

STRENGTH

through
Weakness

*In the midst of the deepest,
darkest valley of my life, God
taught me one of the most valuable
lessons I have ever learned!*

Bill Rudge

Strength through Weakness

by Bill Rudge



LIVING TRUTH
P U B L I S H E R S
A DIVISION OF BILL RUDGE MINISTRIES, INC.

Hermitage, Pennsylvania

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INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul penned a phrase that at one time seemed totally contrary to my natural mind. He said, “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). As a weightlifter, the statement made no sense to me. I had been involved in weightlifting for many years, and I knew that the stronger I became, the more weight I could lift.

It made more sense to me, however, as I reflected on my martial arts training. When a person attacks someone, the aggressor thinks he is strong and in control. In reality, during his attack he is weak and vulnerable. When he grabs or punches his victim, he exposes his rib cage and opens himself up to a counterattack. The same is true in our spiritual life — when we think we are strong and in control, we are in reality at risk of becoming weak and vulnerable.

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

In January of 1987, everything was going great. My ministry had opportunities to grow worldwide. I had just written a pamphlet on *Cartoons and the Occult — A Deadly Combination*, which was sent out in our February newsletter, before I left for a tour of the Holy Land.

I had no idea that I was about to experience intense spiritual warfare and enter one of the deepest, darkest valleys I had ever gone through. It would almost cost me everything — my life, family, and ministry.

Many years earlier when I first started Bill Rudge Ministries, God had warned me to never allow pride or sin to get a foothold in my life. My knowledge concerning the occult and spiritual warfare had been instrumental in tearing down many strongholds of Satan’s kingdom. Being on the front lines of spiritual warfare, therefore, it was crucial that I never let my guard down, not even temporarily. To give the enemy even a slight opportunity would be to open the door to his ravaging and murderous spirit. I knew if I stepped outside of God’s protection, Satan would immediately try to destroy me.

For four months (February through June 1987) my family and I met with one crisis and tragedy after another. It all began with a traumatic experience in the Middle East, and ended with one of the most valuable lessons God has ever taught me.

ISRAELI-STAMPED PASSPORTS FORBIDDEN

In February of 1987, my wife Karen and I hosted a tour group (including our 13-year-old daughter, Tabitha, and 10-year-old son, BJ) to the Holy Land. We were to land first in Amman, Jordan, so that we could visit Petra. While flying Royal Jordanian, I was looking through their

magazine and noticed that there was no country of Israel indicated on the map. I later discovered it was because they did not recognize Israel as a nation.

I knew from news reports that there was continuing hostility between the Arabs and Jews. Now I would see firsthand the hatred between those who traced their common ancestry back to Abraham.

We landed safely in Amman. After going through security, our group boarded a bus to go to our hotel. Suddenly, two men came out of the airport and got on the bus. One of them said in broken English that they wanted to see Karen Rudge, Tabitha Rudge, and BJ Rudge. We didn't know why they were being singled out. One of the men said, "You have Israeli stamps in your passports, and you cannot enter Jordan!" He explained that since Jordan and Israel were at war, it was forbidden to have an Israeli stamp in our passports.

IT HAPPENED BEFORE

I didn't realize that we had Israeli stamps in our passports from a previous Holy Land tour in 1984. Back then we had trouble as we were boarding the plane to return home. My name was called over the loudspeaker because my luggage tag had come off. I gave Karen my passport so I wouldn't lose it, and told her to board the plane. After identifying my suitcase, the Israelis refused to let me leave without checking my passport again, and wouldn't send anyone to the plane (which was leaving in a few minutes) to get it. My family was in tears on the plane, thinking I was being left behind in Israel. Finally, however, I was permitted to board the plane just before takeoff.

IT HAPPENED AGAIN

Now, a few years later, the Jordanian authorities would not let us enter their country. We had been warned before leaving on this trip to be sure we did not have Israeli stamps in our passports when we entered the Arab country of Jordan. Karen had checked them, and assured me we didn't have Israeli stamps in them. The Israelis were not to have stamped our passports in 1984, but were to have just stamped a separate piece of paper. However, they had stamped our passports, even though they told us they had not.

The Jordanians somehow overlooked the Israeli stamp in my passport, so I told them that mine was the same as my family's. It was good that I did, for they undoubtedly would have found mine later.

Needless to say, we were in a precarious situation. Flying back to the United States and leaving our tour group on their own would create many complications. So what were we to do?

THE AMERICAN EMBASSY ORDEAL

We had flown all night from New York, and now it was evening in Jordan. It was getting late and we were all very tired. The Jordanian authorities finally assented to let us go to the hotel with the group, after the Jordan tour company supposedly posted \$1,600 bond. The next day we had to go to the American Embassy to get new passports, while our tour group headed for Mount Nebo (the site from where Moses was allowed to view the Promised Land though forbidden to enter it).

Have you ever seen a hijacking movie where the rescuers speed the victims through city streets trying to escape? Well, that's how we felt. My family and I were packed into a compact car. The driver sped through the main streets of Amman, then down side streets en route to what we thought was the American Embassy. We became concerned when we were taken instead to an old building and led into a back room. We were told to sit on a chair in the middle of the room one at a time as our pictures were taken. We were relieved to discover the photos were for our new passports. We hurried back to the car and headed for the American Embassy.

It felt as though we were trying to escape from terrorists who were chasing us. That's the level of trauma we were experiencing. Finally, after spending a half day at the American Embassy waiting on uncomfortable wooden chairs, and after paying \$300 for all four of us, we were issued new passports.

The driver then drove us at high speed for several more hours so we could catch up with our tour group for the night. We missed Mount Nebo, just as Moses missed going to the Promised Land, because of a careless mistake that cost us greatly.

We thought our dilemma was over, but it was just beginning!

INTIMIDATION AT EVERY CHECKPOINT

We rejoined our tour group. At every one of the many checkpoints in Jordan as we headed for the Israeli border, the Jordanian guards would get on our bus armed with guns. We had new passports with only Jordanian stamps in them, but the officials at the airport must have radioed ahead, because the guards were obviously informed about us. At each checkpoint, soldiers would board the bus with rifles draped over their shoulders, and either single me out, or my daughter, son, or wife. They would request to see one or more of our passports, and then slowly and thoroughly examine them in an attempt to intimidate and traumatize us. When they were done harassing us, they would get off the bus — glaring at us as they did, and then would allow the bus through the checkpoint.

We finally reached the border and were able to cross the bridge from Jordan into Israel. We entered Israel and were waiting inside the bus for our luggage to be thoroughly examined. Our

bus was next in line to be checked, when suddenly a caravan of army jeeps and cars came speeding down to the border. We thought we were in the middle of a war at the border. Eventually we were informed that the Israeli Prime Minister had come to the border to check the efficiency of crossing the bridge. That was why all the press and army vehicles and soldiers had come along.

MANY OTHER DANGERS

There were many dangers in Israel. The cable car to the top of Masada was shut down the day after we rode it. There was rioting and shooting near Nablus (site of Jacob's well) the very next day after we were there. Also, while we were in Israel the terrorists had set a deadline to kill the American hostages in Beirut, Lebanon. If that deadline had not been postponed, it could have been even more dangerous in the Middle East while we were there.

OUR SON BJ INJURES HIS ANKLE IN JERUSALEM

On our last day of the tour, we were walking through the streets of the old city of Jerusalem and the outskirts where the city of David was located. Our ten-year-old son, BJ, was excitedly jumping down the steps. The next thing I knew someone told me he was hurt. He was sitting quietly so no one would notice, but there were big tears in his eyes.

His ankle was badly swollen and hurt so severely that we thought he had broken it. We were to leave Israel the next morning to return to Amman, Jordan, from where we would fly back to the States. I didn't want to take my son to the hospital, because they might have to admit him. If we were delayed in Israel, we would miss our flight out of Amman. To be separated from our tour group and try to make our way through Jordan on our own to the airport in Amman could be even more dangerous — we might never get out of there.

All I knew was that I wanted to get my family home, so I carried BJ through the streets of Jerusalem until my arms were exhausted. The next day I had to carry two heavy suitcases, as well as BJ, on and off the bus and through all the checkpoints in our departure from Israel. My arms burned with pain as I hurriedly carried the luggage to its destination and then immediately went back for BJ.

DELAYED IN ISRAEL

Just as we were ready to leave Israel for Jordan, the Israelis delayed us because our bus driver had left his driver's license at home. They would not issue a permit for our bus to leave until either the driver's license arrived or we got another authorized driver.

We had just enough time to arrive an hour early at the Amman airport to check in for our flight. But now the Israelis were delaying us. Our tour guide was trying to persuade the Israeli officials to please let us go. He was explaining that the Americans must be released, or they were going to miss their plane. All was to no avail.

I knew we would face more hassle and delay in Jordan as well, but there was no hurrying the Israeli officials. The proper ID finally arrived and we were allowed to leave. By now we were one hour behind schedule, and would barely arrive before our plane was to take off. As we were finally leaving Israel and they were checking each of us through, the computer broke down when it was my turn. Thank the Lord; they got it operating within a few minutes.

THE HARASSMENT OF OUR DAUGHTER TABITHA

Once we were back in Jordan, we were again delayed at each checkpoint as armed soldiers got on the bus and harassed one or more of my family members. Our group consisted of only 50 people, so we didn't know how long the international flight with hundreds of people on it would be delayed for us.

Our Arab bus driver and the Arab tour guide were urging the guards, "Please hurry! They're going to miss their plane!"

At the last checkpoint before we reached the airport, four or five guards with guns got on the bus. There were several more guards standing around outside the bus at this strong military checkpoint.

The people at the American Embassy had told me not to throw our old passports with the Israeli stamps away because we could use them for other countries. So I had four Israeli-stamped passports concealed in the front pocket of my pants. I didn't put them in my luggage, because if they searched it and found them, we would be taken off the bus and kept from going to the airport. I gave each member of my family their new passports with the Jordanian stamp, because this time everyone on the bus had to be holding their own passport for inspection. They would not let me hold my children's.

The guards went through Karen's, BJ's, and my passports and said they were okay. Then they came to our daughter, Tabitha, and said, "Your passport has an Israeli stamp!"

You can imagine the fear and terror! For a moment I thought I had given her the Israeli-stamped passport by mistake. But I knew I had looked at those passports thoroughly, so I protested to the guard, "No, that's a Jordanian stamp, not an Israeli stamp!" He replied, "No, it's an Israeli stamp, and she stays here with us!" He said to her, "Get your suitcase. You're getting off the bus and staying here with us!" As Tabitha stepped into the aisle with guards at her side, my wife and I stood up in protest. I thought I was going to be shot, but I insisted, "If she gets off, I'm coming with her!" — for I was certain they would rape her. At that, one of the guards

pushed me back down into my seat and responded, "She can stay." He knew all along it was a Jordanian stamp.

When the guards left the bus, my daughter, wife, and many of the other girls and women began to cry. To this day I feel the emotional trauma of that experience every time I think of it. I can now identify somewhat with the horror people must feel when being hijacked by terrorists.

Imagine the trauma of being held hostage in a country where the culture is very different from yours; where they speak a foreign language; where you know their mentality is that they don't care if you live or die; where you do not have the security of the USA; where no weapon or means of defense is available for your protection; and you do not expect to ever get out of that country alive. The vulnerability and terror we experienced made us feel as though we were really in a hostage situation.

CHECKPOINT AT THE AIRPORT - BJ IN WHEELCHAIR

We finally arrived at the airport, hoping the plane had been delayed for our group. I was carrying my son while dragging luggage through the airport checkpoints. I would periodically put the luggage down, then place BJ on it to give my arms a rest.

Someone at the airport said to me, "You cannot possibly carry your son and luggage through all these checkpoints and then up the escalator to the plane. We will put your son in a wheelchair and take him up in an elevator while you go through the remaining checkpoints. He will meet you at the plane's gate." I responded, "No, I'll carry my son." But they insisted because of the distance we had to walk, the escalator we had to go on, and the fact that I had to carry the luggage through for inspection. I replied, "Well then, I'll go with him." They said, "No, you have to go through all the checkpoints." So they wheeled my son away, supposedly on his way to our plane.

It seemed like an eternity as we went through several checkpoints. Our Arab tour host remained with us, earnestly asking those in security to please hurry the Americans through, as their plane was being delayed and would be leaving shortly.

When we got to the next-to-the-last checkpoint, which was a metal detector, I looked around, and our Arab tour guide was gone. He totally disappeared. I guess that was as far as he could go with us.

I urgently asked the others in our group, "Where is he?" All he told us before disappearing was to go to gate 11. Where was gate 11? None of us knew how to get there. So I looked for someone at the airport who could speak English to ask where it was but I couldn't find anyone. I asked several security people where gate 11 was, but received no response.

Where was my son? Was he already on the plane, going to America without me? What was a ten-year-old (who couldn't even walk because of an ankle injury) going to do in New York City by himself? What was going to happen to him? Had they put him on another plane by mistake and sent him to some other country where I might never find him? Those thoughts flooded my mind as fear gripped my heart.

RACING FRANTICALLY THROUGH THE AIRPORT

With terror in my eyes, I began to run through the airport trying to find gate 11. The whole group of 50 people followed me like a stampeding herd. Finally, I located gate 11. The passengers were in a long line boarding the plane. I anxiously asked, "Is there a little boy in front of the line in a wheelchair?" Someone replied that there was no little boy in a wheelchair.

I almost lost my composure as I desperately ran around the people at the back of the line, pushing my way up to the front. When I got to where people enter the plane, there, sitting in a wheelchair, was my son. What relief I felt as I thanked the Lord that BJ was safe.

ONE LAST CHECKPOINT

We had to go through one more thorough checking just before boarding the plane. For the females, the lady security guard practically strip-searched them — not by undressing them, but by physically examining them everywhere to see if they had anything concealed.

I was ready to enter the plane when the last Jordanian guard asked me, "What is that in your pocket?" I still had the passports with Israeli stamps in my front pocket so they wouldn't find them in our suitcases. Each person had to be holding their own passport to get on the plane. I knew if he saw the passports with Israeli stamps that my family would not be allowed to enter the plane, and then who knew what would happen.

I didn't want to lie, so I stated, "It's just paper." He insisted, "Let me see." I reached into my pocket and began to slowly pull them out. Just as the tops of the blue passports were about a quarter of an inch out, he unexpectedly said, "You can go!" So he let me get on the plane.

Once in their seats, some of the girls in our group began to cry. We did not feel safe until the plane was in the air — and even then we felt they might somehow turn it around and take us back to Amman. BJ didn't have crutches, so he had to hop up and down the aisle to go to the restroom. It scared the passengers — waking many of them from their sleep — because it sounded like the plane had mechanical problems. None of us really felt secure until we finally touched down in New York.

After returning to the States, my daughter said she never realized at the time how important the simple prayer would be that I prayed before the trip: "Lord, keep us safe!"

ARABS AND JEWS ARE FINE PEOPLE

I have no anger towards the Arabs or the Jews. Most of the people in Jordan and Israel treated us very well. They were some of the nicest people I have ever met. I talked to an Arab man from Canada on the plane the whole way home. We got along so well that he invited my family and me to visit his home any time. While on the previous Israel trip, we talked at length to a Jewish family on the way over who invited us to stay at their house in Jerusalem. I have many Jewish and Arab friends. Before going on this eventful trip and after returning, I spent much time helping an Arab friend in the USA who was facing a family crisis.

The Arabs and Jews are fine people. We were just victimized by the hostility and conflict in the Middle East.

Would I go back again? Most definitely — with proper passports, that is. Since this ordeal in 1987, my family and I have returned to the Holy Land numerous times, as well as traveled to many other potentially dangerous countries throughout the world.

I have returned to Jordan and other Muslim countries several times, and have spoken often in Jerusalem, Cairo, and to a variety of Jewish and Arabic groups in other areas around the world. I have spent many days on my own in Israel, Jordan, and other Middle-East countries. The people in these countries, whether Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, acknowledged appreciation for my coming to the Middle East during ongoing tense times filled with violence and were most always friendly and helpful. During a return trip to Jordan, a Muslim friend took me in the evening throughout Amman, where the people were quite hospitable.

A few years later while speaking at the Iranian Christian Center in London, a Jordanian general was in the audience. Following my message on *Overcoming the Giants in Your Life and God's Boot Camp* this general gave me a big hug. He was probably a high-ranking officer when we went through our "Jordan Experience" in 1987. God's love and mercy transcends all past hurts.

BURNOUT AND FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

After returning home in February 1987, I realized what a toll the Middle East ordeal had taken. I was emotionally drained and experiencing burnout.

I returned to all the pressures of a rapidly growing ministry. February had always been one of our lowest months financially. We were in the midst of building an addition on our ministry center, which God had led us to do by faith. The bills for the materials were coming in, and we could barely meet general ministry expenses, let alone those for a large building addition.

I FELT LIKE WALKING AWAY FROM EVERYTHING

With the traumatic experience my family and I had gone through in the Middle East, and now facing the financial burdens, as well as other difficulties, I felt like walking away from everything.

I went off all radio stations except for one local station. I also cancelled all my speaking engagements and would not accept any more.

Satan had me down. I was defeated. God was allowing me to be stripped of everything in my life that gave me confidence and security. A good friend in the ministry later said to me, "I have never seen Satan so manifest. He had you down by the throat for the final count and was ready to finish you off." He was right. Physically, mentally, and spiritually, Satan was out to destroy me, and I was powerless to stop him. When everything was apparently hopeless, the Lord opened a door.

My friend didn't know where to suggest for my wife and me to get away, but "just happened" to remember reading about a retreat where hurting ministers go. He couldn't obtain the phone number, and just when he was about to give up, the Lord impressed on his heart someone to call who was able to get him the number for us. So in March of 1987, my wife and I went to Colorado for two weeks.

ALMOST KILLED IN COLORADO

While we were there, to relieve stress and for the thrill of it, I would drive the winding mountain roads in a small rental car, speeding up to 90 miles per hour. I nearly went off the road and over a cliff three different times as I sped around the curves. I would have been killed because there was a great drop-off, but at the time I didn't really care.

Then one night I felt compelled by the Lord to go into the mountains near the retreat center. I left my wife and everyone there, and went alone into the mountains for a few hours. I just knew that God wanted me in those mountains.

I prayed and sought the Lord for several hours. He began to deal with me and show me where I had allowed Satan to get a subtle foothold in my life, and what I needed to do about it.

The Lord also convicted me about violating the speed limit. The very next day I was back on those mountain roads, but instead of driving 90 miles per hour, I went the posted 35 miles per hour. As I came around the sharpest curve, a boulder larger than the car I was driving was in my lane. It must have just recently tumbled down the mountain. If I hadn't obeyed the Lord by driving the speed limit, I would have hit that boulder at a high rate of speed. I would have been killed instantly, and my vehicle would have been thrown down the mountainside.

In His mercy God had intervened and dealt with me the night before. For several days I had driven those mountain roads at high speeds, and there had been no boulders that size which had fallen on my lane.

Satan wants to destroy us! Jesus was right when He said that Satan is a murderer and a liar (John 8:44). He's a thief who comes to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10). When we foolishly rebel and disobey God by opening up some aspect of our lives to Satan and let our guards down, we become vulnerable.

CHRIST RESTORES US

Although there seemed to be no hope for our marriage, and I thought I was losing my wife, children, and ministry, the Lord kept impressing on my heart that if I totally depended on Him, He would do a miracle.

At the retreat center on Sunday, March 8, about 6:00 p.m., the Lord spoke to my heart that we were like Samson, and had lost our strength. Now we had to stay and make a choice. It was snowing, which caused us not to escape by going out for the evening.

After talking we both made a renewed commitment to the Lord and to each other. Instead of living by feelings and emotions, we decided in our relationship to live by commitment and obedience, which is the Biblical way and the only way. I knew my marriage had to be a priority, or I would not even have a ministry.

KAREN DEVELOPS A TUMOR

About a month after we arrived home from Colorado, we found out (around the end of April) that Karen had a large ovarian tumor which eventually grew to the size of a grapefruit. This was conclusively confirmed from the ultrasound results we received just before our ministry's May banquet.

I thought, "The Middle East trauma, Colorado, and now this. When is it going to end?"

I was 34 and Karen was 33. We had recently become actively involved in nutrition and health, and therefore, I believed we could beat it naturally. I began talking to several doctors who specialized in nutrition. Through proper diet, positive attitude, exercise, more relaxation and time away together, plus trying to protect her from as much stress as possible, it appeared the tumor was actually shrinking in size. Her health and countenance were improving greatly.

DAD SUFFERS A HEART ATTACK

Then my father, who was a great help to me at the ministry, suffered a massive heart attack May 8, 1987. He stayed up all night at his house sitting in a chair in that condition, so my mother would not be alone at night.

Somehow he managed to drive himself to the hospital in the early morning. He neatly parked his car and locked all the doors. Then he walked in and waited at the check-in desk, until the woman at the admissions desk saw him and realized he was totally disoriented. The doctor could not believe he had driven himself to the hospital and even parked his car.

He endured almost four days after the doctor gave him no chance of survival, giving us an opportunity to express our love. Then on May 11, he died.

KAREN COLLAPSES

The trauma of my father's death and the all-night vigils caused Karen great emotional stress. She had never lost a close family member before and had difficulty handling it. The very evening he died, she collapsed in our bedroom, and I thought I would be burying her the same day as my father.

There was a power of darkness that was enveloping my life and our ministry that I felt powerless to resist.

With my father's death, Karen was under so much stress and her immune system was so weakened, that we knew there was no way through nutrition, exercise, or positive mental attitude that Karen's body would be strong enough to beat this tumor.

Even if Karen strictly adhered to her nutrition program, the stress would inhibit digestion, assimilation, and elimination, and her resistance was too low to overcome the additional stress of this tumor. It seemed to be growing again.

We had prayed and fasted and sought the Lord for healing, but He chose not to heal. Years before, when Karen had a liver disease and we thought she was going to die, the Lord intervened and healed and restored her, but in this situation, He didn't.

I FELT LIKE GOD HAD FORSAKEN ME

All these stressful events were going on, along with many other difficulties. For four months I had no real peace. During this time, I had not sensed God's presence or the closeness to Him that I had before. I felt like David in the Psalms. When I prayed I felt that my prayers were hitting a sky of bronze. I felt He had forsaken me and was not even hearing my prayers.

The only reason I kept reading my Bible and praying was because the Word of God told me to and I wanted to obey it. But I did not feel His presence. I felt powerless.

The only time I had any peace at all during that four months was during my father's funeral. God in His mercy gave me His peace for those days of the calling hours and the funeral.

I was able to stand by my dad's casket during the funeral and say, "Twenty-four years ago, in 1963, when I was 10 years of age, I stood with no real hope, in this funeral home, by the casket of my seven-year-old brother, who was tragically hit by a car and killed. But today, knowing Christ as my Savior and Lord, I stand by my father's casket with hope in Christ that he will one day be resurrected from the dead!"

Except for those three days of the funeral, I did not have God's peace. I lived like that for four months — a time of God allowing me to go through the deepest, darkest valley I had ever gone through. I was certain He had forsaken me, but I had nothing else to hold on to.

RESTORATION OF GOD'S PRESENCE

God, however, had not forsaken me. He had been faithful through it all. He had taken the evil that Satan had tried to use against me, and in His mercy was working it out in His time and His way to bring about the greatest restoration I would ever know.

I discovered later that God had impressed on the hearts of several people to pray and fast and intercede for us and the ministry. They didn't know what was actually happening, but they sensed in their spirits we were in the midst of a tremendous spiritual warfare.

On the morning of May 20, 1987, God began to restore His presence in my life. The day and night before, Karen's pain from the tumor was the worst she had experienced, and her stomach was much enlarged. All that night I had such terrible indigestion and chest pain that I thought I might have a heart attack. I could not take any more. I cried out, "God, it's been four months! I can't endure much longer."

When I woke up in the morning on May 20th, I began to pray and seek the Lord. He spoke to my heart that He was turning back the tide of evil unleashed against us and was raising up the wall of protection again.

For four months I had no real direction from the Lord and could not make decisions because my mind was muddled. Now, all of a sudden, the Lord seemed to be speaking to my heart again about everything I should do, and the decisions I needed to make became clear. I felt like Nebuchadnezzar, who had been humbled for pride and stripped of everything, but after God's appointed time was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar learned that all he possessed and accomplished came from the Lord, everything was restored to him (Daniel 4:28-37).

I began to experience His restoration. I felt His peace, and a closeness I had not known during the past four months. His power and His presence returned. It was the greatest feeling in the world! And He confirmed the restoration by His Word. My Scripture study that very morning "just happened" to be the 31st chapter of Jeremiah. It was all about the restoration of Israel and Judah. I knew God was speaking to me by His Word and Spirit that the time of my restoration had come. Again, God had proven Himself to be faithful in my life and ministry.

We know that serving the Lord will still result in Satan's attacks and times of intense spiritual warfare and trials. We also know that the Lord will protect and intervene and not leave us as prey.

KAREN'S PAINLESS SURGERY AND OUR COMPLETED MINISTRY CENTER

In June of 1987, Karen had surgery to remove the tumor. Everything went well. God, in His wisdom, chose to allow it to happen that way. As I look back, I have to admit that if God would have healed her, then He would have only dealt with the symptoms. Instead God wants to deal with the root causes.

I said, "Lord, You have not answered my prayer to heal Karen, and rightly so in Your wisdom. I accept that because You want to deal with the root causes in Karen's and my lives. But in Your mercy, Lord, will You please not let Karen have any pain after the surgery?"

People had been telling Karen how much pain she would experience after her surgery, and she was frightened. Following surgery, she was to have no visitors. Yet, the evening after her surgery when she awoke, a minister's wife was at the foot of her bed. She said that the Lord had sent her to tell Karen that she would have no pain. Then she left. Her words came as confirmation to my prayer that Karen would have no pain, and this gave her great peace. As Karen will testify, the prayer was amazingly fulfilled. Following her surgery she had absolutely no pain.

The Lord also provided all the needed funds so that the ministry addition was totally paid for, and not a penny of interest was incurred.

ALL MY DETERMINATION WAS NOT ENOUGH

For the ten-year (1977-1987) history of our ministry, I had been totally committed to Christ and attempted to live under His Lordship. For ten years I had built my life and ministry on the principles of God's Word. For ten years we witnessed the Lord's great blessing. For ten years I seemed invulnerable.

However, I came up against something that was defeating me in the flesh. All my martial arts, strength (from lifting weights), determination, discipline, self-control, nutrition, exercise, and positive mental attitude could not give me the victory to overcome it. Without the Lord's supernatural intervention I knew I was defeated and it was over.

Looking back, I see the diabolical scenario Satan had hoped to set up. I would be killed in Colorado. Then my father would be dead from a heart attack. Had I died, along with my father's death and her tumor, Karen probably wouldn't have survived either. My children would have

been left without a father, without a mother, and without a grandfather. That's the evil Satan had sought to unleash.

GOD INTERVENED

There is a God in heaven who is faithful and merciful. This God of the Bible intervened in our lives and ministry and brought a great restoration and victory.

In the midst of the deepest, darkest valley of my life, He taught me one of the most valuable lessons I have ever learned. He then began to greatly restore and bless my life, family, and ministry. He gave me even more of a desire and zeal for Him and empowered and used me more than ever. He made our family even closer and stronger than before. He made our ministry ten times more effective than when we were ready to expand worldwide in February 1987. He greatly anointed the ministry and opened doors that would enable us to have an impact on countless lives throughout the world for His glory.

The apostle Paul accurately stated,

And He [the Lord] has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).

I STAND IN GOD'S STRENGTH, NOT MY OWN

If you would ask me what was a major turning point in my life and ministry, I would point back to this time in 1987. Although I would never want to go through it again, it has proven to be one of the most significant experiences of my life.

The Lord showed me that He had allowed everything I built my life on and that gave me strength and security to be stripped away so I would be totally dependent on Him. Once God does that in our lives, He strengthens and empowers us.

Zechariah 4:6 says,

Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts."

When the Israelites trusted in their chariots and the armies of Egypt, they were defeated. When they trusted in the Lord, even though they were outnumbered and apparently defeated, they were victorious.

Whenever I have confidence in my strength and my abilities alone, I am setting myself up for a fall. But when I become weak — in the sense that I humble myself and become totally dependent upon the Lord — He intervenes and manifests His strength and power in my life.

To have the Lord's strength, I must become weak. When I am on my knees before Him, I am weak, I am humble, and I am broken. But when I stand to speak or minister or engage in spiritual warfare, then I stand in His courage, strength, power, and might.

My strength does not come from Bill Rudge ... but from the Lord!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Bill Rudge has produced numerous books, pamphlets and audio messages on a variety of timely topics. For a complete listing or a copy of his informative newsletter, visit

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