

Echoes of Grace

swallowed
up

Alive!

April 2017 – Vol. 87 – Number 10

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ECHOES OF GRACE (USPS 167-180) is published monthly by Bible Truth Publishers, 59 Industrial Road, P.O. Box 649, Addison, Illinois 60101, USA. Periodical postage paid at Addison, Illinois. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ECHOES OF GRACE, P.O. Box 649, Addison Illinois 60101.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: Postage paid to one address within the United States \$10.50 per year (12 issues). Postage paid to one address outside the United States \$13.50 per year (12 issues). Special prices on quantities.

Printed in USA



Swallowed Up **Alive!**

It was a sinkhole that took 37-year-old Jeffrey Bush's life. The family had just gone to bed for the night when suddenly, without warning, there was a loud crash and yells for help. Jeff's brother Jeremy rushed into the bedroom—only to see a giant hole—and no Jeff!

The 911 call came in at 11 p.m. Thursday, February 28, 2013.

"The house just fell through. The bedroom floor just collapsed, my brother-in-law's in there—he's underneath the house."

When police and emergency personnel arrived on the scene in Seffner, Florida, a deputy had to pull Jeremy Bush out of the hole because the floor was still collapsing. Jeremy had been frantically trying to save his brother by jumping in the hole and digging at the rubble with a shovel.

"Everything was gone. My brother's bed, my

"Everything was gone. My brother's bed, my brother's dresser, my brother's TV. My brother was gone."

brother's dresser, my brother's TV. My brother was gone," a tearful Jeremy said. "I couldn't get him out. I tried so hard. I tried everything I could."

Too Risky

A listening device was lowered into the hole to determine if there were any signs of life—but another cave-in rattled the foundations of the house and sucked up the device. At this point it was determined that it was too unsafe to attempt a rescue or body-recovery attempt. The dirt in the sinkhole was likened to quicksand and exceedingly unstable. Tragically, the earth had opened her mouth and swallowed up Jeff Bush alive. The hole eventually became about 30' wide and 100' deep.

Two neighboring homes were found to be in danger of collapse. Family members were given just 20 minutes to get their belongings and leave. Suddenly, people were solemnized to realize just how quickly lives could change—or how swiftly one could end. "Jeff laid his head down on his pillow to go to sleep—and he never got out of bed," the home's owner said.



An Even Bigger Sinkhole

It is hard to imagine the terror, grief and pain that the Bush family went through, let alone the agonizing frustration of Jeremy Bush's not being able to rescue his brother, whom he loved, from this frightening sinkhole. But did you know that the Bible speaks of a horrible pit that all mankind has fallen into? It is the pit of sin—and what a dreadful pit it is—far from God, full of wicked deeds and thoughts, full of sorrow, fear, misery and hopelessness. But there is One who is willing and able to save any that call on His name. **“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear”** (Isaiah 59:1). When we realize our dreadful condition before a holy and righteous God, we can cry out to Him in repentance and ask for forgiveness. Then, in the words of Scripture, we can joyfully say, **“He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it...and shall trust in the Lord”** (Psalm 40:2-3).

After the Bush home was demolished, the hole was filled up with four truckloads of gravel, and the area where three homes used to stand was fenced in. Two years later, a woman walking her dog heard a loud BANG! and was startled to see this massive sinkhole reopen. Because it was fenced in,



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there was no loss of life, just a sad reminder of what had happened two years ago. Sinkholes are very common in the states of Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania, Missouri, Tennessee and Alabama. In Florida, the bedrock is made of limestone and other carbonate materials. When acidic rainwater seeps through the ground to the limestone underneath, it erodes the limestone, causing a cave or

hole to form. When the hole becomes large enough, it cannot support the ground on top of it, which causes a cave-in. These sinkholes can be very dangerous, as they can be very large and often appear without warning, sucking whatever is above them into their depths. The Bible tells us that Satan, **“as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”** (1 Peter 5:8). Satan does not want us to escape **“out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay,”** but wants to deceive us into letting our sins drag us down into the pit of hell, from which there is no escape. Today, while the Lord’s hand is outstretched to save you and His ears are opened to the cry of the repentant sinner, receive Him as your Lord and Savior. Do not put it off for “later” —none of us is guaranteed that there will be a “tomorrow.” Come to the Lord while there is yet time!

The Story of Two Cranes shows how “just another day” can quickly become a final day.



The Story of Two Cranes

Milwaukee,
Wisconsin,
1999

It was just another windy day in July where workers were busy installing a retractable roof at the soon-to-be finished Brewer's Stadium. Dominating the scene was a mammoth crane, the biggest in North America at the time. Workers and residents of Milwaukee gave her the affectionate nickname of "Big Blue." She was an amazing 2,100 tons of steel, with 567 feet of boom and 30,000 feet of steel cable, which had taken all of six weeks to assemble. Whenever Big Blue was in operation, spectators would gather, many with cameras in hand to record this civic event.

It took four people to operate Big Blue, which had already successfully hoisted 10 of the enormous roof pieces into place. On July 14, shortly after 5 p.m., they were in the process of lifting the last of the roof pieces into place. It weighed almost 1 million pounds and





**Three steel
their lives a
this a**

was roughly the size of a Boeing 747's wing. What they didn't take into account was the high winds which were gusting up to 30 m.p.h. Because they were behind schedule and over budget, they took a chance and decided to go ahead with the lift anyway. When they lifted the roof into position, it acted as a giant sail, catching the full force of the wind. This was more than Big Blue could handle. A shudder ran down her long blue boom, and then her brakes began to squeal as they gave way. Next there was a dull BOOM! as her mighty kingpin was almost sheared in two. In less than 30 seconds, Big Blue was down in a giant spider's web of blue steel, cable and rubble.

But that wasn't the worst of it.

Three steel workers lost their lives as a result of this accident. They had been hoisted in a basket below the massive roof piece to guide it into position and weld it into place. When the roof and Big Blue came tumbling down, they too plummeted over 300 feet to their deaths. You can see a tribute to these three men today in the form of three bronze statues just outside of Miller Park. Because of this accident, safety standards for crane operators have drastically improved in the United States.

These construction workers took a big chance, which ended in catastrophe. Because they disregarded safety

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as a result of
accident.**

rules, it cost three men their lives. Yet how many people do the very same thing today? They disregard God's clear plan of

salvation. They think that they can come to God by their own way, whether by works or by their own man-made beliefs and ideas. The consequences will be eternal—instead of eternal life in heaven, they will spend eternity in hell, separated from God, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, a place of eternal torment. **"Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"** (Matthew 22:13).

Too Big a Hurry to Think Clearly

A 15-story crane collapsed in Tribeca, Manhattan, killing one 38-year-old man and seriously injuring two others when it was being lowered because of the weather. Everything seemed normal at first—but then the crane operator lost control of the boom, which continued to gather speed, and within 30 seconds came crashing down, crushing several cars and trapping one man inside of his car. Even experienced construction workers said it was surreal, like watching a slow-motion disaster. The boom crashed to the ground with such force that the cab of the crane flipped upside down, its massive metal treads pointing skyward. A building was clipped on its way down, and the metal weight at the end of a cable ended up on an office desk.

The ripple effect was loss of life, damage to real estate, downtime for other construction workers, fines, litigation and rising insurance premiums, as well as a host of new regulations by OSHA and other government officials.

A witness reported seeing two men running to their right, and one man ran towards his left—he was the one that was killed instantly when the crane came crashing down. Like a long red strand of DNA, “Big Red” lay stretched along more than two city blocks amidst the bricks, masonry and rubble. An order was quickly given to New York’s 376 crawler cranes and all of their tower cranes operating in the city to be secured until they could figure out what went wrong.

State investigators cited negligence on the part of the crane’s operators. Apparently, in the rush to get the boom out of the wind, they ignored safety procedures and the manufacturer’s safety manual. The ripple effect was loss of life, damage to real estate, downtime for other construction workers, fines, litigation and rising insurance premiums, as well as a host of new regulations by OSHA and other government officials.



The Real Safety Manual

Because God loves us, He has given us a sure and true “safety manual.” God’s Word, the Bible, tells us how to avoid the certain judgment that is coming upon all men because **“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”** (Romans 3:23). But He also tells us that there is a way of escape! **“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out”** (Acts 3:19). God wants us to genuinely and sincerely repent of our sins and to trust Him to forgive us for our

sins. His Son, the Lord Jesus, died on Calvary’s cross for our sins. Because God has accepted the work that the Lord Jesus did on the cross, He (God) is righteous (right) in forgiving us our sins when we come to Him in faith. God’s “safety manual” is the only way! **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). Won’t you trust Him today, while there is yet time?

You might know the right thing to do but fail to do it. Tim, Matt and Brian found that out the hard way. *Death on Lunch Break* will show which one survived and why.



DEATH ON LUNCH BREAK

It had been a busy morning and the workers at the baking oil company were glad for lunch hour. Most of them finished up their projects and went

out for an hour to relax and enjoy a meal. They never expected to return to a workplace in chaos.

All the baking oil from the company was shipped out in train cars which had to be purged with nitrogen. It can't be smelled, it can't be seen, but it can kill.

Nitrogen is an inert gas which is lethal if humans breathe it straight. It will knock a person unconscious without their ever knowing what hit them.

Just before lunch hour, Brian went up to the top of an empty train car to fix a broken spout. As he removed the spout, it slipped and fell through the hatch into the car. Without thinking, Brian started down the ladder into the train car. The moment his head entered the car, he fell unconscious to the floor.

You don't know what will happen to you today. Life



is uncertain. What if this happened to you? Do you know where you would go if you died? After death, every man, woman and child will face their Creator God. He has told us, **"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"** (Hebrews 9:27). One day you will die. What if it is today? God in His grace does not leave us to face our deserved judgment alone. He also says, **"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many"** (Hebrews 9:28).

Matt was the next person to fall unconscious from the ladder.

Coworker Matt had seen Brian go unthinkingly into the car and knew that he would die there. All the masks, oxygen tanks, and hoists were readily available for situations just like this, but Matt thought he could just slip into the train car and save his friend. Matt was the next person to fall unconscious from the ladder.

Tim worked on the same shift with Matt and watched with horror as his brother entered the nitrogen-filled car without protective equipment. After calling for the rescue squad, Tim had a friend Andrew help him into an oxygen tank and mask. They climbed up to the top of the train car and Tim attempted to climb down through the hatch that had swallowed up Brian and his brother Matt. But the hatch was too small for Tim to get through with his oxygen tank!

"Here," he said to Andrew, "hold my tank until I'm in, then hand it to me." But Tim did not realize how quickly pure nitrogen took effect. The minute his head



When they entered the car, they found three people who looked like they were sleeping on the floor of the car. But two of them were in eternity.

went below the hatch he also dropped unconscious to the floor. Thankfully, Tim landed face-up on the floor of the car. Andrew was able to lower Tim's mask into the car until it landed on his face, and Tim could breathe oxygen until the rescue squad arrived.

Wearing masks and protective gear, the rescue squad opened the bottom of the train car and pumped oxygen until the nitrogen had dissipated. When they entered the car, they found three people who looked like they were sleeping on the floor of the car. But two of them were in eternity. Only Tim with the flow of oxygen lowered to him by Andrew survived.

Matt could not save Brian. Tim could not save his brother Matt. And while Andrew was able to save Tim's life, he could not save his soul. Only God can save anyone through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ. Death can come at any time. Are you ready for it? **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"** (Acts 16:31).



There is but a
step between me
and death....

Come now....I
will give you rest.

1 SAMUEL 20:3

ISAIAH 1:18

MATTHEW 11:28

ECHOES OF GRACE

59 Industrial Road, P. O. Box 649
Addison, Illinois 60101, U.S.A.

Periodical Postage
Paid at
Addison, Illinois

Jesus said: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

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