



ANUAK JUSTICE COUNCIL

Justice, Peace and Freedom

Mr. Obang's prayer at the Solidarity symposium on: "Where do we go from here?" in Washington D.C.

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Saturday, August 30, 2008

Dear Almighty God,

We call on you today because you are our only hope for the future. We come to you as people you have created, but who have failed you. Yet, only because of your greatness, love, mercy and goodness have you continued to stretch out your arms to us, urging us to seek you and to turn from our destructive ways.

We Ethiopians are in a desperate place, resulting from our failure to listen to you. Instead, we have turned away in rebellion, pride and self-reliance, thinking we do not need you. But now, we are in the midst of such a grave crisis that it threatens our very survival as a people. We come to you for your help and guidance in leading us out from the pit of despair, misery and suffering—a pit that we have dug for ourselves.

We praise you and lift up your name in honor, for you are our Creator and the Lord of all the earth. In you is light and no darkness. You established the rules and principles of this universe and they are holy, just and good. All things are under your control. You have created us in your image and established the value of each life as precious in your sight. There is no other like you in all the universe.

I thank you God for bringing us into this world at this time of your choosing. You have not brought us here by accident, but you have given each of us a responsibility for our days ahead. To fulfill the highest of purposes for our lives, we must be fully yours and live as you have commanded us to do—loving you first and then loving and protecting others as we do ourselves.

The people who feel the pain of others.

Dear Father, I thank you for those here today—Ethiopians, our speakers and others who have come this afternoon or who have joined us through Paltalk or via a radio program aired later. You know each listener and I ask you to bless and empower each of these people who have heard the call to love each other, who want to make the wrongs in our society right and who are choosing to stand on the side of justice for all people. They have heard the screaming of the suffering people and did not shut their ears. They have seen the blood of the wounded and did not block their eyes. They have inhaled the scent of death and have come to tend to the dying, hoping that more might live because of their actions.

These are the people who feel the pain of others. There are millions more Ethiopians in Ethiopia and throughout the world who are like these Ethiopians here with us today. They have heard your call and are seeking a way to answer. Lord Almighty, we call on you to show them the way.

Almighty God, we are asking you to bless this meeting because you are the only one who really knows how things work. You are the only one who knows our inner thoughts and motives—whether they are evil or good. You are the only one who can so easily bring down the plans of those who think they can get away with carrying out their plots against the weak.

You are the only one who can ease the pain of this bleeding nation. We know we cannot do it alone for the battle of Ethiopia is not a physical battle, but it is a spiritual battle—one that we have no hope of winning without you. We are asking you to bless us, to guide us and to show us the way out.

We are your children, but in Ethiopia, the guns, the money, the status, the education, the power—whether we have it or do not have it—make us fail to understand that we are your children. So we are coming here to ask you to nourish and enlarge the solidarity that you have already planted in our hearts.

We are stuck with no way out.

Lord, you know that the reason why we are having this meeting is because we are stuck with no way out. Even without talking about the politics of Ethiopia, we know of the urgency to address the overwhelming hunger and starvation of millions of Ethiopians.

The problem is so deep and widespread, with millions starving, that we have no idea how to meet this great need. Many are dying daily, not only in the rural areas, but in the cities. We know you have resources beyond what we can ask or imagine; yet, our government is denying it and many of us do the same. This is just one of the more serious problems.

We are in a crisis along many, many lines, but refuse to acknowledge it. Ethiopia is like a hut that has caught on fire. We can hear the crackling of the fire and smell the smoke, but the family of Ethiopians inside the hut are still sitting in the hut rather than rushing out and together, dousing the fire with water. We take no action and will all suffer, just because we refuse to accept or work together with our family members you have given to us.

It is you, O Lord, who set us in families and have told us how we are to treat each other if we are to have a great family—with respect, value, care and appreciation, regardless of disagreements. If you take Ethiopia as an example of a family, we can see how unhealthy our family of Ethiopians has become.

In other words, Ethiopia today is not the example you call us to be because of the animosity between us. Ethiopians do not talk with each other, work with each other or forgive each other. I pray Lord, that this day, you help us to lay aside our prejudices, resentments and biases in order to discover the solidarity that comes when we can become one under you or at least work together.

Almighty God, we called this meeting for this purpose and we want this kind of solidarity movement for a new Ethiopia to come about, where we cease from demonizing each other and instead, show each other grace. We know that we must first expose ourselves to you and admit to others what and who we really are—taking off the sheet of pretense that covers up the long list of negatives in Ethiopia—each of which is destroying us from within. We must expose the truth about ourselves if we are to be revived as a country and as a people.

O LORD, you and the whole world knows Ethiopia as a place where people do not take care of each other. The backbone of Ethiopia is broken and we have become paralyzed and no one is around to help us get from one place to another.

Our consciences have become numb from our apathy

We have become numb by what we have seen—the pain, the misery and the death. Our consciences have become numb from our apathy or by our repeated participating in the exploitation of our own people. Our towns and cities are full of beggars and we cannot feed ourselves. The starvation is killing our children. The list of negative things is countless, but the sad thing is, people do not talk about it.

The reasons are many-- false pride, worshiping leaders, thinking we are number one in the world because we have never been colonized, saying we are better than everyone else, being so proud of our ancient rocks and 3000 year-old civilization; but yet, for the last 2000 years, what have we done? We are going backward rather than forward. We repeatedly fail by putting our ethnicity before our humanity and unfortunately, we are not getting better but are actually getting worse. Please God, forgive us and revive us!

I confess my own guilt and ask you to convict the souls of the people to acknowledge their own guilt. We Ethiopians have to repent and tell the truth, even if it hurts, is embarrassing or shameful. You have taught us that only the truth can set us free and we have lived a culture of deception rather than of transparency and accountability. Only the truth can allow us to love each other, appreciate each other and care for each other as we should. Truth is the only thing that will remove this sheet of deception that has been covering the blood of our brothers and sisters on the land of Ethiopia.

The negatives of Ethiopia are so great that the people are either too numb or too ashamed to want to talk about it. Yet, O Lord, you call us to repent, requiring us to confess our emptiness, rebellion, wrongdoing and alienation from you and from each other if we are to move ahead and survive as a nation and a people. You require that we expose the truth, to put our humanity before our ethnicity and to live out the truth that unless all are free, no one is free.

We acknowledge that we Ethiopians have an infected wound and we are not doing anything about it. We have an invisible sickness that is growing inside of us, cutting off our veins, strangling our organs and threatening to eventually make us collapse. Like clay, pottery or eggs that fall to the ground, once we drop and disintegrate, no matter how hard we try, we may not be able to put Ethiopia back together again.

The image of Africa is the face of life that no one wants.

O Father in heaven, what have we done wrong? Is it a curse and can it be reversed? You are the God called Creator that is known about in every tribe from every corner of the earth where life exists because we can see your work through what you created. Each of us has enough evidence around us to know you as our Creator God. It is you to whom I am calling and asking, “What have we done?”

The image of Africa is the face of life that no one wants. This is my appeal directly to you, O LORD, for Ethiopia and for Africa. You know that our image is of pain and unhappiness. When we look at Ethiopia, we know that the powerful, the wealthy, the brilliant or money from the West cannot solve this problem. The problems are too vast and deep and require spiritual answers and spiritual transformation.

I am calling on you, Almighty God, to hear me and to answer my question of to why we have gone through so much suffering as Ethiopians. It is true and obvious that what we do to one another is wrong and behind much of our hardship—the neglect of each other, the hatred and the lack of appreciation of others is part of the reason for the suffering and pain that is going on in Ethiopia. We have suffered so long because of the evil we have committed and because of nature—the droughts, floods, diseases and other challenges. We know all human beings have suffered, but as we look at it today, it seems that the African or the black race has suffered more than anyone.

Today, if you look at the image of suffering, the face of the dying what you see is the face of the black. If you look in America—in American churches, in mosques or synagogues—in most of these if you see a picture or poster calling people to help the poor and those suffering, you always see the black child, the black woman or a black face reflected in all of these things. Why, Lord God? It must go back to the continent of Africa.

I cannot say that the people of this continent are lazy, without talent or immoral because I can see that they are hardworking, intelligent and good people in many ways, just like all the human beings you have created in your image. So, what have we done wrong?

How come this richest of continents in the world has become one that holds the poorest people in the world? How come we fail to produce the leaders that will protect and nurture us? Instead we have produced leaders that exploit, oppress, destroy and kill us. How come? Is this a curse?

Outsiders have used this continent for as long as we can remember to enrich themselves. If you look at the huge amount of wealth in this world that has come from Africa, one wonders how we continue under such hardship.

We know that it is not only outsiders who see our resources instead of our people. We know that it is also many of our own people who forget about the people while getting personally rich on the natural resources of the land. Because the people are struggling to survive, you know that they have little ability and few resources to resist those who exploit the land. Lord, you decry such exploitation repeatedly in the Holy Scriptures.

Dear God, please work in our lives and in our hearts because we have failed as a people. We are asking you God to touch and change our hearts, but we do not want to stop there. We also ask you to change the hearts of outsiders who contribute to our oppression and suffering, sometimes without knowing the stories of the people, but you, O God, know our stories.

The change must take place in individual souls.

Dear Lord, please take this curse from us. We pray that you lift it off from us and replace it with a blessing. We plead for your mercy, forgiveness and blessings. We pray that we become known for our faith and for the way we follow you with great devotion rather than as poster children for misery.

Dear Father, we have failed as human beings and our failure is visible in by how we fail to protect and care for each other. It is obvious that the work ahead of us is too big of a task for us without your help. If it were only a physical task we could try to do it, but what we need is a spiritual and moral transformation that permeates our society.

The change must take place in individual souls as you bring us to new life. But this life must not linger there alone, but instead we know you want us to share it with others. That is why we ask you to “Revive Ethiopia” one person at a time, but multiplying with first a small ripple and which then becomes a huge wave of change across the nation.

Dear LORD, we know that there is no earthly medication we can take to fix our illness for the medication we need is spiritual and the cure must come from within, through the purification only you can give to our souls.

Unless we are all free, none of us will be free

May you, O God, change our hearts, for once our hearts change, we can become the people you want us to be. That will change how we treat ourselves, our neighbors, our towns, our cities and our nation.

May you, O God, also change the hearts of those outside Ethiopia and Africa so there would be a reactivation of their consciences so that outsiders would not come to Africa only to take the resources and discard the people, but that they would bring with them genuine solutions and partnerships based on values of compassion, equality, justice and respect towards all people.

This is what I mean by calling on you God to really do the work in our hearts. Please dear God, please do not abandon us. Please dear God, do not forget us. Guide us as we struggle to get out from this pit—from this tunnel of darkness until we are free and living in the brightness of your light.

We are asking you to reach out to each one of us, reminding us that unless we are all free, none of us will be free. Remind us that the value of our humanity is of much greater value than anything else for you created humanity before you created tribes and ethnicities. We are asking you for your help because none of us will have justice unless we learn to give justice. We know you are a God who loves justice because you love all people. Let this truth penetrate the hearts and minds of Ethiopians so Ethiopia can be revived.

Let this same message reverberate throughout Africa so that Africa can be revived so completely that we become a blessing to others as you work your out your will and purposes through us. Humankind cannot do it alone or we create false gods who end up destroying us.

When we have money, we can trust in our money and it becomes our god. When we have power, we can trust in power and it becomes our god. When we have guns and military power, we can become our own god and forget about pleasing and trusting in you. When we have anger and bitterness, these can become our gods and we lose the image of you and try to become our own god. Forgive us for giving up so much—you—for so little in return. Help us to recognize you as the only true God from whom we have hope and a future.

All else are lies and deceptions and we have no excuse for we know we did not create ourselves. The wealthy did not create themselves. The best educated did not create themselves. The most powerful of rulers of nations did not create themselves. Our breath and our heartbeat has come from you, O Lord, our only Creator God, nothing else, nothing artificial, nothing temporary, no illusion, but only you.

We acknowledge that we are not our own and we ask you, O Lord, to remind each of us that you not only created each of us, but you created the air that sustains us with every breath we take. That same air flows between people, villages, towns, cities, countries and continents. We may look at it that we are not here to protect others, but you God have demonstrated that our existence and our dependence on your provision is the same. You are the creator and none of us can claim that we are God.

How do we lift that curse? O Lord, we do not know, but we trust that as we lift our eyes to you, obeying your call to live our lives for you, that you will graciously teach us how to become a blessing to others.

May we humbly seek your face, O LORD, and honor you by bringing gifts to you on your Holy hill, by becoming a people, a nation and a continent that is a blessing to the world. In the name of Jesus Christ in the Bible, also known as Isa in the Qur'an, who was our example, our atonement and the only way to you, I pray. Amen

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