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Dear Friends,

Thus far in 2024 Papua New Guinea has had its share of civil unrest and calamities. Beginning in January an error in the payroll system lowered the pay of public servants and police so many did not show up for work. When the news spread and that not all of the police were on the job, some crowds started looting in two cities. Several businesses sustained major losses; fires were started, and 15 people died

Other law and order problems continue with armed holdups on highways and the highlands provinces have seen increased tribal fighting using smuggled guns. Enga province during February had 26 deaths from fighting amongst several tribes. Even the PIM house in the coastal town of Wewak has had several break-ins and attempted break-ins. When our missionaries Penny and Eric were there 8 men with weapons came inside the house, thankfully only a few small items were stolen and no one was hurt.



Then the natural disasters- an earthquake in March centered near Ambunti collapsed 1000 houses in the province many of which were standing in flood waters. Thankfully, only 3 deaths were reported. Finally, on May 24 a landslide in the highlands 100 miles south of Ambunti killed 670 or more. As many as 8000 people may be relocated from the unstable area. Of the survivors many had their gardens areas destroyed. Foreign aid has come in from different countries to help with that crisis.



First published in 1563 the *Heidelberg Catechism* begins with the question. "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" The answer: *"That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him."*

It seems in modern usage the word "comfort" first brings to mind physical things -ease, contentment, or the lack of pain. The word gets used to mean relieve from grief or distress. However, interestingly the Latin roots for the word com or con = "with" and fort = "strong." So, in that sense we come closer to the meaning of the word in the catechism which could be "to strengthen". Truly our God is a mighty fortress and ever-present help in the midst of whatever events happen in our lives.

Thank you for your part in bringing the "good news" to people in Papua New Guinea. Yours in Christ,

Douglas Heidema