

Dear Friends and Family,

This has been a packed two months with much progress for the Lord! Thank you for your continued faith in our endeavors here in Papua New Guinea. Here are some of the happenings:

*Therefore said he unto them, **The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Luke 10:2***

MISSION'S MONTH:

August is Harvest time here in our area of Papua New Guinea; it is the perfect time to point people's hearts toward the fields ready unto harvest. Our theme for this year's Missions Conference was 'Around the Corner, Around the World' and we invited Pastor Holmes Tako from the Capital City to be our guest speaker. I felt impressed this year of the need to get our eyes off ourselves and our locality, *which is actually the norm*, and onto other lands. I have been burdened for a long time about the lack of a Gospel witness in **the 7 "Stan" countries of the world** and that is where we turned our focus during this year's Missions Month. It is highly unlikely that any of our bush people would be able to go physically 'Around the World' to any of these far off countries of the world, (*most have never been 20 miles from Wipim!*) but Jesus simply said, "**Pray ye:**" we can do that! The eyes of the Christians appeared to become opened and now wet with tears for those dear people in the 7-Stans: Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

If you know of missionaries in these countries, please let us know that we may rejoice and pray for them by name.

We rejoiced to see six follow the Lord in believer's baptism in August!

MADE FREE:

September 16th marked the 36th anniversary of independence for Papua New Guinea. It was the perfect time to highlight the independence we have in Christ. Ana and I try to teach a new Psalm, Hymn and Spiritual Song every month and this month our people learned the song "Blood Bought My Freedom." The first part of the original song is highly patriotic towards America so that would not have been appropriate here, so I asked our daughter Libby to come up with another stanza that the church could learn. She did that plus wrote a whole new song to go with the theme and presented her new song as a special during one of the services. We are proud of her literary accomplishments!

This month **two walked the aisles professing faith in Christ!** We are now looking forward to seeing them follow the Lord in believer's baptism.

NATIONAL BAPTIST PASTOR'S CONFERENCE:

September also marks the time annually for the National Baptist Pastor's Conference. I was privileged to be able to partner with Brad Wells and the *Bible Truth Baptist Church* in Mt. Hagen as they hosted this years conference. The theme was "Real Growth" and we invited my pastor, Doug Fisher, to be the key note speaker. Even though I know personally how God has used him to connect in my life, I was still amazed at how he was able to connect with our national pastors from the bush all the way down to the cities. There were 200+ registered pastors and wives and God used Pastor Fisher in a mighty and unique way to challenge us to study God's Word, pray for charity and wisdom, be prepared for Spiritual warfare, and about fasting. For many, it was their first time to really study about spiritual warfare and fasting. *I have heard of stomachs growling all over P.N.G. since this momentous meeting :-).*

ATTACKED!

Life can be quite unpredictable! We bought day old chickens while I was up in Mt. Hagen back in September so that we can raise them for their eggs. The Russell family is from the city, thus we have never raised chickens or even been much around them to know what to expect. Titus built a small pen for them before I flew back down to Wipim, so that when I arrived there would be a place for them. The children were so excited to watch them from day to day growing and doing the things that God put inside of them to do, but we were not necessarily prepared for how quickly they would outgrow their little pen. A real chicken coop needed to be built, not just to keep the chickens in, but also to keep the thieves out! Nobody here looks after chickens because it is too frustrating to just watch them one by one “*disappearing*.” So this necessitated a trip to town to buy some materials to protect our little flock.

Daru is only about 30 miles away by air, which takes about 15 minutes to traverse in a Cessna 206, but it is an all day event by road, river, and sea—Daru is an Island. To be able to bring back this material we needed to go by tractor and dinghy, so down the road we went. All went well, and the dinghy was there right on time (*very unusual*) to meet us when we arrived at the river side ‘port’ of Oriomo. We left home at about 7 a.m. and arrived on Daru Island at 4:30 in the afternoon, just in time before the shops closed. We did our grocery shopping for the house, and in the morning we did the shopping for the chicken coop. We were finished by ten and then back on the dinghy to go up the river, through the woods, and then on home to Wipim—it would be another long day travelling!

When we arrived at the place where the road starts, Oriomo Station, there was already a dinghy beached in the mud, and we would have to do the same. I was totally focused on the task at hand and did not realize that the men all around were drunk on home brew. I walked up to where we parked the tractor, took a look around, thanked the security guard and then was met by a fellow hobbling on one leg. He was behaving erratically, which is not all that uncommon for some of the guys from the bush who have no training at all in proper behavior towards strangers. He told me that he was going to ride on the tractor down to the river; he didn’t ask— he told! Not wanting to argue and not seeing what harm it could cause, I “allowed” him to get on, not knowing he was already drunk!

As soon as I got the tractor in position, we formed a line and began unloading the dinghy and loading the tractor for the long, arduous ride back to Wipim. Everything must be secured in such a way that when the tractor or trailer goes into a deep hole or rut, things stay where you put them originally. This was very important! The men who came in the other dinghy were acting a bit bold and friendly, but I didn’t take much notice because most drunks here are not violent just insolent. They helped us with the loading, and then when we had everything loaded and secured, they told me (didn’t ask) that they wanted a ride to Wipim. I told them that we do not carry people who have been drinking. That didn’t go over so well. They began shouting and rounding the tractor and trailer, but our people are not generally violent so that didn’t bother me much. When I was about ready to pull up the hill to the road, one of the fellows got so upset that he pulled out a knife about 10-inches long! He began waving it around while shouting, and then he rushed at me with the knife raised high. I was sitting on the tractor seat!

It is said here that “*killing with knives is not in our history; bows and arrows, yes; poison, yes; sorcery, yes; but not with knives.*” They say that it is just to scare you, but that they will never stab. I want to know who wants to be the exception to that unwritten rule? Not me, so I jumped off the seat in the opposite direction of the knife! My son, Titus, was with me on this trip so I looked for him, and he was in between the tractor and trailer right next to the man with the knife. I called for him to come to safety when all of a sudden I heard a big whoosh of air right where Titus had just been standing. I knew immediately what the knife-wielding man had done. He put that 10-inch knife into the side of the big, ‘*tubeless*’ tire of the tractor! That ended our hopes of going home this day. Everybody just stood there in disbelief.

There were a few brothers with me from Daru, but only one from Wipim who speaks the local language, an older man and one of my Bible School Students named Mark. Mark tried to stop the man, but I couldn't understand why didn't anybody try to get the knife from him. He continued to taunt me around the tractor with his knife. When he couldn't get me, he decided to take his anger out on the other tires. He stabbed the other rear tire, then a trailer tire, then he stabbed the front tire but missed and hit the rim. He stabbed with such force that his knife put a nick into the metal and bent nearly two-inches of the tip of his knife! He was furious now and attempted to straighten it with his teeth, *just kidding*, with his foot. When Mark tried now to get the knife away, the fellow nearly sliced Mark's abdomen open. Other men were finally able to get the wild man away. The other drunkards, finding their attempts to get the things on the trailer off unsuccessful, went away with their violent friend. I started the tractor, tried to crawl up the hill from the river, and then here came the maniac again and off the tractor I go again. This time the whole mob began to go wild finding sticks or whatever they could throw at us and the tractor. Thankfully, the radiator sits back from the front grill a bit so their attempts to smash it were also unsuccessful.

Mark took a couple of blows in my stead. They were intended for me, but Mark took them. I could tell he was hurt physically, but he was willing even to lay his life down for his missionary. To hit an older man in the culture here is a BIG taboo! I have never seen it nor even heard of it before. The other drunkards then turned on their "friend" to fight among themselves. Nothing I could do was calming the situation. It just continued to escalate, and then I took my hat off, raised my voice to be heard and said, "Ok, let's pray and ask God to give us peace." That was like a balm to the situation. Those drunkards all calmed and quieted down, and then bowed their heads as I asked God to bring peace to the situation, especially for my heart towards these men who had said so many hateful words about me and my family and caused such damage. I then asked God to open up a door to reach the village where these men come from—Abam village on the Oriomo river. They then dissipated for good, some back down the river, others walking toward Wipim. They would get there before we would!

Our dinghy too needed to get back to Daru. This whole scenario played out over 2 hours; it was now 3:00 in the afternoon, and it would be getting dark on the river just as they would near Daru. There is no cell phone service at Oriomo Station, so I asked the brethren on the dinghy to find a place to call Pastor Daniel in Daru, in order for him then to call my wife to let her know that we wouldn't be making it home that night. We set up a plan to get some tubes that I had for an emergency down to the river. We would pump them with a bicycle pump!

That evening the three of us: Titus, Mark, and I walked to where there would be cell phone service to call home. Stories often get exaggerated, and this one was already ballooning. I needed to make sure that Ana knew that we were all ok, just a little bruised and battered. It was a good thing that I did, because bad news always spreads faster than good news, and the worst news already reached her that I had been 'belted' by the drunkards. She was confused. I clarified that I had been **pelted** but not **belted**!

That was on Friday. A high government official sent a driver up the river the next day to drive us up to Wipim with our three flat tires. We didn't arrive until after 2am on Sunday, because the axel on the government truck slipped off 1/3 of the way home. We had to do some 'bush mechanics' to get us the rest of the way. Once in Wipim, we fixed the tires on Monday and then headed back down the road until the 'bush mechanic' job failed. The axel had come off again! We fixed it on the road, but it was already late in the afternoon, and we had only traveled about 3 miles. Therefore, we headed back to Wipim for a good night's sleep, and we would try again first thing in the morning. When morning came, I decided that we would chain the axel in place, and that saw us the 20 miles down to the river.

It didn't take long to change the tires on the tractor and trailer, and we made it back to Wipim on Tuesday, September 27, 2011 before nightfall.

As we walked to make that phone call to Ana, I asked my son, "Could what just happened to us here, have happened if we lived in America?" He said, "Yes." I then said, "That's right, but I am glad that it happened to us when we were right in the center of God's will." It doesn't shake me out of God's call for calamity to happen. It rains on the just and the unjust. If I have to be in a flood or drought, as it were, I would rather be in the Ark with Noah or next to the brook with Elijah as the Lord allows us to travel that road.

We are seeing a lot happening here in Wipim for the Lord and a lot more in the "roots" phase. Churches are being started; five men are preparing to graduate from the Wipim Baptist Bible School; the Independent Baptist College of PNG is about to commence up in Mt. Hagen; and souls are being saved every week. God is good, and He can be trusted on the mountain and in the valley. Thank you for holding those ropes of prayer as we continue to rescue the perishing and care for the dying in the bush of PNG.

TRACTOR FIXED!

This should not be a minor point, but after a monologue like that, this may not seem very interesting to you. However, it is life impacting for us!

Our tractor experienced a major transmission problem earlier in the year that disabled it greatly. I was able to use only the low gears which enable me to travel about 3 mph. With effort and patience, I could get the transmission into the high gears, but only with much grinding and then finally somehow it would stick. If I had to take it out of those high gears, or if it accidentally slipped on its own, it would be a great effort once again to get the transmission back in gear again.

The tractor is our only means of personal transportation. This tractor enables me to carry logs to our Woodmizer sawmill when we are cutting, but most importantly it enables me to get supplies for my family from Daru. Without it, we would have to hire airplanes to bring in all of our supplies!

Well, by God's grace we were able to diagnose and then fix the tractor problem right here in the bush. Thank you to Pastor Tim Thacker of the Broken Arrow Baptist Church for helping us with technical support, and to Mike Alman for helping us acquire the special tools for the job. One local man with some mechanical knowledge was also invaluable at this time. A big THANK YOU also goes to each of you who pray and financially support us. Your support enabled us to purchase the tractor back in 2004 and now purchase the parts to fix it. You are the best!

Co-laboring with you,

Jason and Ana Russell