



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL

Justice, Peace and Freedom

Ethiopian Religious Leaders: “Call Our People to Prayer! Our People are Desperate!”

May 25, 2007.

“Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death...Cush(Ethiopia) will submit herself to God.” Psalm 68:20, 31b

We are calling on all Ethiopian religious and spiritual leaders to rise up from wherever you are to lead a movement of prayer for our country and to take an active stand on behalf of the people of Ethiopia who are in great suffering, something which is increasing daily. As people of faith, we must lead the way in kneeling in submission, humility and repentance before our God, asking him to save us from the dark forces of evil that have overcome our country.

May 27, 2007 marks the “Global Day of Prayer”, a day when many from all over the world will be seeking God’s help in order to break through the spiritual barriers that block the transforming presence of God to make His presence known in our nations, cities and communities. This day of prayer is not to stand by itself, but is a day that is meant to launch a prayer movement that will continue on in the nations of our world such as in Ethiopia. Their helpful website: <http://globaldayofprayer.com/index.php> cites this Biblical verse as its mission:

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14

Right now, Ethiopia is in severe crisis and we—the people—need urgent help, but remember and take heart, God loves us and cares about our suffering, but we must seek Him wholeheartedly for our deliverance. We have not lived through a worse political, economic, social, moral and spiritual crisis than the one we are now in. It may be the consequence of years of Communism where Marxist-Leninist ideology has left God out of our lives, yet He has never left us, we have left Him. Now, the destruction and emptiness of such an ideology has given rise to such leaders as Mengistu and now Meles Zenawi as well as to our own condition. We have allowed it to seduce us and we have not spoken out against it enough! Now, we are living the results of the world that was built on such an “anti-life” foundation.

An Ethiopian woman who just returned from Ethiopia sums it up very well as she told the AJC, “People are no longer just talking about the lack of education for their children. They are in a panic, not knowing how they will help their children survive through the next several days!” She said that many people have not had any meat for months and no milk for their children for many days—they cannot go on like this! The police and security forces are everywhere and the people are desperate! As the government senses this desperation, instead of helping, they are fueling greater discontent by further repressing the people. At the same time, the price of food continues to go up and unemployment, mismanagement and corruption are wreaking further havoc. There is a time bomb, waiting to happen and no one is doing anything to stop it!

Yet, the mighty arm of God can work to save us. We can know that God loves us and cares about if we are oppressed. He is the one who calls his people to “loose the chains of injustice and to set the captives free!” In this Biblical scripture found in Isaiah 58, the prophet Isaiah says that true believers in God are not people of mere words and religious rituals, but instead are people who show their love for God and humankind by the way they care for the suffering—standing against the injustices around them that are causing oppression to the people—even their own!

Spiritual and religious leaders have courageously led the way to freedom, reformation and the eventual transformation of societies in many places and times. Their words of truth and fearless stances have defied and brought down regimes where lies, injustice, greed, corruption, immorality, hate and rebellion against any higher power than themselves, have brought destruction on their people. In Zimbabwe, an archbishop recently courageously spoke out against the corruption and abuses of the Mugabe regime. It was covered in international news.

We now call on religious and spiritual leaders within the country to disengage from any collusion with the EPRDF or with any other political group and maintain their independence. We have heard that great pressure has been placed on Ethiopian religious leaders of differing faith backgrounds to promote the government position rather than leading the rallying cry for the poor and oppressed. Some have surely been threatened, bribed or coerced. We know that some religious leaders have caved in and compromised their beliefs due to fear, apathy, ambition or lack of genuine spiritual conviction. As a result, many churches and mosques have been divided by internal conflicts surrounding such issues. It is time for these leaders who have not stood up for truth and right, to now seek God’s forgiveness and with God’s help, to take a strong moral stand.

Lots of Ethiopians are not doing anything because they are so afraid. Yes, the Woyane are real threats, but can you imagine what would happen if all the people who are outraged by their evil actions, but are too afraid to say so, would join together? We cannot fight for freedom if we are not free from fear. Who can free us from our fears? Only God! God has promised those who follow Him will never be left alone—that He is with us! What a mighty force of power! It is enough to bring down the wall of shame, misery, death and ethnic hatred that is surrounding Ethiopia!

Remember the story of David and Goliath? The army of Israel was immobilized in fear of this giant Philistine man who threatened to wipe them out. But David, only a shepherd boy, said, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” (I Samuel 17:37) When he confronted Goliath, Goliath ridiculed and threatened him because he was only a boy with no weapons other than his sling. However, David said, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me... and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel (Ethiopia). All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.” (Samuel 17:45-47) But David triumphed this formidable foe without a sword or a spear, but with only a sling and a stone!

David’s courage was based on his trust in God. It was only because of that trust that he had confidence to stand up to Goliath—against all human odds—but not against heavenly odds! We cannot live in fear, or we will be paralyzed from following what God can achieve for us if we only trust in Him. With God at our side, we have all the strength and power we need. Therefore, we would call on people of faith to trust God, to be liberated from fear and to stand up for truth, peace, justice, equality, compassion, goodness and the fear and love of God.

In Psalm 68, the psalmist calls on God for help. He prays: *“Summon your power, O God: show us your strength, O God, as you have done before.... Rebuke the beast among the reeds, the herd of bulls among the calves of the nations. Humbled, may it bring bars of silver. Scatter the nations who delight in war. Envoys will come from Egypt; Cush (Ethiopia) will submit herself to God. Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth, sing praise to the LORD, to him who rides the ancient skies above, who thunders with mighty voice. Proclaim the power of God... Praise be to God!” Psalm 68:28, 30-34a, 35b*

A Prayer Movement—“For Such a Time as This”

We need people of faith to commit to organizing, coordinating and mobilizing others in their faith communities—and for some of you, beyond those communities—to pray and when called to, to speak out for truth, righteousness and justice. We are a society in bondage to “the Lie.” Truth has been so repressed that it is questioned and often rejected. The Lie has been so promoted, that it is accepted and has created a false reality under which we have agreed to live. It has led to our demise as a society; yet, we are barred from talking about it. Instead, as Jesus said, it is only by proclaiming truth that we will be set free—everything else will bring us into slavery. This is where we are at today—we have accepted the “Lie” and we are in slavery! It is a moral choice to stop the Lie and to choose Truth. God can help us make such a courageous choice.

Our struggle for truth and freedom is an overwhelming “God-sized” task that is beyond our ability to accomplish without seeking God’s vision, aid, instruction, protection and provision. Because of this, we strongly believe it must be surrounded by the prayers of faithful believers who are willing to not only seek God’s help in this time of trouble, but to also give Him the credit and the praise when He brings it into fruition. Many Ethiopians are people of devout faith and we now are calling on you “for such a time as this,” not only to pray, but to stand firm on God-honoring principles and actions. It will take courage, faith and conviction. We are convinced that God cares about the oppression of our people and if we are faithful to Him—fearing and loving Him as our Creator and Almighty God—that we can trust Him as we “walk though the valley of the shadow of death” as God is with us and will be “our comfort,” for we can be assured that God loved us before we ever knew Him.”

As you think about what God may be calling you to do, consider the story of Esther from the Bible. A genocide of the Hebrew people was planned during the time of Queen Esther. As queen, she could go to the King to ask him to save the people, but was afraid to do so because he could have her killed for entering the court without his permission. Her fear made her reluctant to take any steps. However, her uncle told her that God may have brought her to her position of influence “for such a time as this,” and that if she did not do her part, God would use someone else to accomplish His purposes. She was convicted and said she would do it. She then called on all around her to fast and pray for three days, asking God for His divine intervention.

Through the rest of the account, even though God’s name is never mentioned, it is obvious that God is integrally involved in the unbelievable turn of events that followed, resulting in saving the Hebrews from death and destruction. In this same vein, God may have called us to this place “for such a time as this.” In response, let us call on Him for His divine intervention in Ethiopia.

Today, Ethiopians are facing great hardship, oppression and suffering. Their power to resist has been greatly reduced by all of the brutal actions of the current government. Many have been silenced and have lost hope. Most of those in power, not only in Ethiopia, but also in the international community, have ignored the cries of our people and some have actually contributed to sustaining the misery. However, as the repression increases, the news of it becomes increasingly difficult to contain, for instance the recent arrest of the New York Times reporter, Jeff Gettleman, and others in the Ogaden region. It was so embarrassing that the media was pressured to suppress the report, but of course, it leaked out. As the “friends of the Meles regime” find such “damage control” increasingly more risky—as it painfully diminishes their own worldwide influence and credibility—God can use these situations in an unforeseen way to advance His purposes for the oppressed.

The solutions to our crisis are not simple and will require more than we as people can accomplish, but yet, with God's help and intervention, the impossible becomes possible, but only if people of faith under gird this entire effort with prayer. Human effort can easily fail, especially when we are so overpowered, but God can do "exceedingly more than we can ask or imagine" if we call on him.

"But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" Amos 5:24

Action Plan:

Religious and spiritual leaders can play a significant role in bringing about truth, justice, integrity, morality, peace and reconciliation by prayer, speaking out and modeling their faith. We encourage anyone who is convicted of the need for this, to prayerfully take action. We cannot know all the ways God might use individuals, groups or communities to bring this about. We have a few suggestions, but are certain that many more will come to life as people pray for God's leading.

Here are a few preliminary ideas:

- Seek God individually, not just on one day, but as a way of life and let that relationship transform other relationships around you.
- Pray for others—in your family, in your place of worship, in your communities and outside all of these. Pray for Ethiopia and include other people, groups, regions or ethnic groups, particularly those with whom there might exist unresolved conflicts. If possible, resolve these conflicts.
- View the Internet sites that encourage prayer movements, small and large. One might be the Global Day of Prayer site (<http://globaldayofprayer.com/index.php>) or many others one can locate through one of the Internet search engines.
- Set up your own website regarding a prayer movement to encourage others and update them as to needs and progress.
- Find two other people of faith to pray with regarding all aspects of our nation
- Organize prayer events in your areas or larger ones that might include prayer and reconciliation conferences, meetings or rallies, Paltalk prayer meetings and organizing discussions, small and large prayer vigils throughout the country and in Addis Ababa, etc.
- Promote music, art, theatre and literature (poems, etc) that reflect God, his love of the people, how He stands for justices, etc.
- Pray for freedom and democracy to come through a peaceful transition and that ethnically based violence is not only avoided, but that it comes to an end as a system of justice is resurrected.
- Pray for unity, love, respect, peace and reconciliation between the people of Ethiopia and be examples of reaching out to others in doing so that all Ethiopians may belong and be included.
- Pray for Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and the others in the EPRDF, in the capital and in the regions of our country, that they will repent of their actions and promote free elections, democracy and freedom for the Ethiopian people in a peaceful transfer of power.
- Pray that even if our Prime Minister and others in the EPRDF do not turn to God, that God will change their position so that they will release the opposition leaders, human rights activists, educators, journalists and all the political prisoners in all other regions of the country and that they will help change Ethiopia into a more just, peaceful, free and democratic country.
- Pray for all persons in government, including in the military, all over the country, that many will rise up and take strong moral stands for right, truth and justice.
- Pray that God can breathe health into our laws, the legal system, the economy, the institutions of faith (churches, mosques, etc), the educational system, the health delivery system, the media, political groups and other institutions.
- Pray for people in poverty that God would meet their physical needs. Whenever those with more can share, do so with great joy, as you are spreading the love of God to them.
- Pray for the many homeless or displaced that they would find shelter. Help wherever you can.
- Pray for those in prison, for God to give them help, strength and their freedom. Help their families whenever needed and possible.
- Pray for those in positions of influence that God might convict their souls and help them to take courageous stands for right and truth.

- Pray for those unemployed, for those struggling to maintain businesses, farms, etc that they would find a means to support themselves and their families.
 - Pray for those suffering from diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, female problems, water-borne illnesses and other health ailments, that they might recover their health and gain access to needed services and medication.
 - Pray for those caught in the cycles of poverty, injustice, violence, crime, prostitution, etc that God would help them find a way of release, reminding them that God loves them.
 - Pray that the human rights abuses, injustices and economic abuses will end in all parts of our country.
 - Pray for the widows, orphans and vulnerable in our society. Help them whenever you are able.
 - Pray for those in areas of conflict in our country, like in the Ogaden, and in our neighboring countries like Eritrea, Somalia, and the Sudan, that peace, justice and freedom will also come to them.
 - Pray for the Somalian people, as the government oppressing us is now oppressing them. Pray that they obtain true justice and a system of government that will respect their rights and liberty and pray for an end to the fighting.
 - Pray for our Ethiopian troops in Somalia and elsewhere in our country, like in Ogaden, many of whom have also victimized us, that they will be convicted by God to cease from committing any crimes against humanity and that the misery and killing will soon end.
 - Pray that those wrongly supporting this regime from the outside, for their own interests, that they will be convicted, persuaded or otherwise made to stop doing so, wherever that support is perpetuating the suffering and misery of people.
 - Your ideas, inspired by God
- “May God arise, may his enemies be scattered; may his foes flee before him. As smoke is blown away by the wind, may you blow them away; as wax melts before the fire, may the wicked perish before God. But may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful. Sing to God, sing praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds—his name is the LORD—and rejoice before him.” Psalm 68:1-4***

Conclusion: For Such a Time as This

As the time of the Ethiopian Millennium draws closer, we should be reminded that it is not a time right now to celebrate, but instead is a time to grieve and pray for our country. It is time to reclaim our country of Ethiopia to be used for good instead of as a weapon of evil. It is a precious treasure God has given to us to use with responsibility and care in sustaining our lives and the lives of others who are depending on it for their survival. Everyone knows of our long history of suffering. We are an ancient country of 3,000 years, but what have we done? We have run away from God, lost our identity and our sense of purpose. In its place, we now have misery, poverty, manipulation and abuse from our government, greed, hatred and corruption.

We have forgotten that God is not gone from our country just because we are so miserable. There are Ethiopians who think that because they live in a hut, have children who cannot go to school, have no food for their children—forcing them to beg on the streets, or because they are unemployed, disabled or blind—again, pushing them to become beggars, criminals or prostitutes on the streets of our cities, such as in Addis Ababa, or because they come from some marginalized minority group, that they are not loved as much by God as those richer in the West, who may live in mansions or castles. But God loves us equally. It does not matter that we live in a hut because God is a God who loves those inside the huts or homeless on the streets just as much as those in great house. In fact, many in places of luxury, could learn from the poor in our societies about lifting up their faces to God who has built mansions in heaven for those who truly seek Him in humility, no matter what their circumstances on earth.

We boast about never being colonized while at the same time we are ashamed that our country is known for its misery, violence, starvation, death and suffering. God may be giving us a time to change Ethiopia. It is a time to get out from our homes where we have hidden ourselves. We must be liberated from our fears that control our lives and prohibit us from taking the action which would set us free from bondage of the Lie through God's Truth. If you strongly believe in God, and step out in faith, He will guide you and go with you. Even if we are following an invisible God, He is there, marching with you from all parts of our country—from Addis Ababa, from Afar, Amhara, from Benishangul-Gumuz, from Dire Dawa, from Harari, from Oromia, from Somali, from Gambella, from Southern Nations and from Tigray. If we persevere in our faith in God, our time will come and the walls of Jericho will fall down and we will praise Him for such a miracle. The only way we can truly find our purpose, define our destiny and discover our identity is as God's children. Then, as we start marching—at such a time as this—others will join us.

This may be the moment of time that God has given us to do our part. This is a call to come to God to seek His divine help in lifting the curse from our land. We have been given such a time as this and let us not waste it. If we obey God and follow his leading, he will be in front of us, behind us and on our sides. We will be surrounded by the mighty forces of God and we will not fall, but stand.

**“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as waters cover the sea.”
Habakkuk 2:14**