

## **Chapter 6 God Speaks and a Miracle Takes Place**

### **God Speaks**

On July 27, 1989 the word of the Lord came and made it clear deliverance would come exactly six month from that day.

I am looking at my first tattered and torn twenty-eight year-old Bible with the following words written in red at the top of the page over Psalm 8 and 9: “Juana’s Deliverance, January 27, 1990.” When the Lord spoke, peace came over my heart, and although I prayed for a short while longer, the drive and energy to get up early had evaporated. After that season of intense intercession, I was ready for the greatest trial I would go through.

### **Gato’s Story**

Many nights I would gather the boys from the street gang for a game of soccer in the back alley and take them for a meal afterwards. Even though they were usually too high on glue to play very long or very hard, I knew the nutrition would help their poor physical condition. One reason they sniffed glue was that it removed hunger pangs. Some mothers would place a bag of contact cement over their baby’s nostrils because they had no way to feed them.

One night after one of our soccer games, an adolescent nicknamed – Gato –, which means cat, came up to me, and gave me a big hug.

“Brother David you are like the father I never had,” he said.

I was almost brought to tears. As a good father would, I began to counsel him to get out of this place because we both knew the destiny that awaited him if he did not. We went for a meal and talked some more.

The next morning at 11:00 a.m., another gang member came and told me Gato had been shot while robbing someone. I ran several blocks to reach Guatemala City’s massive zone 4, bus terminal and market area where many people had gathered and made a large circle around Gato’s motionless body. I begged police to allow me to go to him. They said he was dead, but I insisted, saying I wanted to pray for him, so they gave me permission.

As I knelt by his side, I saw the bullet hole in his cheek that must have killed him. I laid my hands on his young body.

“God, please, please, return his life to us!”

God responded immediately to my heart.

“His life is over, but there are many more who still have an opportunity.”

I got up, with my head hung low, and my heart even lower, in a state of shock as I walked slowly back to the soup kitchen. I thought about Gato’s precious words to me the night before, our intimate meal, and our father-son conversation. I was confused, and searched my soul for an appropriate response for such a tragic event.

### **Newspaper Lies**

My confidence and heart were crushed. I loved this kid. *Oh, Gato. Why didn’t you listen? What could I have done differently?*

The newspaper portrayed him as an innocent boy who was murdered by some vicious human being. I had become accustomed to them printing outrageous lies. One time, after twenty-one people were murdered in a small town close to the city, the paper accused one of the left-wing guerilla groups for the slaughter. The next day, a pastor from the area came to the school where we were sending some of our men to be discipled in the Word. He relayed a completely different version.

He recalled how the military had interrupted the church service by dragging one of the believers out of their little building and accusing him of being a member of the guerillas. Twenty other Christian brothers left the service to stand by his side, completely unarmed. The Guatemalan soldiers murdered them in cold blood. The only possible consolation is was that they were probably all born-again.

When Gato was killed, I knew the newspaper had produced yet another fictitious story – Gato robbed the wrong person – someone with a gun – and paid the ultimate price for his error. His life was over.

I was never the same.

### **The Effects of Gato’s Death**

Losing this 17- year old boy challenged my faith. Hope deferred really does make the heart sick. The only visible fruit I could point to regarding my sharing of the gospel since I had become born-again was my brother back in the United States, and maybe our second cook. Later that night, I began to question what I really was doing there in

Guatemala. Of all the men, women, and children we had ministered to over the past two and a half years, we hadn't seen a single convert with persevering fruit, to the best of my knowledge. My strong will was challenged by the onslaught of evil, and for the first time, I began to question whether God was with this ministry.

A few uneventful weeks passed. I began to believe all I was doing was providing a meal, but it bore no lasting changes. I stopped responding to the calls for help from beyond my door in the middle of the night, and I went into self-preservation mode – exhausted, empty, alone, and often sick with diarrhea. I couldn't handle much more.

### **Hebrews 4:12 Comes Alive**

A few Saturdays later, I sat reading Hebrews on a bright sunny morning in the soup kitchen. We did not serve meals on the weekends so our small staff could rest and recharge our batteries. This particular Saturday, I was reading Hebrews 4. When I reached verse 12, I could go no further, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." I read it again and again, asking God to help me understand what it meant.

I could relate to the double-edged sword since I had seen so many different styles of machetes. A single-edged machete was good for slicing; chopping if you will. In Guatemala, before weed eaters and mowers, all lawns were cut with a sickle-like swing of a man's arm as he crouched down close to the ground. It was an amazing feat to watch a worker clear an acre of land with a sharp machete and strong arm fueled only by tortillas and beans. A double-edged machete was designed to penetrate. If you were going to stab something, the machete had to have two sharpened edges so it would cut as it entered. In Judges 3, Ehud delivered a secret message to one of the God's enemies by plunging a double-edge sword into the man's stomach (verse 22). I am sure any soldier of the day would have understood the difference between single- and double-edged swords.

The part of Hebrews 4:12 that really got my attention was the ability to penetrate joints and marrow. I had snapped a few chicken bone legs in two over the years and knew the marrow was pretty soft, but the Scripture verse says joints and marrow. So I asked God to help me understand the difference. Within moments, I remembered that we served something I called "cow foot soup" and we had some joints in our refrigerator. I will not describe it in any detail in

case you have a weak stomach, except to say that the toenail and tendons were quite an interesting texture to have swimming around in your mouth as you attempted to grind them up before swallowing. But what made it so useable was the fact that the joints we had were sawed in two and you could easily see the marrow.

I pulled a big hoof joint out of the refrigerator, placed it on the counter, and went for a very sharp knife. You may not know this, but the marrow in a joint is rock hard. You need a chisel, not a knife to separate the marrow from the bone. I knew the flimsy knife was not going to do anything except cut my hand as I made a few meager attempts to divide the two. God made it clear to me in that moment that His Word was powerful enough to find answers to any question I could have, and in my case, He might have. I instantly knew that God's Word could tell me if what I was doing was His work, or mine. The Holy Spirit's challenge to me came in the form of a question: "Was this ministry started by Him, or not?"

I was not afraid of the truth because I knew something supernatural was taking place and my heart was zinging with anticipation and excitement. I had been invited to God's sovereign and safe classroom, and He was going to be my teacher. I related to how the men on the road to Emmaus described their encounter with Jesus, "— were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us — and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32) I began to search for answers; I was in constant conversation with the Holy Spirit, asking Him to take me to the verses that would divide my soul and spirit. I knew the Book of Acts would penetrate the confusion, for it described many missionary outreaches, mainly by Paul. Some people call this book the Acts of the Apostles, but I prefer the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Miraculous Sword Penetrates**

My concordance helped me find Paul's first recorded missionary outreach in Acts 13. He had been serving in the Antioch church with Barnabas, where they had been teaching for about a year. After being sent to the believers in Jerusalem with some money because of a great famine, they returned to Antioch. It was then, "While they (prophets, teachers, Barnabas, Paul, and other Christian leaders/brothers) were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to

which I have called them.””(verse 2). Wow... how the sword came into my soul and spirit in that moment! They were *sent* by the *Holy Spirit* who had spoken through *Christian leaders of the Antioch church* as they *worshiped and fasted*.

I knew I had not been sent. I knew I didn't have a group of men fasting and worshiping the Lord who had received confirmation from the Holy Spirit for the work to begin. And I knew, without any doubt, that in my zeal and lack of knowledge of the Word, I had built the entire ministry.

You may think I was crushed at this point – quite the opposite. I was overwhelmed by the joy of my salvation because a great burden had been lifted. I finally realized God would not send a child to battle – and that's what I was. Some scholars say Paul took at least five years and as much as ten, before this Antioch commissioning took place. I hadn't even taken one. I knew I was to close the doors, sell or give everything away, and go and submit to a body until I was sent.

### **God's Sovereignty Explodes in My Heart**

What a day... what joy... what relief! I felt God's presence and blessing and I was floating with Him on the clouds of Psalm 18. And just when I thought it could not get any better, He asked me what today's date was.

“January 27”, I answered after a moment of thought.

Within seconds, I opened my Bible to Psalms 8 and 9 and I was staring at the red letters written at the top of the page: “Juana's Deliverance, January 27, 1990.”

Oh, how the power of the sovereignty of God exploded inside my heart. I grabbed a pen and crossed out her name and replaced it with mine. I jumped up and began praising God. Six months prior, God's Spirit had led me to pray for this day... this moment. I felt so loved, so important, so safe, and so empowered to do what I was supposed to do. After some time, I sat down completely saturated by God's presence, only to find out my discoveries about His sovereignty on this day were not over.

“What day is this?” He asked me again.

“January 27.”

Since He asked again, in my heart I knew He didn't want words, but only numbers.

So, I said, “1/27.”

He commanded me to go to His Word, and find a scripture verse to match. With the help of my concordance within minutes, I came to Psalm 127:1a, which says: “Unless the LORD builds the house, its builder’s labor in vain.” That truth penetrated the bone and marrow of my soul and spirit. All my labor had been in vain. Almost three years of struggle, tens of thousands of dollars spent, all the violence and the discouragement – all in vain.

A smile spread across my face at the revelation. “Yes! – Yes it has all been in vain!”

I had built the whole ministry without God’s permission, or commission. I was free – free to accept truth – free to repent – free to do things His way and someday see the fruit that I had been commanded to reproduce!

### **Observations of Coming and Going**

I had been on the mission field long enough to see many people come and go!

“Why?” I would ask.

Did God make a mistake? Is He confused, or maybe just trying someone out? Did the other person make a mistake? I know God uses all things for good, but that does not mean He ordained all things – especially when we live in a country where we can afford to do anything we want, including becoming a missionary. I am not being sarcastic in the least. I know, pray, and believe I have been called by God in a supernatural way to help His body, my family, receive a truth that will change the way we start anything in His name.