other occult practices. He was a young pastor at that time and a prayer warrior with a deep burden for revival to sweep across our globe. He would often pray early in the morning, crying out for revival in his own life, his family's, his congregation's, and the world. At that time, the Holy Spirit impressed on his heart that he needed a better understanding of how to battle the enemy who would try to thwart revived lives at all cost.

My father diligently searched the Scriptures to learn more about our victory in Christ. He studied passages like Ephesians 6, 1 Peter 5, and Psalm 91. He connected with other pastors and seminary professors who could teach him more about our protection and how to stand firm against the enemy's tactics to try to defeat us.

I was only twelve years old when Dad was researching for his first book, and he often taught me about the truths he was studying. I was struggling with some debilitating fears and nightmares at that time. I had naively dabbled with séances and Ouija boards at slumber parties when I was in middle school, which to this day saddens my heart, knowing God's Word carefully warns us about the danger of such things.⁴

But my dad was like a lion protecting his cub, often praying for me as the enemy tried to prey over me with fear as I tried to fall asleep. I remember Dad kneeling by my bedside and often praying God's Word over me. Through that, he taught me about God's covering of His armor as outlined in Ephesians 6. He encouraged me to memorize the pieces of the armor,⁵ and I learned to pray the victory roar of God's Word from Ephesians 6:10–18 and Psalm 91, and many other Scriptures. I continue to pray through those passages today over my own family, decades after I began to find my roar against the enemy as a seventh grader.

THE LOUDEST ROAR

In recalling my dad teaching me those truths, I couldn't help but think of a poignant scene in the movie *The Lion King*. The tiny lion cub Simba is facing the vicious cackle of hyenas intent on tearing him to pieces. Young Simba is trying to squeak out a roar to scare them away, but the hyenas just mock his attempts. Suddenly, Simba appears to let out a mighty roar beyond his ability, and shocked, the hyenas retreat in fear. For a few seconds, young Simba thinks it's because of his own brave roar that they back off; but the reason they've retreated is because Simba's father—a strong warrior lion—has stepped up behind him and displayed his mighty roar against Simba's enemies.

That is what our mighty God does for us. It's His mighty roar of victory covering us that becomes *our* roar and makes the enemy flee in defeat. (We are going to discover more about what our roar looks like in future chapters.)

Today we might feel like little Simba with no real voice of victory against our enemy; or it can seem as if the enemy's roar is getting louder on many fronts. He wants us to think that, and to give up in defeat or complacency. Instead, may we truly know we can “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (Ephesians 6:10). We are going to dive deeper into those verses in Ephesians 6 and the armor in Part Two of this book. But before that, let's turn our eyes upon Jesus and all that He has won for us as our protector.

JESUS IS OUR PROTECTIVE BARRIER

Just like little Liam had the courage to stand up against a roaring lion because of the protective barrier between them, we too have all that we need to fight the mighty roars of the enemy of our souls because Jesus provides our protective barrier.

Let me say that again another way—it is only because of Jesus Christ that we can have victory over the battles we have in our lives.

But in order to stand in that victory, we need to better understand who Jesus is and what He has won for us as our reigning King.

Before we study those truths, let's dwell in these ancient words of "A Mighty Fortress," written by Martin Luther around 1527. May these truths become our anthem song as we learn to truly live in our unshakable victory of Christ:

A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he, amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
does seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right Man on our side,
the Man of God's own choosing.
You ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth his name,
from age to age the same;
and he must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed
his truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,

THE LOUDEST ROAR

we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! his doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.

That Word above all earthly powers
no thanks to them abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours
through him who with us sideth.

Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever!⁶

His Kingdom is Forever!

Pray this roar of victory with me.

Father God, we worship You as our Most High. You are our mighty fortress and Your kingdom is forever. Thank You for sending Your beloved Son to die in my place to conquer sin, death, and the evil one. Teach me how to live in that victory every day and to never take for granted all that Jesus endured to secure that victory. In Your holy and mighty name, I pray. Amen.

The Roar of His Word:

Read Ephesians 6:10–13.

Worship Song:

“A Mighty Fortress,” as sung by Tommy Bailey and Keith and Kristyn Getty.⁷