

2 Corinthians 1:4 Manifests as 500-Year Phenomenon Wreaks Havoc

“Texas has never seen an event like this,” FEMA administrator Brock Long says.

The National Weather Service, which tweeted the “beyond anything experienced” description that morning, was predicting that parts of Texas could receive nearly 50 inches of rain, the largest recorded total in the state’s history, according to the *Chicago Tribune*. It also warned that Harvey’s relentless downpours were expected to continue until late in the week, and flooding could become much more severe. More than 82,000 homes were without electricity in the Houston area by Sunday night as airports shuttered and hospitals planned evacuations.

But in the chaos, the light of Christ shines brightly.

Whether they are on the ground or praying from afar, here’s what ministry leaders are saying and doing.

Brandon Sanders, assistant pastor at Powerhouse Church in Katy, Texas:

Our whole region has been devastated by the lingering rains and flooding of Hurricane Harvey, but the response of our people has been amazing. PowerHouse Church is built on the foundation of a gospel lived, not just a gospel preached. For 21 years, we have been in Katy, Texas, and anytime there has been a need, we have answered the call. Hurricane Harvey is no different. Members of our church and community made sure their families were okay and then sprang into action to make sure others were safe as well. With over 20 inches of rain, nine straight hours of downpour, the water rose swiftly and

many were overtaken in moments. Calls overwhelmed the emergency lines, and we jumped into action via social media and text, mobilizing teams alongside the City of Katy officials for shelter and evacuation. We housed over 200 people in our facilities overnight and mobilized rescue teams for high-water evacuations. We are now a resource center working hand in hand with other local pastors, churches and government agencies to provide resources and relief for all those in need. From bass boats, diapers, dry clothes, high-risk rescues or just simple prayers and words of encouragement, it is a beautiful thing to watch the heart of God in action as His people selflessly put their lives aside for the sake of others. This how we witness for our King: We stand strong in perilous times, we remain faithful in times of fear, we are courageous in the face of danger and we allow love for our fellow man to move us into action and watch ordinary people do extraordinary things.

Stephanie Caro, of Ministry Architects, and her husband, Steve, were rescued this morning. The couple was stranded inside their home in Katy, Texas, across from Katy High School. Before the rescue, water rose inside their one-story home almost to their beds, where they were stranded. They were unable to get to the roof due to Steve's physical disability, as he is restricted to a hospital bed in the home. They were there with her sister, Kim, Steve's service dog and two cats.

J.A. Meddars, the pastor of Redeemer Church in Tomball, Texas:

My neighbors—all 6.5 million—are feeling the effects of Hurricane Harvey's 500-year flooding event.

So far, 370 billion gallons of rain have hit our greater Houston area—and it has just started. The pictures are nothing short of stunning. Nearly every bayou and creek in the Bayou City has gone over its banks. Meteorologists expect the storm to linger, dragging its rain across

our city throughout the coming week. First responders are working nonstop, risking their lives to rescue others. More than 2,000 rescues have been performed, and with days of rain to come, countless more are in store.

While the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) anticipates years of relief work, the church of the risen Lord Jesus is ready for her work, too.

As Hurricane Harvey continues to dump rain in the billions of gallons, I see Christlike instincts cresting and rising in our city.

Civilians are assembling their kayaks and big ol' Texas-style trucks to save their neighbors. Sacrifice in a time of severe weather.

Church buildings—like that of Houston Northwest Church led by my friend, pastor Steve Bezner—are becoming staging-areas for relief. The body of Christ is opening her arms to help her neighbors.

Southern Baptists are uniting together, along with other organizations, to wash the feet of those hit by Harvey:

“SBTC Disaster Relief has joined Texas emergency response teams including the Texas Baptist Men, the North American Mission Board (NAMB)’s Disaster Relief teams, the American Red Cross, state police and fire departments, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) teams and more. Southern Baptists in Oklahoma, Arkansas and Mississippi are readying volunteers and equipment as well.”

We’ve assembled a Redeemer Church response team, brothers and sisters eager to help. They have their boats, trucks, chainsaws, trailers, cookies, muscles, time and prayers ready for those hit hard by Harvey.

Like many churches across the city, our members are checking

in with each other, opening their homes, offering to help however they can. They are serving each other, sacrificing for each other; they are ready to love their neighbors. These are the kinds of instincts you hope to see. Apathy and disinterest are demonic in a time of disaster.

My friends and family—my Aunt Pilar and Uncle Jeff in West Houston—have water sliding up their driveways, heading toward their doors. I’m constantly—and nervously—texting church members for updates. Many are trapped in their neighborhoods and won’t be able to leave for days. One family at our church had to evacuate early because the wife may go into labor any minute.

Christians, we should be at our best when affliction does its worst.

Disaster has the potential to knit our hearts together in love. When the apostle Paul tells us to weep with those weeping, and to rejoice with those rejoicing, he doesn’t mean these are the only two emotions we should share. We should grieve with the grieving, and ache with the affected.

When I hear more rain on my back patio, my heart aches. Our city is sinking. I shake my head in disbelief as rain and sirens blare around us. As I tell my kids to wear their helmets during a tornado warning, I must look to heaven, past Harvey, for help.

Chelsen Vicari, evangelical program director at Institute on Religion & Democracy:

As we watch the flooding and devastation on our screens and check in with family and friends affected by Tropical Storm Harvey, we at the Institute on Religion & Democracy offer prayers for all those affected by the storm’s path. Specifically, we are praying the Lord grant strength to clergy and congregants in the Houston area

and beyond as they attend to the physical and spiritual needs of those who've lost homes, precious irreplaceable belongings and are possibly dealing with considerable anxiety and fear. May they—and we—point to Christ as the beacon hope during this devastating time.

American Red Cross:

The threat from Hurricane Harvey is far from over as extremely dangerous flooding continues in Texas and parts of Louisiana. Getting help in some areas is challenging due to devastating floodwaters and closed roads. This is a heartbreaking and difficult situation for those in the storm's path, and the American Red Cross is working around the clock to provide safe shelter and comfort for the hundreds of thousands of people impacted by this disaster. Many of you have asked how you can help people affected by this terrible storm, and we are truly grateful for your support. To make a donation, please visit <https://www.redcross.org>, call 1-800-RED CROSS or text HARVEY to 90999 to donate \$10. If you've signed up online to volunteer, we thank you and appreciate your patience as we process applications!

Franklin Graham, president of Samaritan's Purse Ministries

The "Cajun Navy" is at it again! Out there with their boats rescuing people stranded by #HurricaneHarvey flood waters. I thank God for people willing to step up and help others—real Good Samaritans! The people of South Texas need a lot of help right now, and they need our prayers. Also pray for all those who are out there helping. Untold numbers are still stranded by this catastrophic flooding, and the waters continue to rise. Forecasters now say an unbelievable four to five feet of rain could fall in some locations. ...

My heart continues to be heavy for the good people of South Texas as they begin to deal with the devastation caused by

Hurricane Harvey—and the flood waters are still rising in many areas. We have pre-positioned Samaritan's Purse disaster relief trucks and materials outside Dallas and will be moving into the hardest-hit areas as soon as we are given the all-clear by the state authorities. We hope that over the next few months there will be thousands of volunteers who will want to come and help those whose homes have been damaged by this destructive storm. You can find out more here:

We want people to know that God is "A refuge from the storm" (Isa. 25:4).

Our Billy Graham Evangelistic Association Rapid Response chaplains are also there and already ministering to families near San Antonio who had to leave their homes. Pray for the Texas National Guard, the military, law enforcement and first responders who are working so hard to help during this crisis. Will you?

Michael Snyder, Christian blogger and cultural commentator:

This is already being called "a once in a 500-year flood," and the experts are already telling us that the total economic damage is going to be in the tens of billions of dollars.

Earlier this month, I wrote about an unusual series of events that would happen over a 40-day period starting with the recent solar eclipse, but of course at the time I couldn't account for additional unexpected events such as Hurricane Harvey. And I find it very interesting that this hurricane began forming just about the same time as the eclipse. ...

As a result of this storm, thousands could be trapped in their homes without power for an extended period of time.

Do you think that those that have been storing up food and emergency supplies all this time will be glad that they have

done so?

Of course the answer to that question is obvious: If you wait until disaster strikes to get prepared, it will be too late. A whole lot of people down in Texas are going to end up in some very desperate situations because they never believed something like this could ever happen to them. ...

Please pray for the people in Houston and throughout the entire southeast Texas area. We truly have not seen a storm like this since Hurricane Katrina, and many portions of the Texas Gulf Coast will be changed forever by this disaster.

Daniel Norris, author and traveling evangelist:

Catastrophic events like Hurricane Harvey are a reminder that we live in a fallen world. In times like these, I find answers and encouragement in Paul's words recorded in the eighth chapter of the book of Romans.

"The eager expectation of the creation waits for the appearance of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but by the will of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19-22).

These events are the groanings of the earth, which desperately longs to be redeemed back to the beauty of creation.

However, we are not helpless. Paul also informs us how we can pray during these times, especially when it seems so hopeless. "Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:26-27)

Our brothers and sisters in Houston need our prayers and our generosity. I encourage you to find an organization on the ground and sow what you can. Let's come together.

Ultimately we can trust that though the storm has overwhelmed us, it has not overwhelmed our God. Though a city is currently covered in flood waters, even more it is filled with the glory of our God. No doubt we shall see that glory in the coming days and weeks.

This is the heart of Paul's encouraging words, "We know that all things work together for God for those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Houston, you are in our hearts and prayers. My friends and family in Texas, you are not forgotten. We are encouraged as we watch the city come together and care for one another. You give us all hope! And I assure you, we are here for you as you rebuild.

This story will be updated throughout today.