



# CALIFORNIA FIRES

## BELIEVERS PERSEVERE THROUGH FIERY TRIALS

Story by Margot Bass

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ... Be still and know that I am God.*

PSALM 46:1,10a

Thomas Roscoe and his wife Brittney woke up startled early Monday morning, October 9, in their apartment off of Hopper Road in Santa Rosa, CA. She had been dreaming that they were surrounded by fire and needed to get out. Smelling smoke, they realized that the apartment complex was indeed on fire. “Fire and burning embers were falling from the trees above our apartment building,” said Thomas, worship leader at Calvary Chapel The Rock in Santa Rosa. “We ran out, ducked, covered and tried not to get hit by any fire. It was kind of like a scene from an apocalyptic movie,” he said. They escaped with their lives.

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.*

*When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.* ISAIAH 43:2

The previous Sunday, CC The Rock Senior Pastor Ross Reinman had taught about a verse from the Gospel of Mark: *“For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt”* (Mark 9:49). He shared Jesus’ warning that we will all experience fire, either to punish or to purify us, and followed it with assurances from Psalm 91:1, *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* “So 12 hours later, we were salted with fire and tested. Looking back, we felt like the Lord was preparing us,” Ross said. That night, deadly fires hit the city, destroying more than 2,800 homes, leaving thousands homeless. In his congregation, 30 families lost their homes.

“It’s been incredible to see how people step up to help and how God has used this tragic situation to really bless us.

He reminds us that He’s in control and that He loves us,” Thomas stated. Shortly after the fires, he and Brittney were speaking to a woman with an apartment to rent. “She wasn’t a believer, and I got to share what happened concerning the fires. She asked how I could be happy. I told her, ‘God saved us, not just from physical fire but the fires of hell. And that’s such a great reason to have joy.’” The woman said she would be at church the following Sunday.

Steve and Cathi Fowler, members of the church who run a bed and breakfast in nearby Healdsburg, had to evacuate their own home during the fire. They opened their AAA 4-diamond inn, Honor Mansion, to displaced evacuees at no cost. “They’ve turned it into a shelter where they’re waiting on people hand and foot,” Ross said. Although they were cleared to return home, Cathi and Steve chose to stay at the inn with evacuees. Cathi reported that they had housed 14 evacuees during the week after the fires and expected more later.

They are one example of what Ross described as “beautiful expressions of love that have transformed our congregation. Everybody is hosting evacuees; everybody is giving. Members who had lost everything were serving food at the church on Sunday morning.” CC The Rock has been raising funds through its website to share with victims of the fire.

Their church building, less than a mile from a neighborhood that had been devastated by the fires, was untouched and safe. However, they met at another location, Hessel Church in Sebastopol, the following Sunday, October 15,

**Top left: Fire burns for miles across the Napa Valley.** Photo by Mario Piombo/Aperture Media+Design

**Top right: Raily (left) and Sylus Precup, whose family attends CC The Rock, stand in rubble where their Santa Rosa home burned.** Photo by Sammy Precup



because their own building had not been released from the evacuation zone. “There was standing room only,” Ross said, regarding the crowd of 700 members and their families, including one man who had come to church for the first time in his life. “I preached from Psalm 46: God is our refuge who protects us, our river who sustains us, and our ruler who gives us peace,” he added. During the service, attendees honored six first responders in uniform with a standing ovation. After the service, Ross held an information meeting to offer practical advice to victims.

Pastor Eddie Simmons of Calvary Chapel of the Foothills in the small town of Browns Valley, CA, said that at least 150 homes there burned to the ground. One of his church families, Nick and Fawn Morawcznski, lost their home.

Eddie said Nick, who is more comfortable giving help than receiving it, called the loss “one of the best things that had ever happened to him. He didn’t realize before how desperately he needed his brothers and sisters in Christ.” **And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it** (1 Corinthians 12:26). “There’s been a great work of God in our hearts. It’s been very humbling,” Eddie said.

On Eddie’s street alone, 13 homes burned down. “These are our neighbors, so there’s a huge open door there. Many of them don’t know the Lord, but this is a chance for us to bring them hot dinners and help them sift through the ashes,” he stated. Eddie took meals to a neighbor he’s known for more than 10 years whose home was destroyed.

“He’s a tough guy, not the kind who opens up very much. Yesterday he shared with me that he had a Christian background but had fallen away from it. Now for the first time in a lot of years, he’s seen real love and caring people.” Eddie added, “It’s Jesus, not just do-gooding. It’s because of the Lord.”

In addition to providing food, CC Foothills believers have opened up their homes and offered travel trailers to people who have lost everything, Eddie said. In the future, the church plans to continue feeding victims in cooperation with area Calvary Chapels, collect donations for replacement items, and organize a crew to help people sift safely through ashes. “I see a huge opportunity for the Gospel. Let’s face it: When we lose stuff, we realize we

need something more. I’m seeing a lot of people open up because of the love they’re experiencing,” Eddie said.

In Napa and Sonoma counties, more than 90,000 acres were burned. Senior Pastor Bill Walden of Cornerstone Ministries Napa Valley, CA, and his church family responded quickly to callers reporting that “the Valley is on fire.” He immediately visited evacuation centers in Napa to practice “the ministry of presence,” he said. “Just show up, pray, and be available—that was God’s plan for me. My role toggled between being a pastoral presence and a food source/volunteer networker,” Bill said. Several believers from his church joined him. “This was a true open door for us to minister to people in our community.”

Chris Cross, administrative pastor of Metro Calvary Church in Roseville, CA, brought 30 CC volunteers to Napa Valley Community College the Saturday after the fires to serve food to 800 evacuees. “Our hope was to not only feed them physically, but to give them hope in Jesus—to encourage them that there is an answer beyond this, and that there is [hope] for them tomorrow. Also that Jesus is good and can comfort them and give them the answers they’re looking for,” Chris said. Within 10 minutes of arriving, they witnessed God at work: “One of our girls, Sarah, met a girl, hugged her, and shared the Gospel. She received Christ right here in the parking lot,” Chris said.

Chris’ 11-year-old daughter came on the trip. “For a young child to see other children who are desiring to minister to and love other kids their age, that’s a win-win. She’s been able to walk around and share Jesus with people, handing out tracts and praying with them,” he added. 🙌

***I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.” You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.*** PSALM 91:2,5-6

CA Fire Relief Contact Info  
[cctherock.org](http://cctherock.org)  
[calvarychapel-foothills.com](http://calvarychapel-foothills.com)  
[cmnv.org](http://cmnv.org)

Top left: **The Coffey Park neighborhood of Santa Rosa was ravaged during the Northern California fires.** Photo by Air National Guard Master Sgt. David Loeffler