



BAPTIST COURIERS FOR CHRIST

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Tragedy in the Southern Hemisphere

by Joshua Stertz

As she quickly assessed the situation, she came to the alarming realization that there was no way to get her family to safety without immediately going up. The water that had been JUST rushing down the street was now rushing into her home. Her papa had built this concrete home with his own hands and had designed it to eventually have a second story built on top. The staircase to go up to the attic was adequate, but the space just under the roof panels was not. The roofing was comprised of corrugated metal over wood rafters, but at the peak there was less than 24" of headroom from the concrete second story floor! As they lay on the floor they listened to the combination of eerie sounds outside: wood frame buildings being swept off their foundations and crashing into solid surfaces to be cracked apart; the mighty rushing waters of the river that not only overflowed its banks but also was wiping out their little town; the cries of people losing loved ones to the strong currents and undertow; and finally the helicopters flying overhead to rescue people abandoned on rooftops and bridges, in tall trees, etc. Rainy seasons are common in Brazil, and the little town of Roca Sales was used to the Taquari River overflowing its banks, but she had never seen anything quite like this before. Minutes turned into hours--seventeen of them to be exact--and there was nothing but the claustrophobia of that little attic weighing down on her and her family members. Every time they checked the stairwell, passage down and out was impossible. If they were going to escape the house, it would be from the roof. They found some tools and began to work on prying back some steel so that they could escape to the freedom of the fresh air and a rooftop escape by helicopter.

Dad and I met this woman at the new church plant in Roca Sales, Rio Grande de Sul, Brazil. Although she had lost nearly everything due to the flood, she now had received Christ as Saviour and was attending church weekly. Missionary Nathan Ring and national pastor Antonio have worked hard since June of last year to help with the clean up in the valley any way they could, then sharing the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ with those whom they aided. It never ceases to amaze me how God can turn a human disaster into victory for his glory! We were in Brazil on a survey trip to make preparations for the upcoming Hope for the Valley Scripture Distribution Campaign (taking place October 27-November 11, 2025). We still have a couple of open slots. If you feel the Holy Spirit touching your heart to join us, please visit coursiersforchrist.com and click on the missions

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Pictured top to bottom: Josh, Don, and Nathan Ring in front of the Taquari River that caused so much damage one year ago

A neighbor's wood frame house that was washed away in the flood (the peak of the roof protruding from water in front of the trees!)

A nice gathering for a midweek service at a six month old church!



Ken behind Ceausescu's desk addressing the country through the national news outlet

by Ken Stertz

The time was December 1989. The place, Timisoara, Romania. Dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was giving a speech. The people had had enough. There was an outcry for freedom that swelled amongst the crowd that couldn't be resisted--even by the military. Shots were fired and some were killed. Some men opened their shirts and said, "Shoot me here!" And then the miracle many had only dreamed of began to happen. Soldiers threw down their weapons, some with tears running down their faces. The tanks stood still. Ceausescu became very alarmed. He was seen calling on his wrist phone. Moments later a helicopter picked him up. He landed at a distant spot to no avail. There he was hastily put before a citizens "court" and found guilty of heinous crimes. He and his wife Elena were summarily shot.

Tom Ross, who at the time worked with us in the CFC ministry, was in Timisoara. He saw the whole thing take place. He made a call to us at home and said this, "Someone needs to get over here immediately--the place is wide open, the moment is ours." Tricia and I had been watching all this on the news. We hastily got airline tickets and arrived in Romania about two weeks after the initial rebellion settled down. We went with Tom into a Romania that had an entirely different spirit than what we had felt under communism. Tom said we had been invited to meet with a few remaining government officials in a building in Oradea. We arrived and were surprised to enter a room full of lights and TV cameras. We then were greeted with this, "You are the first Americans here. This was Ceausescu's chair when he preached communism every week! We want to ask



The people of Romania suffering under the crushing weight of the godless communist government



The communist hammer and sickle cut out of the traditional Romanian flag as the people revolted against the communist dictatorship

you some questions--and what we should do now!" What to say?! LORD, help! The questions? "What is it that made America so great?" My answers were short and direct. We told them America was great only as it had embraced God's word. The greatness of America was the moral calm it enjoyed because it obeyed some very basic facts found in the Bible: love God; love your neighbor; don't lie, cheat, steal, or kill. In other words, honor the word of God. Then I told them they needed missionaries and preachers that taught the word of God. That is what Romania needed. They told us this little interview would be broadcast all over Romania on Thursday! The Bible says, **"...be instant in season and out of season..."** Sometimes we as Christians are placed by our LORD in places we could never dream of. By his grace and by his help we need always to be ready with his answer whether in season or out of season.

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Don, Antonio, Nathan, and Josh

trips tab for information and an application. It was such a blessing to testify and preach at the church plant in this city that had no previous gospel preaching church prior to the flood. It is our desire to canvas four cities in the valley and hold two evangelistic services supporting the work that has already been done. As we traveled the region, we noticed that the impact of religion and spiritism was everywhere, pointing to the clear need for the gospel to be declared.

Our God is able to take even the darkest night and turn it into glorious light. It makes me think of the evening that Daniel had to spend in the lions' den before the most powerful king on earth would make this proclamation, **"I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. Daniel 6:26, 27"**

Many hearts have been spiritually softened as a result of the flood. We are praying to sow the word while we can, praying that the Lord will bring a harvest of souls in due time. Out of tragedy, through our Lord, can come triumph!



The attic space mentioned in the story

Not a detail forgotten



Kelly is so thankful for Christian friends used by God in a time of difficulty to be such a blessing.

I have to be honest--going on a missions trip can be challenging. For me, there's always a LOT of excitement, but my flesh always adds some anxiety in there too. Planning a trip away from my children (ages 12-21) always makes me pray a little harder for safety for us and them, for nothing to go wrong at the house, for nobody to get sick, etc. EVERY time I pack my suitcase I have to remind myself that God hasn't missed a single detail in his plan. During the EPIC campaign this spring I got to experience this first-hand.

My phone starting buzzing while we were at a restaurant in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. It was a Friday evening, and we were on our way to participate in the evening service at the church, which was about 90 minutes from our hotel in Mayaguez. The caller was our son Caleb who asked, "Are you sitting down?" He had been injured at work and was in the emergency room back in Wisconsin, thankfully conscious and breathing, but in a great deal of pain. The ER physician explained that there were no doctors in the area who could do the required surgery, so Caleb would be sent by ambulance--alone--about 90 minutes south for the operation. It was his first surgery, and he wouldn't have Mom or Dad there to get him through it. In that moment, it was very difficult to trust that God knew what he was doing. Yet, EVERY DETAIL had been pre-determined by our sovereign and loving father.

Claudia, our daughter, was able to leave work early to sit with Caleb in the ER. She followed the ambulance to the new hospital and used her medical terminology to explain things to me that Caleb didn't understand. Even though it was nearly midnight, a dear friend who pastors a church near the second hospital

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came to pray with Caleb before the procedure. I was able to get a cheap emergency flight out of San Juan, with enough time to drive back to our hotel, pack up, and cross the entire island before check-in time. Caleb was out of surgery, which went exactly as planned with no complications, before my airline counter even opened for check-in. All the connecting flights were perfect, all the luggage made it, and multiple friends offered to pick me up at the airport. Caleb was discharged just after noon, and the kids made it home a half hour before I.



Throughout this scary situation, the Lord was with me and my family every step of the way. The fear and anxiety that overtook my heart when I heard the words from my son were soon replaced with confidence and trust. **God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.** Psalm 46:1 God will keep his children in his hands as he performs his work in our lives--with not a detail forgotten.

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