

Texas senator shares Pentagon survival story | The Baylor Lariat

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During the Sept. 11 Service of Remembrance held Sunday in [Waco Hall](#), Texas State Senator and Pentagon survivor [Brian Birdwell](#) spoke to the audience about his experience.

Matt Hellman | Lariat Photo Editor

By Grace Gaddy
Reporter

The memory of those who lost their lives on the morning of Sept. 11, many while selflessly serving to save others, was lifted high during a special commemoration service Sunday in Waco Hall.

“Baylor Remembers: A Service of Remembrance” featured 9/11 survivor and Texas Sen. Brian Birdwell as the keynote speaker. Birdwell related [details of his own recollections](#) of that day, starting when he first arrived in his office at the Pentagon where he worked as a military aide.

“That morning started off as any other day,” Birdwell said, quickly adding he had yet to realize the reality of that day.

He remembered stepping out to use the restroom, telling colleagues he would be back.

But that moment never came.

“Those were the last words that I would speak to my two co-workers, because there was no thought that the Pentagon was the third target, or that there were more beyond just those of the World Trade Center,” Birdwell said.

Birdwell was thrown from the second floor to ground level as hijacked American Airlines Flight 177 crashed into the western side of the Pentagon. He suffered burns covering 60 percent of his body, half of which were third degree. After being carried to [Georgetown University Hospital](#), doctors worked fervently to save his life. Though he recalled being in excruciating physical pain, the “hardest thing” came through sighting a familiar face, he said.

“Just under the little baseball cap he was wearing, I could see in his 12-year-old eyes the pain and agony of walking in and seeing that his father was dying, and the suffering that we were enduring as a family,” Birdwell said, “and seeing him say, ‘I love you, Daddy.’”

Birdwell, unable to speak, remembered mouthing the words, “I love you too, son.”

“I was having that moment of ‘it is finished,’” he said.

Birdwell said he now has the slightest grasp of what it must have been like for God the Father “to say goodbye to his Son for three days,” he said. He then noted that many personal challenges were to follow that day through the process of healing and recovery, and many more for America as a whole.

“We made a lot of decisions about life that day, and we still make a lot of decisions about life,” Birdwell said.

The “key difference” distinguishing America from a terrorist world is that “we love life,” he said.

He then drew attention to the men and women who faced a “tug of death” that fateful day, as they still do today in professions as firefighters, police officers and the military.

Baylor Law School alumnus J. D. Ressetar, whose survival account from the attack on the South Tower was aired during the service, shared Birdwell’s sentiment.

“The one thing that I think everybody should remember about [September 11](#) is the police and firefighters that really were trying to help everybody escape, and that those are the people that died saving so many lives,” Ressetar said.

Ressetar worked as a finance executive, and was on the 58th floor of the South Tower when Flight 175 crashed into it.

U.S. Congressman [Bill Flores](#) also spoke during the service, telling the audience that God is a God of restoration, and he will faithfully restore the United States of America if people call out to him on their knees”

He said the service of the day provided “an opportunity to pause and pay tribute to the innocent victims of September 11, to the selfless first responders who prevented further loss of life, and to our military men and women around the world who bravely serve to protect our freedom.”

Baylor President [Ken Starr](#) gave the closing remarks, saying while the day of Sept. 11 will always be a reminder of the “profound evil of the fallen world,” it also reveals the “remarkable goodness in the human heart, powerfully illustrated by the mighty examples of the men and women who were willing to pay the ultimate price.”