

Speech at the opening of Agriforum's "All Africa" International conference

Henry Jackson

Distinguished guests

And for those of us who have been ousted from our farms –
"Extinquished guests"

Ladies and gentlemen

May I say friends

In the past two years or so that I have lived in South Africa, after having to flee from Zimbabwe almost overnight. My wife and I have visited many farmers on their farms throughout the length and breadth of these two countries. We have prayed and spent time with and counselled those who have suffered through violence. We have also tried to comfort those whose family members have been brutally murdered.

I have seen men weep unashamedly in frustration and fears of an unknown future, and tried to console those older parents whose life long dreams of their children one day taking over their farms have been shattered as they sadly wave goodbye to their children as these seek greener pastures abroad.

In my deep concern and love for the farming community I have prayed much and searched the Scriptures for practical

answers. The Scriptures and thoughts I share with you this afternoon therefore do not come lightly.

I would like to read a passage from the book of Ephesians

Eph 6:10. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

6:11 "Put on the full armour of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

6:13 "Therefore take up the full armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day..."

This phrase "the evil day" (translated in Afrikaans as 'die dag van onheil') appears often in the Scriptures, and particularly in relation to the end times. The Bible describes this evil day in various places as follows:

**when evil will be called good, and good will be called evil*

**when darkness will be substituted for light and light for darkness*

**when the wicked will be justified for a bribe, and the rights of the just will be taken away (Isa 5:20-23)*

**when unjust laws will be made.*

**when men will be lovers of themselves and lovers of money*

**a time of unparalleled lawlessness*

When we look at these and several other pointers, it is clear that we are living in these last days. The question is how are we to survive at such times. The Bible gives us direction.

Firstly, we need to recognise that we are at war, a battle for the souls of men and women of all races. The enemy is not human, but the devil and his demonic agents, and the weapons we are to use in this fight are not guns, but spiritual in nature.

And, the farmers are at the forefront of this battle between good and evil.

The early missionaries Robert Moffat and David Livingstone poured out their life blood to bring Christianity and civilisation to Africa, and at the end of their lives they had to confess that with all their efforts they had virtually no true converts. It was these two men who suggested that the only way to evangelize Africa was to establish farming enterprises and mission stations; and out of that industry. They understood that the development of the infrastructure would open the doors for the effective preaching of the gospel. Each farm would inherently be a mission station. Each farmer is not only a producer of food for the community, but also a centre of compassion and caring for the sick, and the bereaved.

Like many of you I have often been involved in the funeral arrangements for staff members and their families; or been woken up in the middle of the night to take a pregnant mother to the clinic to have her baby. Many schools have established on farms for the children, clinics for the sick, communication

networks are set up and people are gainfully employed so as to break the curse of poverty. Churches are then built to teach Christian principles in order to break the bonds of fear and witchcraft over the local people. Multitudes of the local populace have been set free to become cultured, civilised people who can add value to the community as a whole. That was the vision of Moffat and Livingstone.

As such the farmer, being in the forefront of the battle for the souls of the people of this continent, also takes the brunt of the hatred of the enemy who desires to destroy humanity. Attacks come in the form of omens by witchdoctors, a plague of constant theft and sabotage of equipment, breaking down of fences, as also attacks against farming families, whilst police turn a blind eye. Governments have added to the burden through legislation which cripples farming enterprise and makes it nearly impossible for farmers to operate profitably. This discourages the new generation from considering a career in farming. The Bible calls this "Unjust laws".

On what grounds can government charge exorbitant levies on rain water which farmers collect and pump from their own dams or boreholes to irrigate crops - water which was freely given by God? How is it that heavy taxes can be imposed on developed farming infrastructure which farmers have paid for from their own pockets? This discourages any further investment. How is it that farmers can be murdered or ousted from their farms whilst government look on without concern? These are unjust laws.

Farmers have endured much, and it is a miracle that there are still farmers left.

So, what should the farmers do? Jesus gave us direction. He said that we were to be salt in a rotting world, and a bright light in the darkness. In the passage we read we find the instruction to stand strong in this battle, putting our trust in God who rules overall. But there is a cost involved.

Throughout history the establishing of Christian standards in the dark world has cost the lives of countless millions. Under the Roman Caesars some 10 million Christians were murdered. Under Roman Catholicism in the dark ages some 50 million Protestants were put to death. Under the iron and Bamboo curtains many more millions died, and under the ISIS in the Middle East one Christian loses his life for his faith every 17 minutes as we speak.

This war that we are experiencing in Africa against the farming community is nothing new. It is a war of evil against good. But, it is in adversity that the Christian faith and message shines the brightest.

Arrogance, hatred, (including racial hatred), and bitterness diminishes our own strength and plays into the hands of the enemy of our souls. It destroys the Christian witness which we are called to proclaim. The purity of the Christian message is always found in love and kindness and forgiveness during extreme provocation, and this can only be achieved through implicit faith in God, and a humble submission to His rulership and commands. God is opposed to pride and arrogance, and if that is in our hearts we will find our lives and farming enterprises disintegrating.

Mere religious traditions and practices are not enough to keep us standing strong in this day of evil. It requires a

humble, personal and vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. It requires that we understand the bigger picture of why we have been given the skills and the land. Our farms do not belong to us – we are mere stewards of God’s land and resources, to whom also we must give an account in the day of judgment for our stewardship. We have a purpose to fulfil which goes far beyond making money.

Yes, we must stand up for what is right. Yes, we must resist evil. Yes, we must care for the poor. But it will take more than that to keep us standing. It will take unity of the faith. It will take a love for one another that will put our neighbour’s interests above our own. It will take a revival in each home where God is honoured and given first place, and where His Word is again lived and taught to our children. It will take a dying to ourselves and our own lusts for riches and power, and a coming alive to the needs of the world around us. It will take a turning away from our own sins and a crying out to God for forgiveness.

It will take something which is beyond our own power and ability to give, and thus we should pray to God to help us in our desperate time of need. After all it was He who said;

“If my people who are called by My name shall humble themselves and pray, and turn from their wicked ways; then I shall hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2Chr 7:14)

Friends, a day of reckoning is surely coming in which each man and woman will answer to Almighty God for their own deeds. All wickedness will be destroyed in that day, and

righteousness will be exalted. May we not be found wanting in that day and may revival come to Africa.

Please may I ask you all to stand as we pray

Our Heavenly Father, as we open discussion at this forum, I pray that You will be honoured above all else. We willingly humble ourselves before You today. We ask You to forgive our sins as we turn away from them. We ask for Your grace to help us in this time of our extreme need. May you break the staff of wickedness in our continent. May righteousness prevail.

Dear Heavenly Father, You instructed us to pray for wisdom if we lacked such. We therefore ask You to grant us the wisdom we need as we seek Your face. May You deliver us from evil and bless us with a unity of faith and purpose.

As we put our trust in You, Heavenly Father, may You grant us Your peace and joy and revival in this our continent of Africa.

We ask it in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen