

Ebola Outbreak Is Not God's Judgment on Liberia

Dear Bishops, Pastors and Church Leaders in Liberia,

You are not alone! Thousands of believers across the world are praying with you during this devastating Ebola crisis. My prayer is that what the enemy meant for fear, death and destruction will become a fresh opportunity to present the Gospel of Christ, and that many across Liberia will rediscover Christ and His grace.

The spiritual concern of the Liberian Council of Churches has been widely publicized in secular and Christian newspapers in America and Europe, particularly the three days of prayer and fasting last week at the invitation of your esteemed President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

I remember with joy the time we spent together earlier this year at the Monrovia Friendship Festival and in the Gospel Revolution Seminar attended by about 900 church leaders.

I write with a deep concern about what is being said about God and the Ebola crisis.

- On Wednesday *The Washington Post* headlined, "God is angry with Liberia, local religious leaders say, blaming Ebola on 'homosexuality.'"
- The *Independent* in the U.K. on Thursday read, "Ebola virus: Liberia church leaders claim deadly outbreak is 'plague' sent by God."
- The headline from WND, America's Independent News Network simply stated on Thursday, "Liberia: Ebola, plague from God due to sin."

It breaks my heart to think that those afflicted by the Ebola virus, some of whom may be in their final days on Earth, would

think that they have been singled out by God for special punishment. Beyond the individual sufferers, the message that these headlines carry to society at large is of a God who is vindictive, petty and condemning.

If there ever were a time Liberia needed the Good News that God is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, and not imputing their trespasses to them (see 2 Cor. 5:19), that time is now. This is the message of hope for all who believe.

You will remember that we discussed these matters during the Gospel Revolution Seminar. I lovingly remind you that in spite of the sin of witchcraft in the city of Samaria, Phillip did not speak a message of God's anger, but he rather preached Christ to them (see Acts 8).

When the apostle Paul visited one of the most sinful cities in ancient times, Corinth, he spoke of nothing except Jesus Christ crucified. The great apostle's focus was not on diagnosing or enumerating the sins of the people, but to present the remedy for sin, which is Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our greatest example of how the "goodness of God brings people to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). He stated unequivocally that his mission was not to condemn but to save. When Jesus, the friend of sinners and tax collectors, met the notorious Zacchaeus, He did not point to Zacchaeus' sins; he simply visited his house. Then Zacchaeus, as a result of Jesus' visit, acknowledged his sins and made restitution.

The same holds true today. If we tell people their sins, they will tell us of the hypocrisies they see in the church. Alternately when we tell people about Christ and His Gospel, many will want to receive the new creation life that God offers.

I urge you in your prayer to not focus on invoking God's blessing on Liberia because truly His blessing for your nation has already been released through the finished work of Jesus

Christ. Instead, pray that you will be given utterance to present the gospel in a more effective way so that this crisis will be turned into an opportunity for Liberians to discover Jesus Christ.

While the Old Covenant prophets focused on the sins of the people, the New Covenant apostles put their focus on the remedy. We are to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and the apostles, because we are ministers of the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:4-18).

If we were to list all the sins of Liberia or any nation, that list would be endless. Sadly, the message that has gone out from Liberia is that God is angry with sin, rather than a message that *God is smiling on Liberia*, because of Christ's finished work. Preach Christ and then invite Liberians to repent of dead works and to have faith in Christ (Heb. 6:1).

Christ's arms are lovingly outstretched toward sinners of all kinds; heterosexuals, homosexuals, criminals as well as pharisaical sinners. Someone once said that if God doesn't judge our nation, He would have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. Such thinking is contrary to the Gospel. Instead if God were to judge Liberia or any nation today like Sodom and Gomorrah were judged, the Father would have to apologize to the Lord Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ at the cross already absorbed the wrath of sin and evil. We live after the cross of Christ. This is the day of salvation. Now is the acceptable time.

Your servant in Christ,
Peter Youngren

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