

(Because of Charles' busy visitation schedule, Kent has been asked to prepare this month's newsletter.)

Dear friends,

*"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)*

*"But You, O Lord, are a shield about me...I lay down and slept; I awoke for the Lord sustains me. I will not be afraid..." (Psalm 3: 3, 5-6a)*

These verses captured my attention during personal devotions this morning, and there are none better to describe our predicament the dawn of October 11.

It was 4:30 am on yet another jaunt across Mozambique in our trusted Landrover. We were only on the first leg, about eight hours from Nampula, driving across a stretch of the Mozambican "highway" infamous for innumerable and sometimes gargantuan potholes. As one native pastor put it, on this stretch it was no longer a matter of how to avoid potholes but rather of choosing the ones you preferred to crash into. However, as we were accustomed to the constant jolts, everyone was asleep except for Marques, our driver, until suddenly with a deafening bang the Landrover's entire frame began to violently buck and heave. Several heads met the vehicle's roof, and everyone was thrown into alarmed wakefulness as the vehicle shuddered to a stop. After the initial confusion of ensuring in the darkness that no one was hurt, it finally dawned on us that we had survived a serious accident!

We stepped outside to survey the damage, and our fears were confirmed. Our trusty Landrover was clearly down for the count. At a curve in the road it had careened straight ahead, sailing over a six foot drop off the built-up shoulder, crashing into the bush, and finally coming to rest in a freshly tilled field. As the front end hit the earth, the chase folded into a flattened V shape, the front axle broke, and the front differential cracked open. In flight our one-ton trailer struck a termite hill and spun one and half times about its rotary tongue. When the car suddenly decelerated on impact, the trailer pitched upward and forward against the back of the truck, puncturing a hole in the accessory fuel tank mounted on the roof, drenching everything in diesel fuel. The trailer axle also had broken.

After questioning the driver as to the cause of the accident, we learned that the car had struck a pothole, probably the billionth our sixteen-year-old Landrover had acquainted over the years, and thereafter could not be steered. The crater was strategically located at a bend in the road such that the forward momentum of the car propelled us straight ahead, off the road and into the bush.

So we were stranded thirty minutes to an hour from the nearest town, and yet the faithful, protecting hand of God was clearly evident in all that took place.

Just a few weeks prior to our leaving, my dad devised and had our welder construct a new seating arrangement which included six upholstered back seats with seatbelts. Previously on

trips we traveled with the six passengers in the cargo area lying or sitting on a cushioned board the size of a double bed. For sixteen years, despite the numerous dangers of the African roads, the Lord preserved us from any major collisions and now, before our first large-scale accident, He in His sovereign grace ordained that for the first time ever we should each be fully protected with seatbelts, shoulder harnesses, and proper seats which no doubt kept us from serious injury. Instead of crashing into dense trees, God appointed that we should depart the road at one of the rare stretches of tilled farmland. Also, the car had not rolled, which the driver informed me might well have occurred had he forced the damaged vehicle to follow the curve in the road. Looking back at the wake of destruction caused by the car as we hurtled through the bush, I marveled that we had not received or inflicted even more damage. Much could have happened to make the situation far worse, and we cannot help but see the Lord's shielding hand. The Lord is good; a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knows those who take refuge in Him. Nahum 1:7. How comforting this promise is to His children in distress.

When things go wrong in the bush of Africa, there are no AAA clubs, no cell phone networks, no tow services, no auto dealerships, and no ambulances or hospitals. You are on your own to provide all those services as best you can, and how much you need God's help! Since we were only thirty minutes from a small town, Dad was able to hail a passing bus to Nampula, hoping to return with our Bedford truck and load the wrecked vehicles onto its bed, then continue the trip to South Africa. The rest of us stayed with the Landrover and trailer. As usual, within minutes of the accident, a crowd of Mozambicans gathered; and even as the sun rose to high noon and the summer heat was at its highest, they did not lose interest in us. They were very hospitable offering their manioc root as food and lending us bamboo mats to sit on under the shade of a tree.

Meanwhile, once Dad reached Nampula, word of our misfortune began spreading through the missionary community. Our friends bought tickets for the entire family to complete the journey using the local MAF plane, and a missionary with Wycliffe translators drove sixteen hours to bring us passengers back to Nampula. After 24 hours without sleep, my dad finally reached the accident scene again, this time in the Bedford. With hired help from the natives, he was able to load the Landrover and trailer onto the truck. The road was six feet above the surrounding land, and the bed of the truck was five feet high; so the motorist was able to back the truck almost flush against the roadbed taking advantage of a concrete culvert strategically carved out right at the accident site. Wounded as it was with bent frame, broken axle, cracked differential, and splayed front wheels, the Landrover still climbed the steep incline onto the road, wheels and axle groaning and squealing the whole way, and then descended onto the bed of the truck. The trailer was emptied and ten strong Africans hoisted it onto the truck. The fully loaded four-wheel-drive military troop carrier then lumbered up the bank, and after 36 hours all our equipment was back on the road.

Rather than return home, Dad opted to continue the trip with our driver despite the foreboding specter of hassles at the border. Taking the damaged Landrover with us was the only way we could reasonably hope to get it repaired. In answer to fervent prayer, the customs officials on both sides of the border allowed the equipment to pass without the usual formalities that would have required a week to accomplish and which would have forced us to miss our flight to the States. After five arduous days driving over land, Dad was reunited with the rest of the family in Johannesburg, South Africa, one day before our scheduled flight to the States.

Oh, what a blessing it is to have brothers and sisters in Christ in a place so far removed as Mozambique! Yet greater by far is the Blessing that makes those from every tribe and

nation one, binding us together in Him.

We are now in our second month of visitation and have been richly blessed by the people and fellowship of the many churches God has led us to. Our only regret is that we haven't more time to spend with all the believers we have come to know and appreciate in each church. Many have shown an interest in Mozambique and the Lord's work there. Please pray that in these eight months of travel the Lord will raise up the personnel needed to further His kingdom in Africa and especially that His name would be glorified through the proclamation of what He has already done in Nampula.

The Landrover that has served so faithfully the past decade and a half is now useless for making the strenuous trips down to Johannesburg. We will need another vehicle before visitation is over, so please remember this need in prayer as well.

Thank you for your continual prayers and support.

In His name,  
Kent Woodrow

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