

‘With God’s Grace, We’ll Recover,’ Says Okla. Undersheriff After Tornado

In his 31 years as a law enforcement officer in central Oklahoma, Rhett Burnett has witnessed the aftermath of some of nature’s most destructive storms, such as the one that hit the Oklahoma City area Monday afternoon. It’s his duty to help maintain law and order in the midst of utter chaos.

But as a messenger of God—he serves as the associate pastor at Elevate Church in the city of Moore—Burnett says all he can try to do is provide comfort to the victims and assure them God is still on His throne.

“Yesterday, I had a man say to me, ‘I don’t understand why God does things like that,’” says Burnett, the undersheriff of Cleveland County. “Everything this man had was destroyed in the storm. What I told him was that I don’t believe God creates this mayhem.

“I told him that we all need to praise the Lord that we’re alive, and I told him that God is his provider. We need to praise the Lord and trust that He is going to take care of us. We prayed together, and I believe that man is going to be OK. He did praise God, even after such an ordeal.”

A lifetime area resident who lives in Norman, south of where the 2-mile-wide, EF5 tornado (with winds up to 200 miles per hour) hit, Burnett says the storm was the “worst [he had] ever seen.” He said it topped the 1999 twister—although it, too, was an EF5 that killed 36—that hit the Oklahoma City area.

Monday’s storm killed at least 24, according to Reuters.

Tornadoes also ripped through the area on Sunday evening. As

of Tuesday afternoon, Burnett and his men from the Sheriff's Office had been on duty for nearly 48 consecutive hours.

"We've been set up in the parking lot of a local Target store, and we've set up our command post here," Burnett says. "The entire ground is covered with mud, dirt, insulation and other debris. When we showed up, it looked like a war zone, like a bomb went off. You look at some of the people today, and they look just as beat up as their homes. It's devastating."

Burnett says the devastation flattened a local hospital and a bowling alley. It also leveled at least two schools in Moore, including Plaza Towers Elementary, where several children were killed and several are still missing.

"This is on a level that we simply haven't seen before," he says. "We know that support is going to come from local churches, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army. If nothing else, we're asking for people to pray for the comfort of the families who survived and for those who had loved ones that were lost."

"This is a resilient city, and with God's grace, we'll recover. We've been through the grinder with these storms and the bombing [in Oklahoma City in 1995], but we always recover. We know our God is an awesome God, and He's with us."