

Stories of Hope Surface After Terrorist Attacks

In New York and Washington, Christians shared testimonies of God's protection after disaster

As rescue workers used huge cranes and small buckets to remove the remains of the World Trade Center in New York and the shattered portion of the Pentagon in Washington, testimonies of amazing survival miracles spread almost as fast as the terrible news of Tuesday, Sept. 11.

"There were a number of people running late to work that day," said Carter Conlon, senior pastor of Times Square Church, just a few miles from the devastation. "A lady was fired from her job at the World Trade Center on Monday night."

Clarice Franklyn, a member of Faith Evangelistic Ministries, a Pentecostal church, escaped from the 101st floor of the South Tower, the second building hit.

Having arrived at her office at 8:30 a.m., she heard the explosion in the North Tower at 8:45. Rushing to the window with other employees, she saw flames and black smoke shooting from the building. Her manager yelled, "Let's get out of here!"

She rushed down the emergency stairs to the 78th floor where a crowd of workers had congregated. "Get back to your floors," someone called out. "Everything is OK."

Ignoring the order, Franklyn continued racing down the stairs.

She obeyed an inner voice saying, "Child, run for your life."

Exits were blocked when she reached the building's mezzanine. When the second plane hit the South Tower, fleeing workers screamed and stampeded in panic. She said she prayed, "Jesus, You have to help me," and added, "I praise and thank the Lord for moving me out at that moment."

At the Pentagon, Air Force Col. John Bowley and others began their morning on Sept. 11 with the normal coffee and chatter about current events when they heard the Trade Center's North Tower had been hit. Bowley pulled up a television feed on his computer in time to see a commercial jet slam into the South Tower.

"I said this must be a coordinated attack, and we could be next," Bowley told Charisma. "We began to discuss the implications of this horrific attack when one of my co-workers said he heard jet noise that was unusually close. Moments later we felt the concussion and heard the boom of the jet crashing into the Pentagon. All the alarms in the building went off, and we were told to evacuate."

Once outside, a civilian seeking help for seriously wounded people accosted Bowley by a nearby tree line. Bowley grabbed a stretcher and found Army Lt. Col. Marrion Ward and helped carry him to the casualty collection point.

"I tried to see if I could find out where he was hurt and to keep him from passing out," Bowley said. "Col. Ward was holding my hand, and as I prayed for him, it was clear the power of the Lord was passing through our grip. It was so clearly the power of the Lord. I felt a strong and clear

presence of God in this confused and very critical situation.”

Ward was in shock, and Bowley stayed with him until an ambulance picked him up. “It was a tense situation, but there was a calm there I will never forget,” he said.

Local New York City churches rejoiced at reports of other miracles of those who survived the worst attack by foreign enemies on American soil in U.S. history.

David Sowell, a member of East Brunswick Assembly of God in New Jersey, was about to enter one of the Trade Center’s towers when he heard the booming roar of turbine jet engines overhead.

“The noise was unbelievable,” Sowell told Charisma. He watched in horror as the tail end of a commercial jet disappeared into the Trade Center’s North Tower. A powerful explosion followed. Flames shooting out of the building punctuated a fireball of exploding jet fuel and billowing smoke.

“Glass started breaking and people started jumping,” Sowell said. “All I could see were bodies flying through the air. They wouldn’t stop jumping. A man and a woman jumped together. It looked like they held hands all the way down.”

After the second jet struck the other tower, the pandemonium accelerated. Employees fleeing for their lives flooded the streets.

Office workers and executives cried, “Jesus, help me!” Many made the sign of the cross over their chests. Sirens blared.

Sowell scooped up a woman lying on the ground before she was trampled.

Large chunks of metal and concrete hit the pavement. Running from the carnage, Sowell covered his head with a leather briefcase. A falling chunk of steel knocked a businessman to the ground. His severe head wound bled. "He didn't move," Sowell said.

When the South Tower collapsed, Sowell joined the stampede to escape. "I didn't know I could run that fast," he said.

He wandered uptown, not knowing where he was going. His only injuries, besides the mental trauma, were bruised knuckles. When he called home Tuesday afternoon, his wife Carolyn said: "I never heard such a sweet voice in my life. We cried."

Glad Tidings Tabernacle, an Assemblies of God church on West 33rd Street in Manhattan, organized a massive relief effort with 650 volunteers. Carl D. Keyes, pastor, worked 63 hours straight.

"It was ghastly," he said. "They were crawling over one another looking for relatives when the ambulances arrived. They were passing out from grief. It was pandemonium."

Many speculate about what will come in the aftermath of this national tragedy, and some wonder if a tidal wave of spiritual renewal will engulf New York City.

"The recipe for revival has gathered all the ingredients," Keyes said. "The last ingredient is humility. Now New Yorkers

are in a position to receive from God.”

After calling a solemn assembly of prayer and repentance a month ago, Times Square Church members continue to pray for the city.

“We’re hoping this will be a precursor to a spiritual awakening in New York City,” pastor Conlon said. “Our cry today is that we won’t go back to business as usual, forgetting the things of God.”

—Peter K. Johnson in New York, with Billy Bruce