

## **Grand Opening of the EMS Focus 2009 – 2010**

**“Giving Account of our Hope – Christian Witness in a Pluralistic World” (I Pet. 3:8-17)**

**Sunday Worship in Adenta Victory Church in Accra/Ghana, 21 June 2009**

### **Reflection from Africa**

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#### **Introduction**

Our reflection is based on a letter written in early A.D. 60. At this time, the Roman Empire under Nero the Emperor displayed zero-tolerance towards Christianity. Believers in Christ faced discrimination, slander, confiscation of property and threats to their lives. These hardships caused some early Christians to wonder if God had abandoned them. The situation was scary and volatile; some found it not easy to put their lives at risk. I do not know how they viewed Paul's words in Romans: "I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is God's powerful method of bringing all who believe it to heaven." (Rom. 1:16)

#### **The Message of Peter's letter communicates to Africans**

Many in Africa know abuse; harassment; discrimination; oppression; suffering.

Africans have to be strong in faith. Yes, these are people who know they have not received the spirit of cowardice. These are persons who are convinced as God's anointed ones that there is grace and hope to counteract fear and suffering.

A believing African endorses this letter as a "survival manual". Even when all around us looks dark, when we are on the verge of despair, even as we live in a shattered and hopeless world: Our faith is deeply rooted in Jesus Christ, the Lord.

He cheers us: "And I have overcome the world." Trials and tribulations will be there, but Christ our victorious hero is on our side. Without doubt we give account of our hope. A believing Christian is able to say: "With Christ in the vessel; I fear no storms." The power of the gospel is a life-giving force.

Many challenges face us: HIV/AIDS pandemic, poverty, suffering; poor service delivery; wars; bad governance; refusal to allow a succession plan in leadership positions; assassinations, lack of peace; greed.

An African believer will echo Job's statement: "I know that my Redeemer lives."

Many challenges face us: We in Africa have the wealth of deep spirituality. We know our Lord, Jesus Christ, lived; suffered; was crucified on the cross; died and was buried, but he rose again. "He is the life and resurrection."

Abraham, the hero of faith: As a result of his deep rooted faith and obedience he came to be known as the father of the faithful. Rom. 4:18: "Who against hope believed in hope; that he might become the father of many nations."

An African believer is always convinced that we are saved by hope. Churches are always full when it comes time to praise and worship God. Many people still promote corporate prayer times. This clearly shows we have hope in Jesus. "He alone is the anchor of our lives." Heb. 6:18-19

"Be strong, be courageous all you that hope in the Lord." Ps. 31:24

The psalmist continues and says: "What, then, can I hope for, Lord? I place my hope in you." Ps. 39:7

Concerning situations which raise doubt; anxiety and fear:

In situations that make us feel scared, e.g. Global economic crisis, threats of wars; migrations; refugee challenges; diseases: We put our hope in God.

Ethnic vendettas may result in genocide ... There may be intolerable practices such as child molestation, abuse of women. Even so, an African believer is encouraged knowing Jesus is Immanuel: God with us. His grace is sufficient for us.

Negro slaves of old: We recall these singing songs of hope while reaping cotton. "Kumbaya my Lord", "We shall overcome", "Oh freedom".

We recall songs of hope expressed through freedom songs.

We see the hope in South Africa incorporated in the freedom charter: "The People shall govern."

## **Conclusion**

African believers know Christ the Lord lives and rules. Wherever we are we bear witness in this name. He is our hope; our salvation, our life.

Amen.