

Historic Church in Antioch Looks to Rebuild After Devastating Earthquakes

One of the cities affected by the Turkey earthquake holds biblical significance. Antioch played a prominent role in the life of the apostle Paul, and it also served as a foundation of the early Church.

According to the New Testament Book of Acts, it was in Antioch that followers of Jesus were first called Christians. The city was devastated by the February 6th earthquake.

Like many cities and towns throughout this region, Antioch took a particularly hard hit.

CBN News visited the destroyed house of a pastor and his wife in Antioch. Nearby, the buildings of their beloved neighbors stood. Many of the neighbors didn't survive the earthquake and others were relocated away from their leveled homes, so the pastor's family lost the ones they had been serving and sharing about the love of Jesus for many years.

Turkish pastor Elmas Akin told us about that terrifying night.

"I just can't find the words to describe it and I don't think you can really understand what happened at that time," she said. "There was a deep noise from the ground and it wasn't ending and it was a long time. Both my husband and I just looked at each other and hugged each other and we started praying."

They expected to die.

Elmas explained, "And then we discussed with my husband later and we realized we both thought the same thing so we thought maybe that's is Lord, we're coming, so is this our last day.

Are we coming to meet you?"
Instead, they rushed outside.

"And then when we came out and completely outside and I looked and I realized that all these buildings were collapsed and that was so painful because this has been our ministry to our neighbors," Elmas said.

For years, she ministered to about 50 neighborhood children, teaching them the Bible.

"They know me as their Aunt Elmas, sometimes Mother Elmas, because we've been having them at church and playing games, sharing the Gospel for many, many years. They grew up in our own hands, so to speak," she recalled.

She cried as she said, "And now they are all gone now. I've lost all of them. Some of them died and some of them are just spread around the country or medical help or they can't live here anymore or they have moved to other cities and I've lost them all."

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