



from Glenn and Beth Calderwood

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PNG Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

It's been said often enough that a week is a long time in politics. Well, a week can be a long time in evangelistic and church-planting work I can assure you. One day things can look quite promising and hopeful, even a joy to be part of, and then the next there can be so many difficulties and problems that it's impossible for us to see the way ahead. Thankfully the Lord knows the end from the beginning and will accomplish all that he sets out to do. His people will be gathered. His church will be built. These are certainties. The twists and turns he ordains to accomplish his plans and purposes are for his glory and honour. In John Calvin's words "...the more he is assailed the greater will be the victories and triumphs gained by his power."

In recent weeks there has been a great struggle in dealing with the issues surrounding the rape of two of our young girls at Tatagufa. The first, a quiet little girl of around sixteen years of age, was raped several times and is now pregnant to the rapist. Following the cultural practices of this clan-orientated community the family of the girl and the family of the rapist are pushing her to marry the rapist. As you might expect from someone who goes out and rapes, the man is a very unsavoury character with all sorts of misbehaviours chalked-up to his name. Nevertheless, the girl's family, some of whom are believing members of the Tatagufa church, think the only "face-saving" thing to do is for the girl to marry the rapist. It's really very sad for in doing so they are consigning her to more pain and misery, sooner and later, as he will, as is the custom here of recent years, use her and abuse her and then divorce her.

The alternative though is not much better. If she were to remain single and have her baby, she will not be able to marry in the district, and if she does stay in the district she will be preyed upon by every guy who thinks she is a soft mark. Her reputation will be one of a prostitute, even though that is just so far from the truth. She needs to be loved and cared for, but sadly her believing family members are not prepared to think nor act out of cultural character.

The second victim is the new wife of one of our young married couples. She was raped twice by her husband's younger brother, and as it turns out another younger brother of her husband had tried to rape her some time before that. Culturally they should have been her protectors, but as is often the case here these days, even cultural values are no longer adhered to, apart, of course, from their very worse cultural "values". Her husband, in his anger, caused much trouble over a period of a few days. A house was burned down and several people injured before we were finally able to get him calmed down and to submit to a specially convened local court. On Sunday morning he was in such a

rage he loaded a firearm and stalked around the village menacing anyone who came near him. I tried to calm him by putting my arms around him and talking with him. Iko was finally able to disarm him before irreparable damage was done.

Thankfully the court officials found the right people responsible (not always the case here). Things are not over yet (is it ever over for the victims?) as the court was adjourned for 3 weeks because the rapist's family are refusing to meet the court's compensation terms. We're expecting more trouble at anytime. It's so disappointing that those believers who are involved have defaulted to their cultural ways, missing such good opportunities to "showcase" Christ. The girls, by the way, are not believers, nor are the rapists. But some of their family members claim to be. All, except the first rapist, come along to the Tatagufa church meetings.

I think that in the past there have been so many "romantic" missionary stories told that we forget the real sinful world in which the gospel operates. These are real people with real sinful natures. They have not had the benefit of years of Christian influence on their culture which modifies the behaviour and values of even non-believers. Even though the Kanite has been "missionised" for nearly 60 years now, the God of the Kanites is not the God of the Bible, and so the dark night of paganism has continued.

I'm convinced that only when they fully grasp and appreciate the Lord Jesus Christ will real change come. We must hold out for that. No matter how difficult it is we must keep on proclaiming the God of the Bible as he has revealed himself. John Piper puts it this way: *"I am persuaded that the vision of a great God is the linchpin in the life of the church, both in pastoral care and missionary outreach. Our people need to hear God-entranced preaching. They need someone, at least once a week, to lift up his voice and magnify the supremacy of God. They need to behold the whole panorama of his excellencies."* Only in knowing God will real change ever come. We must never be content with mere religiosity. Therefore we must continue the work of making him known.

And of course we sometimes forget that we ourselves are only different because of the Lord's work in us. "And you were once dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...but God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved." Where would we had the Lord not loved us before the creation of the world, and had he not chosen us, and had he not done all that was needed to redeem and



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justify us, and had he not purposely brought us to himself by giving us a heart to believe and trust? How we long for the day when Papua New Guineans know these truths for themselves and rejoice at how wonderful God is and be genuinely grateful.

As we feared it looks as though the killing of Anteya is going to be swept under the rug. A delegation of mission representatives have brokered a "peace" deal where a small amount of compensation will be exchanged between the two sides. A small sum will be paid to Anteya's relatives and in turn a slightly smaller sum will be paid to the killers' family, I suppose in tacit recognition that Kemo's death was due to sorcery and that Anteya was likely responsible. The rule of law was negated by the mission representatives in favour of their own law. The killers and those who supported and planned the killing will go free. There will be more killings in the future, I'm sure, for their belief in the false wisdom of their ancestors and their rejection of God's word, particularly in connection to obeying the governing authorities, prevails. Stay tuned.

Things remain constant at Yafanagomo and with Jeve. At Avili Leften has left for Port Moresby and plans to return at Easter. This leaves things a little less organised at Avili so there have been some disruptions to our normal activities there. Because of the rapes at Tatagufa I've not had as much time with Jeff as I had planned. Hopefully I'll be able to make that up before our trip down to Australia in March.

Most of you will know that Hayley and Alice have been able to join us for 4 weeks. It's been really nice to have them here with us again and we're very grateful for the opportunity. Ruth has not been able to come as she has been looking for work, and indeed has just gained employment in the Newcastle area in the past few days.

The CQB was very much welcomed once again. Thank you to all of you who contributed. We appreciate the love and affection and prayerfulness with which it comes.

All our love,
Glenn and Beth.

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