

We just received a more detailed report from Topher of his amazing escape from Typhoon Haiyan. We had no idea of what he and Melanie went through. English being Topher's second (or third) language, his report below was somewhat edited by me, Kermit.

Three weeks ago, Friday, November 8, 2013, Super Typhoon Yolanda (International name "Haiyan") hit Tacloban and destroyed our beautiful place. On that very day (morning around 4 AM) a strong wind started to blow with rain. Then around 6 AM the typhoon started to destroy some parts of our house. [12 hours earlier Topher brought me, Kermit, to the airport where I caught my flight to Manila. We actually passed by their home on the way to the airport.] First our kitchen was blown away, then our ceiling. After that we (me, my [6 month pregnant] wife, and my sister-in-law, Mheggan) decided to leave and run towards our neighbor's house. I opened the door and we ran as fast as we could. Amazingly, the gate going out of our yard was already wide open even though I had locked it. On our way towards our neighbor's house, the wind and rain was so strong it was hard for us to see each other, so we held hands as we ran. Along the way, wires and posts blocked the road and the wind was pushing us harshly. My wife stumbled because of the wind, so we helped her get up. But then the wind once again brought her down. So we picked her up again and continued our way through the wires. Along the way we had dropped our bags where we had put our food and cell phones, and my sister-in-law tried to pick them up again, but I said, "Just leave them. Let's go." We finally reached our neighbor's place. However their gate was locked. We kept on yelling and yelling so that they might open it for us. Not getting any response [probably due to the noise of the rain and wind] I told them to get away from the gate so I could kick it in. Nothing happened. We felt hopeless and thought of death on earth and life in heaven. But then at that moment and to the left of us we saw the [cement fence] wall collapsing (another act of God). Then I yelled, "there, over there, jump." My wife jumped

first and the moment she landed, she fell again and this time she fell on her belly. Again we got her up and approached the door of the house. We pounded on the door and shouted as loud as we could. This time they heard us (God's grace) and opened their door for us.

When we were inside our neighbor's (Ate Grace's) house we changed into dry clothes. In less than 5 minutes wild rushing water began to come inside the house through the windows and doors. The owner told me to open the doorway to the attic, so I did. We had a hard time going up because Shana (a 4 year old child) kept on holding her mom and did not want to let go. So I grabbed her and brought her up into the attic. Finally all of us were in the attic. The water kept on rising and Ate Grace was terrified because of the strong wind and thinking the water might continue to rise up to where we were. She wanted us to make a hole through the roof so that we could climb up onto the roof if the water got higher and higher. But I told them not to because it would be more dangerous. While we were there my wife and I thought that we probably lost the baby because of all the tumbling and falling that happened along the way. We were expecting that soon there would be blood coming out, and yet there was none. In fact within 30 minutes the baby moved, and we were very happy and praised God for His protection of our baby.

In the midst of the tragedy, my wife and I as well as my sister in-law assured ourselves that we will meet in heaven because Jesus is in our hearts and we trusted Him as our Lord and Saviour. Thinking of our neighbors who welcomed us, we shared with them the Good News, that is, that Jesus came to earth to save us from our sins so that we could be with him in heaven, and the only key is to believe in him and surrender our lives to him. Right then and there the whole family received Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Around 10 minutes later, several families joined us because they were able to hold on to some part of the

house and were some how able to climb up into the attic. When I saw several people swimming nearby in the water, I blew my fox 40 whistle to get their attention. [I, Kermit was not sure what a fox 40 whistle is, so I went to Google and found out it is a referee's whistle – thought so, since Topher is a soccer coach, having been coached by yours truly. :) ] Then I called one of the persons with us to help me. We used some 2x2 pieces of wood so that people swimming in the water could grab on to them and so we could pull them into the attic. In due time, the number of us in the attic grew to between 25 and 30 individuals – composed of different families from different places. We shared the Gospel to some of them as well.

Around 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon, the typhoon was totally gone and the water had subsided. I went to our house to check it out. But, sad to say, it was no longer a house -- merely a mountain of rubble.

[Some thoughts from Kermit: Raquel and I are grateful that the roof came off of Topher's home at the very start. For if not, they probably would have just stayed and then it would have been very dangerous for them when the over 15 feet high waters arrived, since their home did not have an attic. Topher is a good swimmer having been raised at Nasuli and since a young child swam daily in the natural pool fed by underground springs there. But not sure if he could have saved both his wife (Melanie) and her sister. Also it is some consolation knowing that even though there was so much destruction and death and so many lives disrupted, yet it also brought an opportunity for the Good News to go forth, resulting in some new spiritual grandchildren. Oh what celebration there will be in heaven! Lord, watch over these new believers in you and guide them in your Word and in your Spirit. And guide Raquel and me as we try to guide the Winaray translators in exile to get your Word into a more understandable form.]