



## Beyond Surviving

The pains were mere minutes apart. It was time.

My wife and I had planned for this moment. I was to grab the bag she had prepared for the trip, and she was to keep me calm. We were only minutes from the hospital in Mendi, the capital of the Southern Highlands Province, 500 miles deep in the interior of Papua New Guinea. It was about midnight.

And the plan almost worked, only the “calm” part never fully materialized.

When we arrived, there was no one to tell us where to go or what to do. We saw no nurses, no orderlies, no doctors. This may not have been a “bush” hospital, but it wasn’t far from it. If my mother-in-law had known what I was putting her daughter through that night, I would probably have been a marked man.

We did know, however, where the delivery room was located. I helped my wife onto the delivery table, found a sheet for her, and left in search of help. I returned with a midwife with only minutes to spare, and my daughter Karla interrupted an otherwise quiet night with her first and clearly pronounced cry for attention.

And that’s when I reached for the bag. I found the pajamas, a robe, a little blanket, and we all went for a stroll along the dimly lit walkway looking for an empty room. The building was bare block. The floors were bare concrete. And the beds were bare mattresses on bare metal beds with single flat sets of springs.

In the last issue, we talked about “bugout bags,” and I guess that little suitcase was a bugout bag of sorts. At least it was enough stuff to let us survive a night or two at the provincial “hospital.”

But God’s agenda for His people goes beyond surviving. God intends for us to thrive.

So now we need to ask, “What does that mean?”

Thriving is not the false narrative of those who run to Deuteronomy 28 and preach endless messages about personal wealth and position. That passage, by the way, is a promise to the nation of Israel, a corporate blessing. Applying it to individuals is to miss the point of God’s declaration of faithfulness to the people Israel (now including the Church). It is not a promise that every believer will be wealthy. And verse 13 goes on to make it known in no uncertain terms that He promises they will thrive *if* and only *if* they listen and obey. To reduce the idea of prosperity to the meagerness of material possessions is a truly impoverished theology.

At its more basic level, thriving is about growing and flourishing. Temporal wealth and success might be sufficient if we were merely flesh and bone. But we are not. Made in God’s image, we are inherently more, with eternity in our future. To thrive spiritually is to become more and more what God has designed us to be.

For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago (Ephesians 2:10, NLT).

In spite of the circumstance or the struggles we encounter, and regardless of the storms we face, His purpose in us does not change. We are to reflect Him; even more, allow Him to reveal Himself through us.

## Taking Our Next Step Together

Lord, wean us from our fleshly minds and expectations, and let us find true clarity about who we are in you. Let Your purpose become the anchor for our spiritual voyages, whether there be days filled with calm or those in which we are tossed by the storms of life.

Let Your purpose thrive in us, and let us thrive in Your purpose.