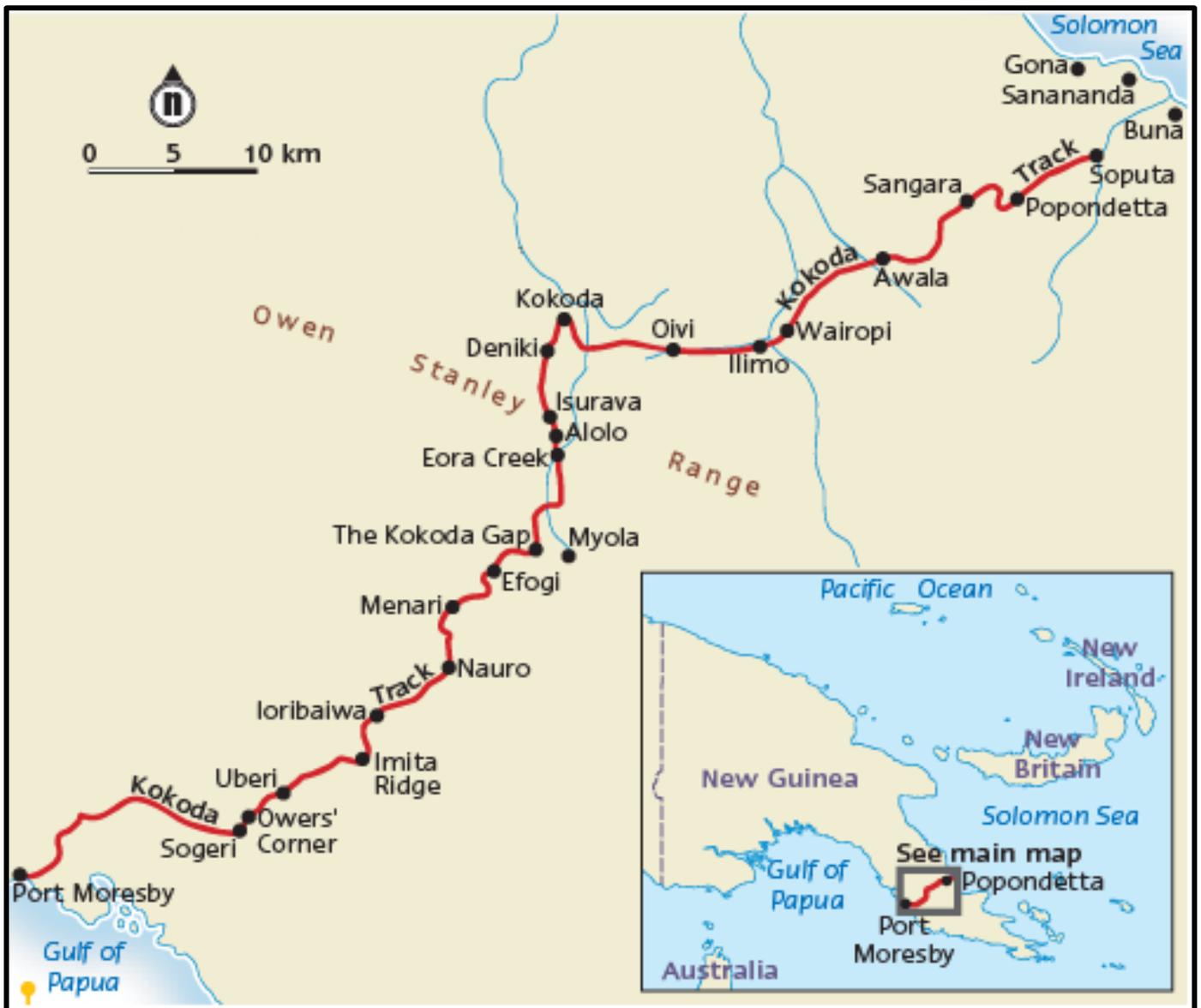




Up the Track with JESUS

Reflections on KOKODA for Men

by David Rowsome



Map of the Kokoda Track

Up the Track with JESUS

Reflections on KOKODA for Men

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Canberra Declaration
c/- Australian Christian Values Institute
PO Box 378
Unanderra NSW 2526
AUSTRALIA

Email: info@canberradeclaration.org.au

Website: www.canberradeclaration.org.au

Phone: (02) 4272 9100

Fax: (02) 4272 4001

Dedication

To 'Uncle' Geoff Baskett

who served as a missionary in Papua New Guinea for 56 years;
remained in Milne Bay throughout World War II as an ANGAU (Australia New
Guinea Administrative Unit) army captain;



(Captain Geoffrey Baskett third from left)

continued in New Guinea after the war until 1989 in Christian radio and writing;
was awarded the MBE in 1990 at Government House in Sydney
for dedicated service to PNG;



(Geoffrey Baskett MBE far left)

and continued into his nineties to write radio Bible scripts and proofread this booklet!
Living in Christian community in Port Macquarie he turned 100 on 6 November 2015
receiving a letter from the Queen. On 2 March 2016 he was promoted to glory.

Read more about his colourful life in his autobiography

'Islands and Mountains'

Castle Hill, NSW, Geoffrey Baskett 1991

ISBN 0646075675 / Libraries Australia ID 8580282

Foreword

David Rowsome has done an excellent job of relating the mateship, the struggles and the sacrifices of the soldiers who fought in the Kokoda Campaign to the life of Jesus. In so doing David has aptly demonstrated that Jesus fully understands and has experienced similar situations.

These reflections are a great encouragement for us all when times are tough; when we are facing adversity; when the situation appears hopeless. It is during such times that we can, with confidence, put our trust in Jesus Christ because Jesus has already been “Up the Track”.

I first got to know David and his new Australian bride Marilyn in Lae, Papua New Guinea while he was working as a government water engineer. Later he became the Dean of Distance Theological Education with the Christian Leaders’ Training College in the highlands – an interdenominational Bible College serving the churches of Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific Islands.

In writing these reflections David has drawn on his experiences of 10 years in the Canadian army and 22 years as a volunteer and as a missionary in Papua New Guinea.

I warmly commend these reflections to your reading.

Geoff Lapthorne

Former District Officer and Magistrate in Papua New Guinea

(1964 – 1988)

Preface

There is a well-used walking track in Canberra called the Kokoda Track. It commemorates the Kokoda Campaign fought in Papua New Guinea during the Second World War from 23 July to 18 November, 1942. From its start behind the Australian War Memorial it winds up through two kilometres of open eucalypt forest to the top of Mt Ainslie. At its beginning there is a three-dimensional map of the Kokoda Track cast in bronze. Along the track are small plaques commemorating the different key battles which took place. At the top end of the track walkers are rewarded with a panoramic view of Canberra from the Mt Ainslie scenic lookout. This includes a 'rifle-shot' view straight down ANZAC Parade which hits 'bang-on' the massive stainless steel flagmast of Parliament House.

It is my prayer that as you go through these KOKODA reflections you will be rewarded with a clearer view of some of the spiritual realities that are important to Aussie men. With the permission of Peter FitzSimons' publishers, each reflection begins with a short episode from his best-selling book KOKODA. The 17 reflections are in acknowledgement of the 17 chapters of the book. These episodes are just a few of the many gripping stories that the reader will encounter. The page numbers cited are those of the 2004 paperback edition of KOKODA.

To get the most out of these reflections I encourage you to read the whole of Peter FitzSimons' book KOKODA. You will find some rough language, but that is a real part of the story. If you have your own copy of KOKODA you can always underline and make notes in the margins as you go. At the back of the book you will find an excellent index and extensive footnotes to help you further explore or retrace your steps.

Finally, as you go through these reflections, I also hope you will make good use of the best-selling book of all time - the Bible!

So, welcome to these KOKODA reflections. Let's get started up the Track with Jesus!

David Rowsome

23 July, 2013

- The 71st anniversary of the start of the Kokoda campaign.
- The 3rd anniversary of the Canberra Declaration.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank the publishers, Hachette Australia, for granting me permission to quote from Peter FitzSimons' best-selling book, KOKODA (2004 paperback edition).

ISBN 9780733619625 / Libraries Australia ID 7490794

All they asked was that I include the following statement:

“KOKODA by Peter FitzSimons, Hachette Australia, 2004”

As I mentioned to the publishers I do not intend that these devotions be sold commercially. My greatest joy would be to see copies of this booklet being given one mate to another.

My heartfelt thanks goes to Warwick Marsh of Australian Heart Ministries and Fatherhood Foundation who suggested that I read KOKODA.

And a huge thanks to my wife Marilyn and Royce Perkins for their proof-reading and comments. (Royce is the husband of our bridesmaid Heather at our wedding in the highlands of Papua New Guinea thirty years ago).

All photos have been obtained from the world wide web and used in compliance with Creative Commons conditions.

All Bible quotations are taken from the New International Version.

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1 - A Cruel Enemy

KOKODA Story

The 39th and 53rd battalions from Victoria had only just arrived by ship in Port Moresby when, the very next day, on Sunday, 4 January 1942, the Japanese attacked Rabaul. After quickly overwhelming the garrison of 1,400 Australian soldiers with vastly superior numbers, the Japanese went in vigorous pursuit of the survivors.



KOKODA page 74 – *“Down at a place called the Tol Plantation, just fifty miles south down the coast from Rabaul, a former bank officer by the name of Captain Bill Owen had just forded a river with a couple of fellow officers to reconnoitre the lie of the land ahead for the hundred and fifty tired and wounded soldiers who had managed to escape from Rabaul when they heard the throb of motors.*”

As Owen and his two companions took cover across the river until they knew more, five Japanese motor launches suddenly hove into view and sprayed the other shore with heavy machine-gun fire. All the Australian troops who surrendered were quickly tied up. Not long afterwards they were led one by one into the jungle, and each one was shot or bayoneted or both – their blood-curdling screams leaving no doubt in the minds of the waiting soldiers just what fate lay ahead. In the undergrowth, Bill Owen and his fellow officers wept with frustration at their inability to do anything to save their countrymen and comrades. Still, they were in no doubt as to their duty; had they tried to intervene, they too would have been cut down, which would have served no purpose. Their job really was to live to fight another day, and by God when that day came they would.”

The Japanese worshipped a different god and had a different outlook on the value of human life. They saw their place in the world in a different light. To achieve their goal of regional domination for the glory of Japan and the Emperor they would stop at nothing. Australia was beginning to realise that this could be a battle to the finish.

From the Word of GOD

“They close up their callous hearts, and their mouths speak with arrogance. They have tracked me down, they now surround me, with eyes alert to throw me to the

ground. They are like a lion hungry for prey, like a great lion crouching in cover” (Psalm 17:10-12).

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matthew 6:22,23).

Up the Track with JESUS!

As a man, Jesus was well acquainted with suffering and grief. He had been sent to earth on a rescue mission, to save a lost mankind from a cruel and ruthless enemy – the devil. It was a formidable task. Even so, Jesus willingly gave himself to this rescue mission even though it would cost him his life. Jesus, even though he was the Son of God, felt the enormity and weight of His mission. We read:

“During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission” (Hebrews 5:7).

Captain Bill Owen “*wept with frustration*” over the cruel actions of a murderous enemy. Jesus, though he was the Son of God, also showed his humanity praying to God with “*loud cries and tears*”. Jesus was prepared to fight the devil, the cruel and ruthless enemy of all mankind, to the finish.

Have you ever wept with frustration feeling your hands were tied? Have you ever agonised over an impossible situation that drove you to loud cries and tears? Sometimes the enormity of things hits us in the guts with such force we almost come to the end of ourselves. At these times we are tested as men in the battles of life. Will we give up or will we resolve to keep on fighting? Coming before God with loud cries and tears, like Jesus did, is a manly response that moves the heart of Almighty God. As a result we receive renewed strength to keep fighting the good fight.

BRACE YOURSELF LIKE A MAN

Prayer

My Father and my God, thank you for the blood, sweat and tears of those who fought to defend Australia from a cruel and ruthless enemy. Thank you for Jesus who came to this earth to fight the devil who is behind so much of the trouble in this fallen world. Give us the wisdom and strength to fight evil in the world today – to shine a light into the darkness. Help us to pray for our enemies and show them a better way that they may be won for you and your Kingdom purposes. Help us to fight the good fight to which you have called us to the finish. In the mighty name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

2 - Courage of Conviction

KOKODA Story

The war with Japan was getting grimmer and closer. John Curtin, as the new war-time Prime Minister, was under immense pressure from British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who demanded that Australian troops continue to fight in the European field. Churchill even solicited help from USA President, Roosevelt, who then sent cables to try to convince Curtin. Finally it all came to a head.

KOKODA pages 86/87 - "Curtin, in short, stuck to his guns, insisting that the boys come home to an Australian people who were clearly expecting them. Churchill was equally insistent. His views had been set in stone when, back on 22 November 1940, he had sent a memo to his First Sea Lord, insisting that there be concentration of 'all possible naval and military aid in the European field to the exclusion of any other interest ...'

Thus, in a display of extraordinary arrogance – even for the time – Churchill gave orders that instead of returning to Australia, the troopships were to alter their destination to Burma. It was only after he gave the order that he informed Curtin of what he had done – a full twenty-four hours after the event.

Curtin, shocked that it had come to this, needed time to think. So he went for a walk around Canberra's Mount Ainslie. A long one. It was in fact so long that his key adviser on defence issues, Frederick Shedden, organised for messages to be put up on screens in the city's theatres around Canberra, asking that Prime Minister Curtin return to his office or at least contact it. He did return, just after midnight, and sent the cable which fully affirmed Australia's right as a sovereign nation to determine where its own troops would be sent."



John Curtin, who had left school at the age of 13, stood his ground with the most powerful leaders of the free Western world. He insisted that Australian troops be brought back immediately to Australia to defend Australian soil. His strong conviction that the Australian homeland must be protected against the threat of Japanese invasion prevailed. The troopships were on their way home!

From the Word of GOD

"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33b).

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Corinthians 4:16,17).

Up the Track with JESUS!

John Curtin was not out to win a popularity contest with world leaders. His main aim was to fulfil his role as Prime Minister of Australia. He knew what he had to do and he did it, even though he might have to face the fury of the superpowers.

Even though Jesus knew he would face persecution and death in Jerusalem, he was determined to go there. We read:

“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51).

Here the Bible literally says that Jesus ‘set his face like flint’ to go to Jerusalem. He knew the importance of going there and was not going to be diverted. We see the determined resolve of Jesus when, taking the shortest route through Samaria, a Samaritan village refused to welcome Jesus because he was headed for Jerusalem. The disciples wanted to retaliate by calling down fire. Jesus would have none of that and rebuked them. He kept his face toward Jerusalem and continued on his journey.

That kind of resolve should characterise our lives as men. When God gives us a course of action, we must move steadily toward our destination, regardless of the potential hazards we might encounter. We must not get diverted or compromise our convictions to please others for, in doing so, we become less of a man. We must be true to our calling as sons of the living God.

BE MEN OF COURAGE – BE STRONG

Prayer

God in Heaven, thank you for ordinary men who have the courage to stand by their convictions, especially when it is on behalf of others. Thank you for every leader who has a heart to serve our nation, preserving our freedoms and way of life. Thank you for the unflinching, unwavering resolve of Jesus to face persecution and death to save a lost mankind. Help me to follow in his steps, not fearing the consequences, when I declare the truth of your Word and act on what I believe. Give me the courage to stand up for others and to declare your truth fearlessly as I should. In his name I pray. Amen.

3 - Good Medicine

KOKODA Story

Now in Port Moresby, these young men of the 39th and 53rd battalions were the only Australian soldiers standing between the might of the undefeated Imperial Japanese Army and their homeland. Could they hold them back? Would they live up to the legend of their ANZAC forefathers?

KOKODA page 115 - *“Now, let’s try it again . . . ’ Captain Merritt said to the attentive men of the 39th Battalion’s C Company encamped at Port Moresby, enjoying a rare day off from working as labourers, and receiving instructions about the newly issued Thompson sub-machine guns.*

‘You take an aggressive stance, like so,’ Captain Merritt said, holding the Tommy gun before him in a fierce manner. ‘An expression of pugnacity and determination on your face . . . ’

‘Begging your pardon, Sir . . . ’ a voice called out from the back, ‘but are we supposed to frighten the bastards to death, Sir?’



All the men fell about laughing, and even Captain Merritt, after he’d calmed down, saw the funny side. It was to be a rare moment of levity in the otherwise serious business of getting ready for the Japs, who were expected to fall on Port Moresby at any moment.”

Alongside the bonds of mateship, the Aussie Digger has always been known for his ability to remain cheerful with a good sense of humour, even in the most difficult of times. The ANZAC legend, forged at Gallipoli in the First World War, is based on the qualities of mateship, endurance, courage, sacrifice, ingenuity, larrikinism and a sense of humour. This was shown on the battlefield by Australian and New Zealand soldiers. The laconic sense of humour of Aussie and Kiwi Diggers was that wonderful ability to get the job done with a sense of fun and a helping hand for a mate. Humour was a way of expressing emotions, without needing to dwell on them.

From the Word of GOD

“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones” (Proverbs 17:22).

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11).

“But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:13).

Up the Track with JESUS!

It is hard to think of Jesus as a joyless person. People were attracted to him. His first public miracle of turning water into wine took place at a wedding he was attending. He welcomed children and held them. He was not averse to eating with tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners. Joy is a common theme in the teachings of Jesus. He wants us to be joyful both in this present life and the life to come.

Amazingly, Jesus’ greatest joy was doing his Father’s will in loving obedience - even if this would cost him his life. And so the writer of Hebrews encourages us:

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God” (Hebrews 12: 2,3).

The soldiers of the 39th showed the ability to remain cheerful in the face of imminent danger. Jesus took this further with a deep abiding joy as he faced the certainty of death on a cross. For us, the key to such joy is a close walk with Jesus. As our Good Shepherd, he will lead us through the valley of the shadow of death.

When we face trying circumstances - the loss of a job, a difficult relationship, a health setback - we need to take it all to God and put it into his powerful hands. When we do we will be able to laugh at the days to come because we read in the Bible that “**our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all**” (2 Corinthians 4:17). God is with us no matter what. So, as you go through troubled times don’t forget to have a good laugh with your mates! It is good medicine.

THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH

Prayer

Loving Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of laughter that adds zest to our lives and helps to carry us through difficult circumstances. Thank you that Jesus had joy even when he faced the cross. Help us to have a close relationship with him so that we will have the full measure of his joy. We shout for joy that your Word declares that we are more than conquerors through Jesus who died for us. Nothing can separate us from your love. We look forward to an eternity with you. In his name I pray. Amen.

4 - Dreadful Realities

KOKODA Story

It was five months since the 39th had arrived and the rigours of life in Port Moresby were taking their toll. Malaria, rations referred to as 'dog-biscuits', digging countless trenches, unloading cargo ships in the tropical heat - life had become monotonous – except when Japanese bombers made their visits!



KOKODA page 139 - *“The Macdhui had a terrible list as it took on water amidships, but it was at least still under way. Most upsetting for Joe in that first instant was that somehow the explosion that had knocked him over had also blown his wristwatch off and into oblivion. That wristwatch was a present from his beloved Elaine and it near killed him that it was lost.*

Far more tragically as Joe soon discovered, six members of the 39th, including the two officers below, really had been killed by one of the bombs which had penetrated the decks before exploding in the saloon bar. Six men dead. Good men. Dead. In an instant Joe Dawson’s sense of appalling unreality was compounded when he spied, on the deck of the ship, a whole human leg, the dead owner of which could only be identified by the name written on the inside of the leg’s puttees. Horrified, but mesmerised, Joe kept looking at the leg and two or three thoughts kept reverberating through him: ‘This is really a war. Blokes are going to get killed. I might get killed.’ ”

Joe Dawson of the 39th had a near-death encounter with the dreadful realities of war for the first time. The loss of the wristwatch from his girlfriend was a rude awakening. But in the light of the horrific loss of life, the wristwatch was a small reminder to Joe of his mortality. The MV Macdhui caught on fire and within minutes of its bombing, keeled over in the shallows of Port Moresby harbour where it still lies, mostly submerged, today.

From the Word of God

“My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me” (Psalm 31:15).

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:35,37).

Up the Track with JESUS!

As Joe Dawson stood alone on the deck of the sinking ship he was horrified by the dreadful realities of war. Jesus too came face to face with some dreadful realities. This was in regard to his own death that he had been predicting for some time, but for some reason the disciples never fully understood. And so he went with his disciples to a lonely spot on the Mount of Olives to pray. Then, after encouraging his disciples to pray, we read:

“He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ‘Father if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done’. . . And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke 22:42,44).

In this extreme agony Jesus made time to express his deep feelings to his Father. Jesus exposed his dread of what lay ahead - being falsely condemned, then mockings, a flogging and a shameful death on a cross. But these were not the only horrors on his mind. Much worse was the total separation from God his Father for the very first time in all eternity. This was almost more than he could bear. In no way was praying to God an attempt to shirk his responsibilities. Jesus was totally committed to do the will of his Father.

It is sometimes hard for us men to get in touch with our true feelings. Even harder to articulate them. The shock of dreadful realities can sometimes shut us down, at other times, it can wake us up to ourselves and what is going on around us. We need to be fair dinkum with God because he is our Father. He wants to talk things over with us. Our lives are short and so we need God’s advice to live each day to the max.

YOUR LIFE IS IN GOD’S HANDS

Prayer

Eternal Father, thank you that those who belong to you can call on you in times of trouble. Your Word declares that in every situation I am more than a conqueror and that nothing that can separate me from your love. For if my God is for me, who can be against me? Give me wisdom and understanding to deal with the dreadful realities I encounter in this fallen world. Thank you that through faith in Jesus as the Son of God I can overcome the world and need never fear death. Your eternal plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. Thank you that my times are in your hands. In the mighty name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

5 – A Needed Father

KOKODA Story



Most of the men in the 39th were under twenty years old but there was a good cross-section of older men up into their fifties. One of these was Sam Templeton (photo at left), a veteran of the Great War, who had tried to join the AIF but was sent to the militia due to flat feet. During the voyage to Port Moresby he was right in there getting the anti-aircraft guns on the troopship working and training men how to use them. Also from his war experience Sam Templeton drummed into the men the vital importance of good hygiene in the field.

KOKODA page 144 - "While there was some relief among the older officers of the 39th that they'd been replaced and were now free to return to Australia, there was also relief among one or two of the older men who were allowed to remain. Chief among these was Captain Sam Templeton, the Commanding Officer of the 39th's B Company, who had continued to grow in the battalion's estimation as the weeks had passed. With all of his experience and senior years, Sam Templeton projected confidence and a can-do spirit to a group of mostly much younger men who were in need of precisely those qualities. It was also likely that a lot of them were missing their fathers, from whom they had so suddenly been separated for the first time in their lives."



There was an immense and growing respect for Sam Templeton amongst the men and he became known as 'Uncle Sam'. Clearly, his experienced leadership and initiative would be a huge asset to the 39th. He was the father that the young men needed to affirm that they 'had what it takes' for the coming battles.

From the Word of GOD

"Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me" (1 Corinthians 4:15,16).

“Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir” (Galatians 4:6,7).

Up the Track with Jesus

Throughout his earthly ministry Jesus maintained a close relationship with his heavenly Father. He spent whole nights on lonely mountain sides praying and communing with his Father. And Jesus would only do or say what his Father had told him. One day, in response to the questions of his disciples, Jesus shared these important truths about his heavenly Father and his relationship with him. He said,

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him” ... “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:6,9).

From elsewhere in the Bible we know that Jesus is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15) and “the radiance of God’s Glory and the exact representation of his being” (Hebrews 1:3). So Jesus is the complete and perfect revelation of what God, our perfect heavenly Father, is like.

Often our perception of God as our Father is greatly influenced by the relationship we had with our human fathers. If, for example, we had abusive fathers or who were absent or abdicated their responsibilities, we might see God as unfair, distant and weak. If, on the other hand, we had fathers who were good providers, protectors, who believed in us and made time for us, we might see God in a different light. But no matter how good our earthly fathers may have been none of them was perfect. Only our Father in heaven, who knows us totally and yet has compassion for us and only wants the best for us, is perfect. By believing in Jesus we can enter into a relationship with our Father in heaven. In doing so, we have the privilege of addressing God as Abba Father (‘Abba’ is Hebrew for Dad) just as Jesus did.

GOD IS YOUR FATHER – YOU ARE HIS SON

Prayer

Abba Father, how can I ever thank you enough for receiving me into your family as a son? Because Jesus has shown me the way to the Father I am yours forever. Thank you that you are for me no matter what. More and more help me to know you and your Father heart. Help me to become a better father to others in my family, my church family and my community. Help me as a son, who is called by your name, to live a life that is pleasing to you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

6 – With His Men

KOKODA Story

On 7 July 1942 the men of the 39th Battalion B Company, led by Captain Sam Templeton, set out from Port Moresby, the first Australian troops to walk the Kokoda Track. That same day Lt. Col. Bill Owen (photo at right) took over the command of the 39th from the previous CO, who had succumbed to ill-health.



This was the same Bill Owen who had witnessed the horror of the massacre of his men in Rabaul six months ago. Back then he *“wept with frustration”* that there was nothing he could do to save his men on the other side of the river. Indeed, as he had hoped, he lived to fight another day and he wanted to do that with his men.

KOKODA page 184 - *“So this was Kokoda. And he was on the ground at last, after an aborted landing attempt the previous day. Commanding Officer of the 39th Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Owen, stepped out of the flimsy aircraft on the late afternoon of 24 July 1942 with a great sense of relief. He had been following scattered reports about his men and Japanese incursions and been excruciatingly aware that there was nothing he could do for them back in Port Moresby. His rightful place as commanding officer, he had quickly decided, was to be commanding them in battle. On the track. So let’s get to it.*

When the Lieutenant Colonel stepped down from the plane, Sam Templeton was waiting for him and within minutes the two were making their way forward to the Gorari ambush site, Templeton briefing Owen as they went. Neither man was in any doubt that this small outpost of Kokoda, with the only airfield within four days march in any direction, would be the key strategic possession in this campaign.”

When in Port Moresby Bill Owen was *“excruciatingly aware”* that there was nothing he could do for his men who were four days march up the Kokoda Track. He didn’t want a repeat of Rabaul where he was separated from his men when they were attacked. Every day he re-lived the cruelty of the Japanese in his mind.

Not a vengeful man, Bill Owen nevertheless felt he had some unfinished business. Bill, perhaps more than anyone else, realised that the Japanese had to be stopped.

From the Word of GOD

“With your help I can advance against a troop; with my God I can scale a wall” (Psalm 18:29).

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20b).

“I long to see you so that I might impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong – that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith” (Romans 1:11).

Up the Track with JESUS!

Jesus used word pictures to describe to his followers who he was. Once he described himself as the Good Shepherd who protected his sheep from thieves and robbers:

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:10,11).

The thieves and robbers represent those who want to harm or destroy those who follow Jesus. The good shepherd is a picture of Jesus, so committed to the welfare and safety of his followers that he was prepared to lay down his life for them. And indeed he did. He died on the cross taking upon himself the penalty for sin that we deserved. The good shepherd was always with his sheep to protect them from danger. At night he would even sleep across the entrance of the sheep pen to protect them from thieves or wild animals such as wolves, bears and lions.

As men, we need to be there for those depending on us for leadership and protection - in particular our families. When our wives and children need us, we must not be absent, busy with our own agendas.

Bill Owen could have remained in his safe office at Headquarters in Port Moresby leading from the rear but he chose not to! Jesus chose not to remain in heaven but to come to earth to put his life between certain death and his followers. He gave himself totally to the task of leading to safe pasture those being led to the slaughter. So must we.

LEAD LIKE JESUS

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for men who were willing to face evil head on. Thank you that you set us an example by laying down your life for us on the cross, saving us from a cruel enemy. Thank you for being with me every moment of every day and leading me in every threatening situation. Help me to recognise where the enemy is attacking. Help me to stand strong with my brothers and to provide a spiritual covering over our families and those who are vulnerable to attack in our society. As you lead me, give me the strength to continue your fight against evil in the world. In your mighty name I pray. Amen.

7 - Depraved Minds

KOKODA Story

Very different from the upbringing of Australian boys into manhood, Japanese boys were indoctrinated into the centuries-old samurai warrior tradition. Beaten into them were unquestioning obedience and readiness to die for the Emperor. The blatant atrocities of the Imperial Japanese Army were many. In 1937 there was the 'Rape of Nanking' where hundreds of thousands of Chinese citizens and soldiers were wantonly killed. Then on Christmas day 1941, when the Japanese invaded Hong Kong, they entered the hospital where they raped the Chinese and British nurses and bayoneted the patients. After they had landed at Gona they bayoneted and slit the throats of two Australian missionary ladies. What kind of enemy was this?

KOKODA page 199 - *"One by one the captives, including a male plantation assistant, were made to kneel. Then, drawing a massive samurai sword, an enormous Japanese officer with the rank and name of Sub-Lieutenant Komai, shouted something unintelligible in his own language, raised the sword high above his head and brought it down hard on the back of each individual's neck, smiting their head off with one clean blow.*

In all the screams of horror, none was more frightened than those coming from the six-year old son of the plantation assistant. This youngster was obliged to stand there as his kneeling and weeping father told him that he loved him, just before the Japanese officer brought down his sword. Immediately afterwards, the same officer took the weeping child, obliged him to kneel and then took his head off too. In terms of the Kokoda campaign, it was the first piece of barbarous savagery done publicly, but by no means the last."



Such barbarous acts point to a samurai warrior worldview where the lives of the enemy, including women and children, were not respected. This is in stark contrast to the worldview of the Australian soldiers who would most times show mercy to wounded or captured Japanese soldiers. For Aussie boys grew up understanding that every person deserves a fair go. Australia was a 'Christian' country that acknowledged every human being's inherent value and dignity - all made in the image of God.

From the Word of GOD

“The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

“Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice” (Romans 1:28,29).

Up the Track with JESUS!

The Japanese hated their enemies and seemed to enjoy making a public spectacle of them as they were tortured or executed. But Jesus said he came that we might have life in abundance. Once when Jesus came across some stiff opposition he gave them some shocking news. He said-

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of all lies” (John 8 44).

The attitudes and actions of this crowd opposing Jesus clearly identified them as followers of Satan. They may not have been conscious of this, but their hatred of truth, their lies, and their murderous intentions indicated how much control the devil had over them. They were tools in carrying out his evil plans; they spoke the same language of lies.

Satan is still at work in the world today. So we should not be surprised when confronted by men with depraved minds who belong to the devil. On a world scale we see this in belief systems such as false religions and ideologies that result in so much suffering and physical and spiritual death around the globe. In our everyday lives we may encounter those who hate us simply because we are followers of Jesus. We need to hold on to the truth of God’s Word and live by it.

STAND FOR TRUTH – STAND FOR LIFE

Prayer

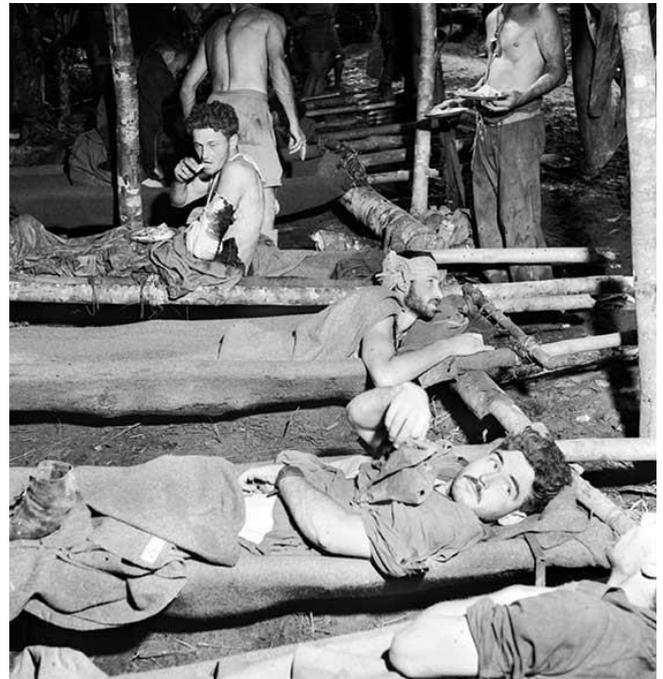
O Father, how these stories of the shedding of innocent blood grieve my heart. And if these stories grieve my heart how much more must they bring pain to yours. Thank you for the bold words of Jesus who declared Satan to be the original murderer and liar who uses people to do his dirty work. Give us holy boldness like Jesus in confronting evil and standing for the sacredness of human life, even for the lives of our enemies. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

8 - Selfless Service

KOKODA Story

As a Regimental Medical Officer in the First World War, Geoffrey Vernon won a Military Cross for gallantry. After the war he lived in the highlands of New Guinea where he got to know and love the native people. Now skinny and wrinkled at sixty years old, he was almost totally deaf due to an exploding shell at Gallipoli. Even so, he had refused to be evacuated from New Guinea because he knew that his medical skills would soon be needed. And he was right. Ol' Doc Vernon could be found anywhere along the Kokoda Track where there was action. Under heavy fire, he tried to save the life of Lt. Col. Bill Owen who had been fatally shot in the head by a sniper. Now we see his selfless service for a native carrier.

KOKODA page 239 - *“ . . . in the rough tent that had been set up as their frontline ‘hospital’, the old doctor worked eighteen to twenty hours a day, removing shrapnel and bullets, cleaning wounds and sewing them up, fixing splints and trying to deal with the endless cases of malaria that continued to blight the fighting men. Even in the middle of the night he was not off duty. One of the soldiers with him at this point, Sergeant Jack Sim of the Signals Platoon, later told of being in a similar situation with Doc at Efogi, sharing a hut built on stilts with him. It was a freezing night up there in the highlands, and around three o’clock in the morning Doc briefly disappeared, carrying his blanket, only to return without it. Bert Kienzle was there too.*



‘Where’s your BLANKET?’ Bert shouted at him.

‘Wrapped a carrier in it,’ Doc replied matter-of-factly. ‘Poor devil, dying of pneumonia. All I can do is make him warm for his last hours.’ ”

Amid the foreboding jungles of the Kokoda Track shone a life that brought hope and encouragement to Australian soldiers and native porters alike. What was it that moved this sixty year old man to remain in New Guinea when given the opportunity to evacuate to safety in Australia? Where, as an older man, did he find the strength to endure the extreme rigours of the tortuous Kokoda Track? What was in his heart that he chose not to preserve his own life, but give himself in selfless service to others? Only God knows.

From the Word GOD

“Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (James 2:15-17).

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:2,3).

Up the Track with JESUS!

We read in the Bible how Jesus and his disciples went from village to village preaching the Good News and healing people from disease and sickness. Jesus was full of compassion as he demonstrated the love of God to people in great need. Ultimately, because of his great love for a lost mankind, he willingly gave his own life that we might find everlasting life. John points us to his example:

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:16-18).

Real love is an action, not a feeling. It produces selfless, sacrificial giving. The greatest act of love is giving oneself for others. Sometimes it is easier to say we’ll die for others than truly live for them – this involves putting others’ desires first. How can we as men lay down our lives? By serving others with no thought of receiving anything in return. There are, for example, opportunities to reach out to homeless street people, or help the elderly with some yard work or house repairs. And in the process giving that timely word of encouragement that means so much. Even giving a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul is important in the eyes of God.

LOVE WITH ACTIONS

Prayer

Thank you God for men of outstanding character who truly give of themselves for others. Please raise up many more in our generation who will bring blessing and encouragement to a hurting and confused society. Thank you, not only for the example of Jesus, but also for his promise that he will be right with us every step of the way. Use us to reach others with practical demonstrations of your love. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

9 - Given a Fair Go

KOKODA Story

On 16 August, 1942 Lt. Col. Ralph Honner took the 39th Battalion by surprise when he walked into the village of Isurava and introduced himself as their new commanding officer. At 38 years old he had served as a Captain in the Middle East with the AIF. Now it was his job to hold the Kokoda Track with militia forces until the AIF reinforcements arrived. A Japanese attack on Isurava was imminent so he had to quickly assess his men. He found them very depleted and ragged from 40 days of jungle fighting but still plucky and wanting to have a go at the Japs.

KOKODA page 262 - *“Which company of the 39th to put on this, then, the battalion’s most vulnerable front? Honner had no doubt. When he had taken over command of the 39th the previous day, he had had a brief meeting with the outgoing Major Cameron, who had once more been scathing in his assessment of B Company who, in his view, had so woefully failed at Oivi and Kokoda. His strong recommendation was that B Company be broken up and scattered into the other companies as reinforcements.*

Honner had listened carefully and considered the recommendations, but now, after consultation with his senior officers and some deep thought on his own part, decided to do quite the opposite. Instead of obliterating B Company, he would give them the position of greatest honour and responsibility – he would give them the western perimeter of Isurava, the position which would be guaranteed to take the most heat and the one which had to be held at all costs.”

Ralph Honner had quickly but carefully weighed things up and decided that B Company deserved another go. And since their beloved CO, Sam Templeton, was missing and presumed dead, Ralph Honner quickly selected one of the B Company officers to replace him. When he announced his decision to give B Company the key battle position, the men, in a flash, stood tall once again. They were ready to prove themselves!



From the Word of GOD

“Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favouritism to the great, but judge your neighbour fairly” (Leviticus 19:15).

“The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love . . . He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities” (Psalm 103:8,10).

“Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven” (Colossians 4:1).

Up the Track with JESUS!

Jesus did not come to condemn the world but to save it. The Jewish leaders set a trap for him with a question about a woman caught in adultery. But the answer Jesus gave reversed the situation. He said -

“ ‘If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her’ . . . At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ ‘No one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go now and leave your life of sin’ ” (John 8:7b,9-11).

Though the woman was guilty of adultery it seems she was not given a fair trial. The Law required that both the man and woman be stoned, not just the woman, and that two witnesses were required. By saying that only a sinless person could cast the first stone Jesus was pointing to the importance of compassion and forgiveness. After everyone had slinked away Jesus did not condemn the woman but neither did he condone her sin.

None of us appreciates being unfairly criticised, stigmatised or condemned. But it happens more often than we care to think. We too may slip into that mindset when it comes to the performance of others – especially our sports heroes and politicians! But as men we, like Jesus, need to be part of the solution not those who get fixated on the problem. We need to encounter people in their difficulties and speak words of hope and encouragement that will get them back on their feet.

YOU HAVE GOT WHAT IT TAKES

Prayer

Father, just as you do not treat us as our sins deserve, help us to be gracious and compassionate with others who are struggling with sin. You alone are the Righteous Judge and in the end all men will have to stand before you and give an account. On that Day you will respond to each person with total justice and fairness. Until then may we not turn a blind eye to sin but confront and warn others with wisdom and compassion so that they may experience forgiveness and full restoration. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

10 - Fighting for Home

KOKODA Story

Perhaps the closest thing to home the soldiers came across on the Kokoda Track was the Salvation Army tent where exhausted and wounded soldiers could hop in for a hot cup of tea or coffee, a smoke and a word of encouragement. It was manned by Salvation Army Major Albert Moore who kept the tent as far forward to the actual fighting as he could. But letters to and from home were the main lifeline between the soldiers and their families and loved ones. Here is a moving scene of the men of the 39th in the calm before the storm of the battle of Isurava.

KOKODA page 267 - *“Meanwhile, the men of the 39th continued to dig in and get ready. On rare occasions when they could get a break, some of the more optimistic soldiers would take time out to write letters home on the back of dog-biscuit packets. Others would sacrifice the paper from cherished letters they had received from home*



as cigarette paper – the best was airmail letters – to wrap the dried tea leaves they used as tobacco. Certainly the taste of such ‘cigarettes’ was deadly, but it did take their minds off what lay ahead, which they all knew was going to be a lot deadlier.

And sometimes, too, they would do it all, reading and writing letters, sucking on a cigarette and thinking about what they were fighting for in the first place. They were fighting for home; fighting to stop the Japs getting any closer; fighting to keep their loved ones safe. Someone had to do it, and it was them. There was nothing else they could do but get on with it.”

The men of the 39th clearly understood why they were fighting. It wasn't out of hate for what was in front of them but for the love of what was behind them. It was required of them to be strong and courageous. They must not fail.

From the Word of GOD

“After I looked things over, I stood up and said . . . ‘Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and daughters, your wives and your homes’ ” (Nehemiah 4:14).

“Be strong, and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The LORD will do what is good in his sight” (2 Samuel 10:12).

Up the Track with JESUS!

The day before he was crucified Jesus with his disciples went up the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem to an olive grove called Gethsemane.

“On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done.” ... And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke 22:39-44).

The cup he spoke of was not only the soon-coming horror of the crucifixion but, even worse, the total separation from God his Father for the very first time in all eternity; tense moments, deep emotions as he faced the agony of the cross.

We might say his prayer was his ‘letter to home’. He wanted to fight this part of the battle side by side with his disciples but they had fallen asleep. As he prayed to his Father Jesus’ sweat resembled drops of blood. He was in extreme agony but he did not give up. He could have called on legions of angels to rescue him but he had resolved to fight to the finish. He did this because he loves us. Only he could save mankind from eternal death and damnation.

Australia needs men who will rise up and fight for their families and for their homes. We could be called to military service to fight for Australia but more likely our battles will be in the context of ordinary life. Perhaps our children are being bullied at school or our wives accosted by a road-raging driver. Then there are invasions of our homes through violent and pornographic media and internet. There are times when political leaders try to introduce ungodly laws to rule society. At these times we need to rise up and fight by praying to God and taking appropriate action as men.

BE STRONG AND FIGHT BRAVELY

Prayer

Sovereign God, help us as men not to shirk our responsibility to be providers and protectors of our families. Give us the wisdom and strength and courage to rise up against any threat and fight physical and spiritual battles for our families in the name of Jesus. I praise and thank you that one day the One who is called Faithful and True will vanquish evil forever. I look forward to that great day of victory! In the mighty name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

11 - The Last Shall be First

KOKODA Story

The Battle of Isurava was, for the 430 men of the 39th, a fight for their lives. Outnumbered six to one they were able to hold their position until the men of the AIF arrived. As the 2/14th fought side by side with the 39th their opinion of them as chocolate soldiers, or 'Chocos' as they referred to them, changed very quickly. Far from melting in the heat of battle they became, in their estimation, 'ragged bloody heroes'. On the second day of continuous fighting, two platoons of the 39th were cut off by the Japanese advance. For 3 days and 3 nights Lieutenant Bob Sword led these men through the jungle to the safety of Brigade Headquarters at Alola. Lieutenant Johnston had also arrived there from Isurava with 28 walking wounded of the 39th. But when both groups found out how desperate the fighting was at Isurava they turned around and started back up the Kokoda Track!

KOKODA page 323 - *"One bright spot at least was when Lieutenant Sword and his men arrived, just before sunset. Honner later recorded his feelings.*



'I was surprised to see a grimy, bearded figure leading in a tattered line at twilight. I did not recognise him until he saluted and announced: "Sword, Sir, reporting in from patrol." There was more than mere formality in my answering salute.'

Happily, Lieutenant Johnston's walking wounded from the 39th were only minutes behind them, and the men of the 2/14 were staggered and

heartened all at once to see that the same scarecrows they'd seen off two days ago were now, voluntarily, back with them and bearing arms. They looked at these ragged bloody heroes, with their swollen feet, tottering countenance, open wounds and determined expressions with awe. Once again, many of the men of the AIF regretted every barbed joke they might have made at these blokes' expense. Chocolate soldiers, indeed!"

After five days of continuous fighting only 150 of the 39th were left. The rest were dead, wounded, missing in action or evacuated because of sickness. Beyond any doubt the 39th had acquitted themselves well. During the Battle of Isurava there were many heroic acts including the action of Private Bruce Kingsbury of the 2/14th for which he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

No wonder the four Australian black granite memorial pillars of 'COURAGE', 'MATESHIP', 'ENDURANCE' and 'SACRIFICE' are located at Isurava (see photo page 48).

From the Word of GOD

“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him” (I Corinthians 1:27-29).

Up the Track with JESUS!

After Jesus had been speaking to a rich young man about how he might have treasure in heaven, Peter asked Jesus what he and the other disciples could expect. Jesus reassured them:

“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sister or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (Matthew 19:29,30).

Jesus is saying that anyone who gives up something valuable for his sake will be repaid many times over in this life. But not necessarily in the same form. The rewards we receive may take us by surprise. Some act that we might consider insignificant, like giving someone a cup of cold water, may be of great worth in God's sight. Unexpectedly we may receive God's promotion or special encouragement of some kind. God may even call us to go into full-time ministry leaving behind a lucrative career. If he does, be assured that God in his wisdom has everything under control. There will be many surprises as those who think they are first become last, and those who think they are last become first.

YOU HAVE A HOPE AND A FUTURE

Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me to go forward in your plans and purposes for my life and to forgo all that holds me back. Help me to be willing to bear the pain of insults and disapproval, knowing that I have your approval. Give me endurance to go the extra mile to show your love to others who are having a hard time. Even though I am so undeserving I thank you that your Word clearly states that I have an inheritance that is kept in heaven for me that will never perish, spoil or fade. Thank you that you call me your son. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

12 - Love as Brothers

KOKODA Story



Butch and Stan Bisset had happy days growing up on a farm. They later played rugby together in Melbourne's famous Power House Club, served as weekend warriors together, and finally at the outbreak of war, joined the AIF together.

Both were assigned to the 2/14th which was nicknamed 'Jacka's Mob'. Albert Jacka had won a Victoria Cross at Gallipoli and was later recommended

for two more. Butch and Stan proved to be true leaders of men and a binding force in the 2/14. They fought and they laughed side by side throughout the Middle East and up the Kokoda Track until the premonition Stan had about Butch became a reality.

KOKODA page 327 - *"When they shone the torch on Butch, though, Stan immediately knew it was every bit as bad as he had feared: close to hopeless. The burst of machine-gun fire had sprayed Butch right across his belly, and through the globs of blood Stan could see his brother's intestines. Just the fact they had got him back down that murderous slope from where he had been hit was extraordinary enough, and in fact 10 Platoon had lost one more man killed and one wounded in the process, but it was a measure of how much Butch was loved by his men that they would take such risks to get him out.*

Don did his best, but it was little enough. Though he dressed Butch's wounds, and gave him morphine to ease the pain, the look he gave Stan confirmed the obvious – it wouldn't be long.

They talked of days on the farm. That time with Uncle Abe. Of Mum and Dad. Their sister and two older brothers. Sang songs of their childhood. At that moment, they knew, Mum would be just likely turning in after making Dad a cup of tea. What about the time during the floods when they were on their raft and Stan had nearly drowned, only to be saved by Butch getting to him in the nick of time? . . . "

That one soldier died and another was wounded in order to get Butch Bisset some help is a powerful reminder of the love these men had for each other.

For six hours Stan stayed with his brother, holding his hand in a small clearing, watching his life ebb away. Finally, around 4 a.m., Butch's hand went limp. Stan wept. At dawn they buried him, and Stan said a prayer over his grave. Then it was back into it!

From the Word of GOD

“Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, “See how much he loved him!” (John 11:35,36).

“Finally, all of you live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you will inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:8,9).

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (1 John 3:16).

Up the Track with JESUS!

A word picture Jesus used to describe the close relationship he has with his followers was of himself as the vine and his followers as its branches:

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

What could be a closer relationship than remaining in Christ and him remaining in us? This word picture leads into Jesus’ strong encouragement to remain in his love. Then he gives this command:

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command” (John 15:12-14).

We are to love each other as Jesus loved us, and he loved us enough to give his life for us. We may not have to die for someone, but there are other ways of showing sacrificial love – listening, helping, encouraging, giving, caring. We can stick by our mate when he discovers he has cancer; listen to our wives when we don’t see eye to eye; give plenty of quality time to our kids. To be willing to lay down our life for others is a high ideal to live up to. The Aussie Diggers of Kokoda did this well. But Jesus also counts us as friends and we should be prepared to lay our lives down for him by sacrificially loving and serving others.

GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS

Prayer

Father God, thank you for the love that we can share in our families. Thank you that on the field of battle the love of men for one another often runs very deep. Help us not only to remain in the love of our families and our best mates but also, more importantly, in the love of Jesus. Thank you for his example of sacrificial love. May we prove true blue in our friendship and mateship with him and with each other. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

13 – Angels Ascending and Descending

KOKODA Story

Native porters were first called into service on the Kokoda Track to carry ammunition, food and supplies for the 39th Battalion. Trudging the tortuous track in bare feet they were capable of carrying unimaginably heavy loads. As the campaign developed, native porters carried the severely wounded back along the Kokoda Track for further medical treatment. Preferring to make their own stretchers out of bush materials and an army blanket, their dedication to the task was nothing short of remarkable. To transport one wounded soldier required eight porters made up of two teams of four who would take turns carrying. But it was *the way* the native porters carried the wounded that won the deep, heartfelt admiration of the Aussie soldiers. Here is one account.

KOKODA page 341 - *“At night, when it was time to rest, the porters would take great care to ensure that the Digger was on level ground with a fire nearby to keep warm, and at least one of them would sit through the night to make sure that the wounded Australian soldier would not want for water, or food, or simple company in his oft-tormented and delirious stages.*”



Gently, oh so gently, for the severely wounded who could not eat, a thin paste of milk powder and water would be fed to them, spoonful by spoonful. Never, no matter how hopeless a Digger’s medical condition might have been, was one of them abandoned. Never.

On a single day in the withdrawal from Isurava, Bert Kienzle had forty-two Diggers on stretchers moving back under the steam of

336 porters, who were already exhausted from having carried so much ammunition and supplies towards the frontline.”

Early in the fighting, native porters became known as ‘Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels’. Not only were they supremely sure-footed but they were also utterly committed to looking after their precious cargo. The wounded soldiers knew they were in good hands. One of the most enduring and endearing memories the Aussie Diggers brought home from New Guinea was this most amazing proficiency and dedication of the ‘Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels’. Many Australians owe their lives to these manly heroes with servant hearts who played such a vital role in the Kokoda campaign.

From the Word of GOD

“He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it” (Genesis 28:12).

“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone” (Psalm 91:11.12).

“Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word” (Psalm 103:20)

“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14).

Up the Track with JESUS!

Jesus was 30 years old when he was led by the Holy Spirit into a desert wilderness. After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights the devil came to tempt him. He wanted to divert Jesus from the mission that God had given to him. In the second temptation the devil challenged Jesus to throw himself from the rooftop of the temple quoting the above verses from Psalm 91. But Jesus refuted this and the other two temptations, by correctly using the Word of God. Finally, when Jesus had had enough, he said, **“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’ Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him” (Matthew 4:10,11).**

This shows us that angels are real, and that they had a part to play in the life and ministry of Jesus.

One of the functions of angels is to watch over believers in various situations. They are spiritual beings created by God to do his bidding. There are many fascinating stories that seem to point to angelic activity. Perhaps you can recall situations where you have inexplicably escaped danger or received help of some kind. Not usually visible, they act as God’s secret agents in wonderful ways. Most of the time believers are not aware of how angels are hard at work on their behalf.

ANGELS ARE WATCHING OVER YOU

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for the outstanding example of the native New Guinea porters who reminded battle-weary Aussie soldiers of the work of angels. Thank you for your creation of angels and for the different assignments that you give them to achieve your plans and purposes in the world. Thank you that angels are sent to watch over believers in ways that we are mostly completely unaware of. As those who have inherited your salvation we welcome their activity and say thank you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

14 – A Proud Moment

KOKODA Story

When Lt. Col. Ralph Honner joined the 39th Battalion as its new CO he barely had time to get his men dug in and prepared for the next Japanese onslaught. To do this he led his men in practice drills and manoeuvres. The men could see that he knew what he was talking about and all this inspired confidence. Ralph Honner projected an air of great confidence as he moved among the men showing his concern for their well-being. On 5th September, after seven straight weeks of fighting, fresh AIF troops arrived and the 39th were ordered to withdraw. At a place called Menari, Ralph Honner received a congratulatory message for the men of the 39th from Brigadier Potts. Here's what he did.



KOKODA page 362 - *“Colonel Honner went one better. Instead of merely passing the message to his adjutants to tell the men, he decided to call a full parade.*

So they formed, a mob of ragged bloody heroes with tattered clothes, odd boots, hollow eyes, crutches, leaning on each other to remain standing, and instead of rifles - which they'd passed

on to the 2/27th – holding the sticks they'd used to support their trek back.

But when Colonel Honner came before them they stood to attention like the guards at Buckingham Palace, stock-still and proud, as he saluted them with great feeling. Honner would later record of his feelings at this proud, poignant moment: ‘As I glanced along the lines of pallid and emaciated men with sunken eyes and shrunken frames that testified to the hardships they had long endured, I saw no hangdog look – only the proud bearing of tired veterans who had looked death and disaster in the face and had not failed.’

Ralph Honner (photo at right) had seized the moment and delivered heartfelt, timely and healing words of encouragement. His men had stood the test and all Australia was proud of them. The men would never forget this ‘Well Done’.



From the Word of GOD

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ ” (Matthew 25:21).

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24,25).

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Up the Track with JESUS!

Jesus’ timely words to his followers are known as the Beatitudes. These eight short statements are words of encouragement because they promise blessedness to those who hear and obey. A good example is the last Beatitude.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:10-12b).

Surely it is next to impossible to rejoice when being persecuted! This is an encouragement to follow the teachings and example of Jesus no matter what. Faithful obedience done from the heart does not go unnoticed by God and will be richly rewarded. Will we stand up to pressures in the work place and not compromise our integrity? Will we avoid the onslaught of internet pornography in the privacy of our homes? As the ‘Day’ of Christ’s return gets closer, we will face struggles, trials, temptations, even persecution. We need to be accountable to each other and encourage one another to stand firm in every situation so we can be counted faithful.

LET US ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

Prayer

God, you are our Father, full of compassion, rich in mercy, abounding in love. We affirm that you are for us and not against us. We see this in the many words of encouragement found in your Word. We also thank you for the work of the Holy Spirit who draws alongside us to comfort and strengthen us. Help us to find opportunities to encourage others in this world of suffering and disappointment. We look forward to all that you have in store for those who love you and obey your commands. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

15 – Standing Up to Accusation

KOKODA Story

Major General Sir Thomas Blamey was the appointed Commander in Chief of the Australian Military Forces. He had been knighted for very distinguished service in the First World War and had great power of command. Even so, his appointment was controversial because of alleged scandals when he served as a police commissioner.

Noted for his abrasiveness and lack of empathy for those who worked for him, he delivered hurtful blows to three of his New Guinea commanders by relieving them of their commands. Now commanding the forces in New Guinea in person, Thomas Blamey, on his high platform, addressed the assembled men of the 2/14th, 2/16th and 2/27th battalions.



KOKODA page 420 - *“A shocked atmosphere suddenly descended on the troops as they realised they were being criticised.*

Blamey went on . . . ‘You have been defeated, I have been defeated, Australia has been defeated,’ he said.

There was a stirring among the soldiers, a murmur of mutiny, of outrage . . .

Then they heard the words that would never be forgotten, and Stan Bisset – an adjutant to his battalion, and therefore standing at the front of the men of the 2/14 – was well placed to hear Blamey’s next words clearly.

‘Always remember, it is the rabbit who runs who gets shot ...’

At these words, there was a real rumble in the ranks, a gasp of disbelief that Blamey had really said what he did. But the fact that they had all heard it confirmed it, and the disbelief soon gave way to barely contained white fury at his colossal presumption in saying such a thing to them.”

How could such words be spoken to men who had fought so valiantly? The 2/14th, for example, had gone up the Kokoda Track with 550 men only three months ago. Now only 73 men of Jacka’s Mob remained. With fresh memories of so many lost mates, such words must have been like salt rubbed on raw wounds.

From the Word of GOD

“He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless” (Proverbs 2:7).

“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns?” (Romans 8:33,34a).

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21).

“For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death” (Revelation 12:10b,11).

Up the Track with JESUS!

Jesus was accused of many things, including being a glutton and a drunkard because he had eaten with certain people. He was even accused of using the power of Satan when he was driving demons out of people’s lives. Then, at the end of his earthly life, he was unjustly accused before the Roman governor of opposing payment of taxes to Caesar and of claiming to be a king. Look at what Jesus said when he was wrongly accused again and about to be stoned by a crowd.

““Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe in the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp”” (Luke 11:14-16).

As a believer you may, for example, have been accused for being ‘narrow’ or a ‘bigot’ or ‘irrelevant’ or all three! When this happens remember that Satan is likely behind these accusations, one way or another, for his name means ‘accuser’. When we are wrongly accused our first reaction may be to lash out in revenge or to get defensive. Instead, ask God to fight the battle for you, for our battle is not against flesh and blood. He will clear your name in the eyes of those who really matter.

OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD

Prayer

Almighty God, thank you that Satan has already been defeated by Jesus and though he is still active in the world will one day be bound forever, never again to do his evil work. Give us the wisdom and strength to stand up against the accusations of Satan and to overcome evil with good. Help us not to be drawn into petty disputes that could trip us up or to complain or criticise behind people’s backs. Instead, help us to speak the truth in love and refute false accusations, for the battle belongs to you. In the mighty name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

16 - Forcefully Advancing

KOKODA Story

With their backs to the Solomon Sea the entire remaining Japanese force was well dug in at Buna and Gona. The Japanese were prepared for a fight to the death. To dislodge the enemy repeated attacks over open kunai grass killing fields had been ordered by higher command. The ground had become soaked in Australian blood.

When a sixth attack was ordered Lt. Col. Ralph Honner made a bold request. A plan had been taking shape in his mind of advancing through a finger of jungly scrub that went to the heart of Japanese defences. With approval from Headquarters he studied the battlefield carefully and worked out precise tactics for his men. Four months before at Isurava, it was the 39th who were dug in and waiting for the Japs. Now it was their turn to do the attacking!

KOKODA page 439 - *“And still Honner had yet one more ace to play. His close examination of the Japanese military method had revealed that while the Japs were being bombarded, they didn’t bother firing but simply kept their heads down till it passed and then proceeded to let forth their withering fire.*

What if his men, then, advanced right to the Japanese throats while the bombardment was on? What if the 39th took the risk of being blown apart by their own bombs, on the reckoning that, however dangerous, it was a whole lot less dangerous than going straight into the teeth of a Jap who was aiming directly at you? The more Honner thought about it, the more he liked the idea . . .



By split-second timing the 39th would be able to begin its move on the Japs two minutes before the bombardment finished, giving them one minute to get among the bunkers, and one minute to do damage while the bombs were still dropping and all was confused.

It was a plan of extraordinary daring, the more so because there was a very real chance that an enormous bomb would drop right on his own men and

take out twenty at once; but the point was that it was so daring that the Japanese surely wouldn’t anticipate it.”

The strategy proved to be an outstanding success. Not one man of the 39th was killed by the covering bombardment. The Japanese were taken by total surprise with their

heads still down in their bunkers and trenches. It was the breakthrough that was sorely needed.

From the Word of GOD

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body” (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).

Up the Track with JESUS!

When Jesus was teaching and preaching in the towns of Galilee he received a message from the imprisoned John the Baptist. After sending a message back indicating that he was indeed the Messiah, he then shared with his disciples these astounding words about his cousin, John the Baptist.

“I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it” (Matthew 11:11-12).

Jesus declared that no man in the age of the old covenant ever fulfilled his God-given purpose better than John the Baptist. Yet in the Kingdom of God all believers will have a greater spiritual standing than him because they have been made new creations through Christ and his finished work on the cross. According to God’s plan his Kingdom is forcefully advancing. It is up to believers to become involved as true followers of Jesus. Often it is said there are many believers but only a few true disciples. To become a true follower of Jesus requires spiritual courage, vigour, power and determination because of constant attacks by the devil.

DARE TO DO GREAT THINGS

Prayer

God our Father the King of Glory, help us to realise our privileged standing before you as heirs of your Kingdom. Against the enemy help us to take the initiative with extraordinary daring knowing that the battle belongs to you. As we put on the armour of God and pray to you, help us to formulate winning strategies that we may do great exploits for the extension of your kingdom. Help us to be forceful men. Use us to achieve breakthroughs and victories in your name! May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

17 - The Cross Triumphant

KOKODA Story

Gona Mission was where it all started. On 21 July, 1942, a Japanese warship started shelling nearby Buna while thousands of Japanese troops landed at Gona. On 23 July, the 39th were the first to engage the Japanese in an ambush. This took place at Awala about 50 km inland on the main track towards Kokoda.

For the next two months the Australians, outnumbered 6 to 1, fought a heroic fighting withdrawal. Then in the last days of September the Japanese advance stalled at Ioribaiwa. The Australians then pursued the Japanese all the way back down the Kokoda Track leading to the capture of Gona Mission by the 39th on 8 December. Here is a brief glimpse of Gona the next day.

KOKODA page 442 - *“Shattered palm trees lay every which way. At a Regimental Aid Post a member of the 39th was screaming as they tried to remove a bullet from his stomach. And yet he was one of the lucky ones who had survived. The first duty of the victorious 39th was to bury their own men who hadn't made it – six had been killed in action – and of these the gallant Lieutenant Sword was among the first to be buried, before the bowed heads, silent prayers and tears of his comrades.*

A God-forsaken place it seemed. Just a short distance away, the old Gona Mission house and church were blown to bits, though, oddly enough, the only thing in the whole place that didn't seem to have a mark on it was the large white cross out the front”.

A God-forsaken place it surely must have seemed, especially with the stench of so many dead and rotting bodies. The



Japanese had been piling up their dead for weeks. (above photo is a mission station in the same area today)

Very sadly one of Lt. Col. Ralph Honner's very best men, Lieutenant Bob Sword, and five others had been killed. Sword was killed with one of the very last shots of the battle. And so during a break in the fighting, the men of the 39th gathered to bury their fallen comrades. As they shed tears together and bowed their heads in prayer, it is hard to know whether the sight of the large white cross had kindled some hope in

them. For the cross had defied every blast of the battle and was standing triumphant over the worst that man could do.

From the WORD of GOD

“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Colossians 2:15).

Up the Track with JESUS!

The enemy had done his very worst to Jesus, the sinless Son of God. After an unjust trial, Jesus was mocked, punched, spat upon, stripped, flogged and nailed to a Roman cross and later speared. The humiliation and pain of hanging naked before a jeering crowd of people and the tears and sobs of his mother and friends would have been overwhelming.

Death on a cross was excruciating. But even worse for Jesus was that he would experience a separation from his Father for the very first time in all eternity. For when he took the sin of the whole world upon himself, he became sin, and because God is holy, he had to look away. Because of this a terrible darkness came over the land for three hours.

“Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’ . . . When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (John 19:28,30).

Because Jesus was fully God and fully man and lived a sinlessly perfect life he became the perfect all sufficient sacrifice for our sins and the sins of the whole world. The last words of Jesus before he gave up his spirit were a victory cry! When Jesus said **‘It is finished’** he declared that the work that he had been given by his Father had been completed. Jesus did it all for us! Praise God for the triumph of the cross!

VICTORY IS YOURS

Prayer

Heavenly Father, how the shedding of so much blood throughout the world must grieve your heart. Thank you for the cross, for it was here that Jesus rescued us from the power of sin, Satan and death. The Son of God took my place and died the death that I deserve so that my sins could be forgiven. Thank you that, because Jesus lived a sinless life, death could not hold him down. Then in your righteousness and holiness you vindicated him and raised him from the dead. Now he is seated at your right hand and intercedes for us. Thank you for the victory we have in Jesus. Amen.

Afterword

Just off the road leaving Port Moresby, not far from the southern end of the Kokoda Track, is Bomana, the largest war cemetery in the South Pacific. It contains 3,823 graves marked with polished marble headstones. It is the final resting place of many Australian soldiers who fought on the Kokoda Track as well as other Australian and Allied servicemen who fought in different parts of New Guinea.



As with many other Commonwealth war cemeteries around the world, a Cross of Sacrifice is a main feature. It is a tall sandstone cross, usually standing on an octagonal base and has a downward pointing bronze sword attached to its face. The cross represents the Christian faith of the majority of the dead it overlooks. The sword symbolises the cemetery's military nature.

Fitting symbols – a sword fastened to a cross. Both speak of sacrifice. The sword speaks of the supreme sacrifice made by our soldiers, airmen and sailors who laid down their lives for our nation's freedom. The cross speaks of the even greater sacrifice made by Jesus, the Son of God, who laid down His life for the freedom of all people of all time. In the Bible we read:

“But now he (Jesus Christ) has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people” (Hebrews 9:26b-28a).

How did Jesus take away the sins of many? He willingly left the glories of heaven and came to this earth so that he could sacrifice his life for us so that we might have everlasting life. His blood, shed upon the cross, paid the price of our sin. We cannot save ourselves from eternal death and separation from God - we are all born with a

sin nature and are imprisoned by it. The Bible declares that “the whole world is a prisoner of sin” (Galatians 3:22a)!

This is because “... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23) and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a). We are all sinners no matter how ‘good’ a life we lead. No matter how good it is according to human standards it still falls short of the glory of God. As sinners, all of us, as God’s Word makes clear, are deserving of death. **This is bad news!**

Each of us will die eventually and after that we will have to give an account of our lives to God. Born with a sin nature, we are powerless to save ourselves from sin. But God has a rescue plan: Jesus, the sinless Son of God, would pay the full price for our sin by dying in our place. We would not have to suffer the punishment we deserve. The Bible says “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23b). We don’t deserve eternal life but because God loves us he gives it to us as a gift anyway. **This is good news!**

Though history books, Peter FitzSimons’ book and these reflections may cast men like Thomas Blamey and the Imperial Japanese soldiers in a negative light, they were sinful men like us. Each had strengths and weaknesses. Amazingly, God loves each of us with all our failings and hidden



faults, and wants us to receive his free gift of eternal life. The Bible assures us that “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:16,17). It is therefore clear that God wants all people everywhere to receive his free gift of eternal life. And this is only made possible through the sacrificial death of his Son on a cross.

Again the Bible says “He (Jesus) came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:11,12).

It is a sad reality, however, that many reject God’s free gift of eternal life by not believing in Jesus and receiving him into their lives. They have other ideas about what life is meant to be. But Jesus said, “If anyone would come after me, he must

deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" (Matthew 16:25,26).

When we don't know Christ, we make choices as though this life was all we have. In reality, this life is just the introduction to eternity. How we live this brief span of time, however, determines our eternal state. What we accumulate on earth has no value whatsoever in purchasing eternal life. Even the highest social, sports or civic honours cannot earn for us an entrance into heaven. The only way to get to heaven is by putting our faith in Christ who was crucified on our behalf and who, with his own blood, "purchased men for God" (Revelation 5:9).



The Kokoda was a narrow track where Australian soldiers willingly gave their lives in battle so those at home could live in freedom and safety. If they had not gone up that track our lives might be very different today.

Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13,14). When Jesus said that the gate that leads to eternal life is "narrow", he was not saying that it is difficult to become a Christian, but that there is only one way to live eternally with God. For Jesus also said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Some may argue that this way is too narrow. In reality, it is wide enough for the whole world, if the world chooses to accept it. Believing in Jesus is the only way to heaven, because he alone died for our sins and opened the way to God.

It is my prayer that as you have gone 'Up the Track with JESUS' in these reflections, you will want to welcome him into your life. If you haven't already, will you seriously consider doing that right now? You can pray the following prayer to receive Jesus into your life.

Read it through first to make sure you understand and agree with it. For praying a prayer like this is both one of the easiest and one of the hardest things in the world to do. It is easy because it is only a few words. It is hard because it involves the complete surrender of the life and will to Jesus Christ.

Please, right now, give this your best attention. For in praying a prayer like this you have so much to gain and only the burden of sin to lose. It is a step of faith for which you will be eternally grateful!

God in Heaven,

I am sorry for the wrong things I have done in my life. I know that my sin has separated me from you and that I am deserving of death.

Thank you that you loved me so much that you sent your Son Jesus to earth to die in my place. I now put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ who sacrificed his life on the cross that I might live. I gladly receive him into my life as my Lord and Saviour.

Now I give you thanks for your forgiveness of all my sin! Thank you for giving me eternal life! Thank you that you have now received me into your family as a son and that, for the rest of eternity, I can call you Father!

For all my days on earth please help me to turn from everything I know to be wrong by the power of your Holy Spirit who now dwells in me. Please help me to follow Jesus with all my heart and to become more and more like him.

In the powerful and precious name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

Initials _____ Date ____/____/____

If you have prayed this prayer sincerely from your heart I have the joy of telling you that you are truly on your way 'Up the Track with JESUS'! Jesus himself said, **"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life"** (John 5:24).

(Perhaps you would like to initial and date the above prayer!)

If you have been encouraged by these studies and want to know more about what it means to give your life to Jesus and continue 'Up the Track' with him, please contact me. It will be a joy to hear from you!

David Rowsome

95 Middleton St
Mt Gravatt, QLD 4122,
AUSTRALIA

Home: 07 3422 0969

Mobile: 0438 967 116

Email: with1accord@outlook.com

My 'Kokoda' Story



During my very first days in Papua New Guinea, known as *'the land of the unexpected'*, I unexpectedly found myself on the Kokoda Track! A missionary family took me to the National High School at Sogeril to meet with the staff and students there. This was very near to Ower's Corner, about 50

kilometres up the Kokoda Track (see map on page 1 and cross-section on page 50).

Strangely, during the next 22 years that I lived in PNG, I never got back there. I was caught up with life as a missionary in other remote parts of PNG. And a big part of this was raising three PNG-born daughters with my Australian wife Marilyn.

In those first days in Papua New Guinea, in October, 1982, I was, technically-speaking, still a captain in the Canadian Armed Forces. A few months earlier I had resigned and I was still in my last few weeks of termination leave. Though I was enjoying a career in the military engineers, I felt that God had called me to leave Canada and work overseas with a volunteer organisation. But it wasn't my plan to go to Papua New Guinea - I had never even heard of the place. It was just like life in the army, I simply went where I was told to go!

During my first five years in PNG, I patrolled as a government engineer through the districts surrounding the former Japanese strongholds of Lae and Salamaua and the Australian attack bases at Wau and Bulolo. As I did I was able to re-trace some of the footsteps of Aussie soldier, Peter Ryan, and his intrepid detachment of native policemen and New Guinea Volunteer Rifles. In the early stages of World War II this small band gathered intelligence and daringly harassed the Japanese when the Kanga force was outnumbered 100 to 1. The title of his book *'Fear Drive My Feet'* well describes that period of his life.

Our first two daughters were born in Lae in what is still known as the ANGAU (Australia New Guinea Administrative Unit) Hospital. This is where Peter FitzSimons' mother, Lieutenant Beatrice Helen Booth, served and helped put back together some of the men who were wounded during the Kokoda campaign. The two times I had malaria were when I had worked up the coast in Finschhafen where Peter FitzSimons' dad, Lieutenant Peter McCloy FitzSimons, had served for a time.

The Bomana Commonwealth War Cemetery in Port Moresby is the final resting place of many who died on the Kokoda Track. But Lae also has a Commonwealth War

Cemetery with the graves of 2,390 Australian soldiers. It was a sombre and moving experience to walk through those immaculate grounds with my Australian father-in-law, Gordon, who had fought in this part of the world during the Second World War.

Now settled in Australia since 2004, I am praying that one day I will be able to take my growing number of grandchildren to 'New Guinea' – to at least visit if not walk the Kokoda Track. Maybe I'll see you there!

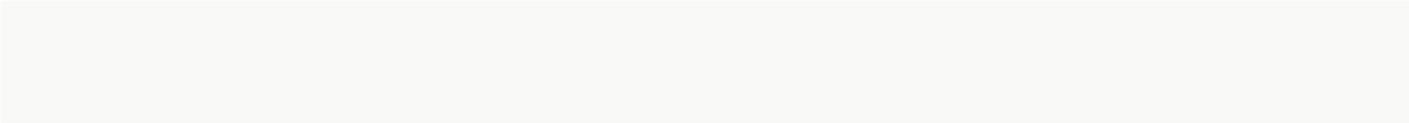


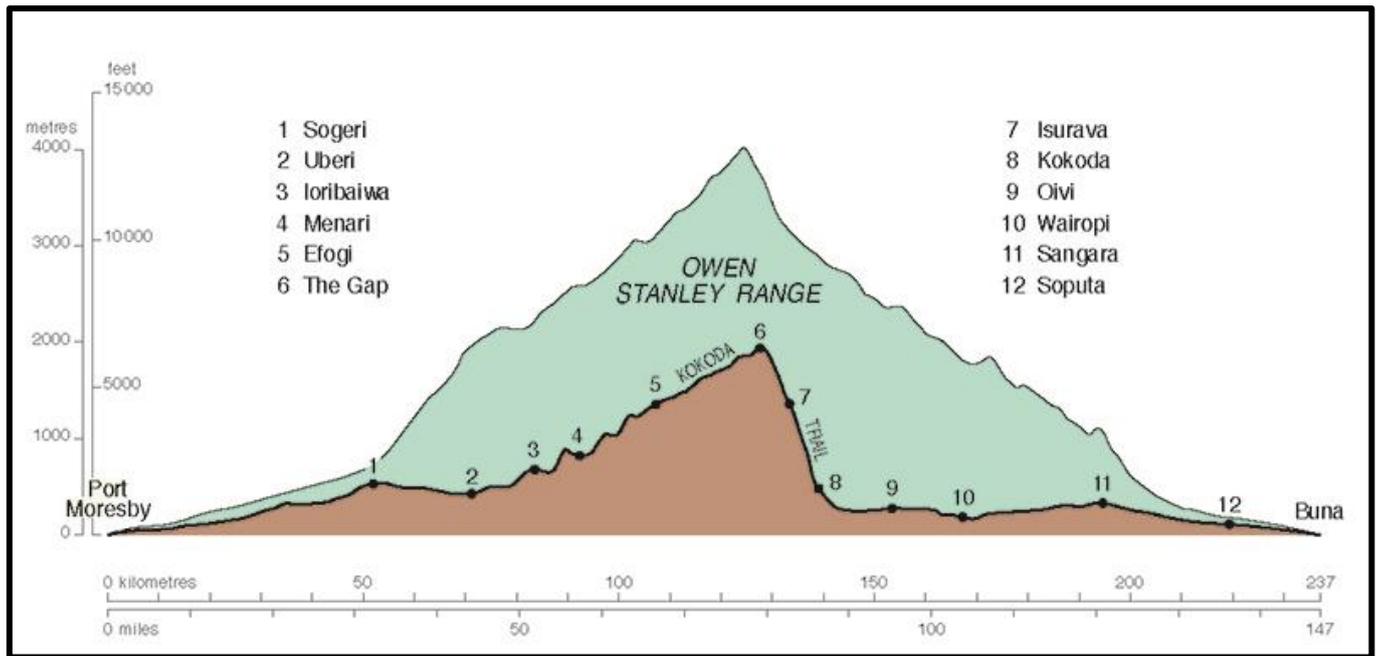
THE ISURAVA MEMORIAL

**with its four Australian black granite pillars, each inscribed with a single word
'COURAGE' 'MATESHIP' 'ENDURANCE' 'SACRIFICE'
the values and qualities of those Australian soldiers
who fought along the Kokoda Track.**

Photo from Nomad Tales used in compliance with Creative Commons conditions.

Notes





Cross-Section of the Kokoda Track

Up the Track with JESUS is an invitation to men to look at the qualities of **COURAGE, MATESHIP, ENDURANCE** and **SACRIFICE** – first in the lives of the Australian soldiers who fought along the Kokoda Track, then in the life of JESUS.

These 17 devotional reflections are based on stories from the 17 chapters of Peter FitzSimons' best-selling book **KOKODA**. They are written to challenge men to embark on the ultimate adventure - following JESUS up the Track that leads to heaven.

Any True-Blue Aussie loves anything that deals with the amazing achievement of our troops during the horrendous fighting on Kokoda. We must never forget that it was these young rag-tag Aussies who inflicted the first defeat on a hitherto invincible army at a place called Milne Bay. Through this small book their lives point us to an even more amazing achievement. This is the sacrifice of Jesus who won the greatest victory of all time at a place called Calvary.

COL STRINGER – author and speaker

The tragic loss of life of these fine young men in the face of barbarism inspires and challenges us today to have real purpose; *"always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that his life may be revealed in ours"* (2 Corinthians 4:11).

DR GRAHAM MCLENNAN – National Alliance of Christian Leaders

This brief look at the lives of the 'ragged bloody heroes' who made history on the Kokoda Track can help Aussie men become history-makers in our day.

WARWICK MARSH – Dads4Kids Fatherhood Foundation

David Rowsome writes to challenge us to rise up and be men of God in our time.

REV GRAHAM SERCOMBE – Southern Cross Ministries

This booklet has a lot of punch & power.

ROYCE PERKINS – writer, speaker and MC