



An Exposition of the Book of Esther: Assurance of Deliverance for God's People

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Abstract: *The book of Esther has a practical narrative of God's deliverance for his people (The Jews), who were facing a peculiar persecution from a political leader (Haman). This article explores an examination of Jewish experiences in Shushan by looking at the wicked plot of Haman to destroy the entire Jewish people for his selfish reason. On the contrary, they uphold God's divine intervention of delivering them through Mordecai and Queen Esther. This narrative has a missiological implications for Christians who are suffering one form of persecution or the other in the hands of wicked political and religious leaders in Africa. They should trust God for their deliverance as it was the case with Esther and her people. Wicked Politicians should learn a lesson from what happened to Haman in his quest to kill Mordecai and the Jews.*

Keywords: *Deliverance, Jews, Fast, Assurance and People*

1. INTRODUCTION

The story of Esther begins in 483 BC, 103 years after Nebuchadnezzar had taken the Jews in Captivity in Babylon. The book attracted a lot of Christian scholars. Some are positive about the book, and reference it as worthy, while some scholars reacted against it; for two major reasons.

The book of Esther was said to have been accepted at the council of Jamma in AD 90, when the Jewish canonization process was completed.

- a. The name of God is not mentioned anywhere in the book
- b. God's people are consistently referenced to as Jews.
- c. Queen Esther was married to a pagan King.

The entire book possesses an in depth spiritual and theological revelation that can serve as standard for Christian spirituality and morality. The character of Haman in the book of Esther, is a clear reflection of a pagan community, where Esther and the entire Jews found themselves. Perhaps that may be the reason why the name of God (Yahweh) cannot be mentioned openly for fear of oppositions. Desmond asserts that, "Of great significance the message for the book, is Haman's dependence upon chance, having decided to pursue his plan of genocide against the Jews. He cast lots daily for almost a full year in order to determine a lucky day on which to put the plan into action."

The book of Esther clearly demonstrated that the Almighty God has a full control of human affairs, either good or bad. God made a special arrangement of deliverance for the Jews by removing some obstacle, and thwarted Haman's plan.

- a. Vashti's deposition Esther 1:10-22
- b. King Ahasuerus Choice of Esther as queen Esther 2:1
- c. Mordecai discovered a plot against the king. Esther 2:21-22

F.F Bruce, (1979:511), assert that, "The theme of God exalting the humble and bringing low those in high position may also be observed in the stories of Jacob (Gen 25:23, Joseph Gen. 41:39-440. Ephraim, Gen. 48:14-20), Gideon (Judge 6:14-16), David (1 Sam. 16:6-13, and many other throughout both Old and New Testaments.

2. DATE AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER

The date and authorship of the book was not vividly mentioned, but there were records by which the date and authorship can be traced. Bruce, (511.) assert that,

The type of Hebrew used in Esther is very different from the Hebrew of the second century B.C. which has been recorded from Qumran. This has compelled scholars to, abandon the previously popular hypothesis of a late date for Esther. Increasingly a 4th or 5th century date is being accepted. Another piece of linguistic evidence supporting early date in the absence of any Hellenism such as are frequently found in 2nd and 3rd century B.C. Carson (1994: 448), assert that: "The book makes scholars to comment about authorship. The Linguistic evidence and the detailed knowledge of Persian life that the book displays, make it likely that the author is a Jew living in Persia at a time not long after the events recounted in the book. The author may well have incorporated material originally written by Mordecai himself". (Esther 9:10). The general theme of the book is about the divine providence of God's deliverance for his people.

2.1. Statement of Problems

So many Christians are suffering one form of persecution or the other in Africa and they urgently need God's divine intervention for them to be delivered as it was the case with the Jews in the time of Esther. There should be men and women who will take the burden of leadership to bring a lasting solution to the crises that the Christians are facing all over Africa.

2.2. Exegesis of Esther 4:12-17

When Mordecai got the bad news of the plot of Haman to kill all the Jews in Susa, he tore his clothes, and put on sack cloth and ashes. That is a symbol of mourning and sorrow. Mordecai reported the whole matter to Esther. In verse 12, Esther words were reported to Mordecai, on how difficult was it for anybody to see the king without an invitation. According to the Babylonian custom, anyone who sees the king without invitation will attract capital punishment.

In verse 13, Mordecai, sent back an answer to Esther insisting upon it that whatever risk she could take to save the Jews should be taken "Do not think that because you are in the king's house, you alone of all the Jews will escape." That statement made by Mordecai was not a threat to Esther, but a common factual reminder to her about the general danger facing the entire exile Jews in the land.

In verse 14, Mordecai made another strong statement concerning the saving power of deliverance to the Jews that will surprise everybody, "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place. Duetzel, (2000:40) notes that:

Mordecai undoubtedly implied that God would protect his people, and that he had purpose to use Esther by causing her to be chosen as queen. This is a theological high point in the book. Mordecai believed that God guides in political events and in individuals lives, even though those in power do not acknowledge him.

"But you and your father's family will perish, and who knows, but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this? Mordecai here is probably thinking of God's divine punishment upon, Esther and her family, if she will disobey him, and necessarily revenge for the Jews. Mordecai clearly refers to Esther's throne as a divine providential plan of God, for the purpose of saving, the Jews.

In verse 15 and 16, Esther finally accepted the initiative of standing in as an advocate for the salvation of the Jews. She commanded a fast amongst the Jews all over Susa, for three days, seeking for divine help "If I perish, I Perish" Esther still has natural fear, for whom the kings were, and for what the Custom was also. In verse 17, Mordecai carried out the instructions as commanded by Esther. God answered their prayers and offered them the deliverance they needed. Haman evil plan turn against Him.

3. APPLICATION BY A LEADER FOR THE DELIVERANCE OF HIS PEOPLE

"I will lift up my eyes to the hills where my help comes from? My help comes from the Lord the maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip He who watches over you will not slumber. Indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you, the Lord is at your right hand, the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will

keep you from all harm. He will watch over your life. The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forever more. (Psalm 121:1-8.)

There is no doubt that GOD has the natural and supernatural power to deliver his people in times of trouble. "And call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver you and you will honor me (Psalm 50:15). There are many practical examples for of God's saving power in the Bible both in the Old and New Testament. God took over the Battle of Jehoshaphat and his people in ". (2 Chro. 20). He fought for Gideon and his troops (Judges 7:15). He delivered Paul and Silas in (Acts 16:25). God is still delivering his people today. There are remarkable lessons to learn from the text under review. There are ungodly pagan evil men and women who can kill even an entire nation. (Haman as an example). Evil of men can consume them (the same Haman). God has a divine providence of salvation for his people. Mordecai respected the law of God and not of man- He feared God and not man. Esther risked her life for the deliverance of her community. There is power in fasting and prayer. God can change the plan of the enemy. God will not fail those who trust in him.

Duewel,(2000:40) notes that, "We too can be usually conscious of God's gracious hand upon our leadership and our people. This should be our experience repeatedly in this new dispersion. God is longing to be gracious to us (Isa. 30:18). How gracious he will be when you cry for help."

Once we truly believed in the saving power of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, we should not again require supernatural manifestation to know that we are within his will and plan. God understands our situations or circumstances.

As certainly as you have sensed God's presence and power in the past, just so certainly you will sense again. You are in the midst of conflict with the power of darkness. Your experience is not unique. God's chosen saints have at times hard days, weeks and even months of such challenges. But God's answers always come again, don't try to get off the train while you are going through the tunnel you are still enrooted to God's great victory. Hold on, and God's power will be revealed again?

Sometimes God works with great might without our knowledge, what we need to do is to trust him and hold unto the promises, he made to us, no matter what we are facing. Let us play our part like Mordecai and Esther, and live the rest of the battle to the Almighty God.

Johnstone, (2000:291), note that, "We are involved in the greatest and most bitterly fought war ever to be waged. The enemy will not surrender his final grip on, his crumbling empire until the king of kings and Lord of Lords, comes in triumph at the end of time. Every stronghold every bunker, every sinful heart will be a battle. Our wounds and casualties may be serious. Suffering and dying may be clearly seen. Yet we have the promise of supernatural protection in all."

We can continue to trust God for who he is and for what he does. His identity is found in his words and his supremacy is seen in his deeds and actions. Bonnke, (2000:192), note that, "we are not dealing with someone of limited skills, but He is the all sufficient one, with whom we can depend on for our entire affairs and give our lives to him".

4. TRUSTING GOD FOR DELIVERANCE AS A LEADER

When one considers this biblical passage in the light of its context, one will understand that Esther like Isaiah, are not new persons in the ministry of dealing with people in the context of leadership. Esther was also a queen who understood political leadership. Isaiah has been serving the Lord as a priest. Thus, being a priest, he knows the government and political life of Jerusalem since he lives in this city. However, this passage, manifest a dramatic call of priest Isaiah to the prophetic office and also as a leader. The man Isaiah has known Yahweh and is serving as a minister but the Lord reveals himself to him from glory to glory. This happened when the priest was in communion with God and performing his priestly responsibilities in the temple. Thus, the Lord reveals himself to him in his glory as the angels appear to him. Here, they are praising and glorifying the Holy God. Priest Isaiah sees himself as a perfect sinner, living within sinful people. This proves the act of humility and a repented heart in priest Isaiah. Thus, does not reveal that Isaiah has been a hypocrite but he has a deeper revelation of Yahweh. Leaders should humble themselves in Africa and seek the face of God like Esther and Isaiah did for the deliverance of their people from different calamities that are on the African continent. There many calamities in Africa that are to be handled by political leaders who have the will power to do.

Therefore, anyone leader who has personally encountered with the Lord, will certainly be transformed. A leader who is transformed and is committed to the Lord, devoting his time at the solitary with the Lord. Surely such a person will experience the goodness of the Lord better and serve his people effectively. In other words, he will know the mystery of the Lord in a special way. Especially his holiness, righteousness and justice. The passage further reveals to us that as priest Isaiah acknowledges his sinfulness. Thus, he considers himself totally condemned but the mercy of the Lord is shown to him. Here an angel is sent with a col of light which touches his mouth. This is a clear indication, that the Lord has removed his sin and has transformed his life. He is ripe to be used by God in a higher degree. This is based on the fact that he is not only an ancestral priest but a transformed and sanctifies man for the prophetic ministry based on calling not inheritance. African leaders and beyond should learn for the humility and act of repentance from both Esther and Isaiah who trusted God for their deliverance and that of their people.

The passage continues with the appeal and request of the Lord 'whom will I send? The new Isaiah declares his willingness as he is moved towards the love of God with a passion for his fellow man. He response positively, 'here am I send me send me'. Now the Lord gives him the message to be delivered to his people. Some theologians consider the book of Isaiah as the gospel in the Old Testament. This is because the book of Isaiah is a book of hope, with prophetic messages on the expected messiah (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7, 53:1f). From this biblical truth the pastor who knows the Lord will continue to cultivate the time to wait upon the Lord. He will surely listen to the Lord and be transformed from glory to glory. It is at this solitary period that such men of God encounter the Lord and receive messages to his people.

Similarly, Prophet Ezekiel is another biblical model, worth emulating since he eats the scroll it is bitter but it becomes sweet in his stomach. This symbolizes the fact that the word of God is bitter to the hearer but one who truly listens and obeys it, it becomes sweet like honey. No matter how hard the word of God is, it is purposely for transformation and the salvation of man (Ezek. 2:1-10; 3:1-15).

The activeness, effectiveness and forces in the word of God cannot be overemphasis. The minister of the gospel only needs to be in tune with the master or be connected with the word. His life is to portray what he preaches. When this happens the word of God proclaimed by the man of God becomes active and powerful.

The full gospel is delivered in the power of God and the Holy Spirit performs the work of conviction. He searches the heart and the mind of man. He rebukes and convinces him. The fruit of the gospel is manifested in the life of man. Thereafter, the sinner believes that Jesus is the Lord and Savior of his life. He believes the dead and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit convinces him within his heart. The Holy Spirit leads him towards genuine repentance as the sinner acknowledges his or her sin. Thus, he or she repents of his or her sin. Now that the believer truly believes in his heart, he is deeply moved to confess Jesus by his mouth (Rom. 10:8-9). Therefore, salvation comes through the power of the word. No one comes to him unless he is sent by the father through hearing the word of God. However, God who cares for man in totality desires that the holistic gospel is being taught and proclaimed on the land of Africa and the entire universe, since God uses leaders to carry out his mandate for the people under his divine providence. People should be committed in prayer to God for guidance and protection. There is temple, a house of prayer, commitment and sacrifices on to the Lord. Teaching and proclamation of the word (Jn. 2:15-17).

The power in the gospel or the word of God is undisputable fact since in the days of the prophets. For example, when the Jews return to Jerusalem and every man of God performed his responsibility. Nehemiah was primarily responsible for rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Zerubbabel was responsible for the temple. While Ezra was the prominent teacher who expounded the law. As Ezra committed himself to the Lord and devoted himself towards reading and expounding the Law to the Jews. They were deeply touch, repented and even lamented for their sin. This genuine repentance was manifested in their actions as they divorce their illegal wife's or pagan women and their children. Ezra was not only committed to the study of the law but devoted in prayer which gave him the enablement to preach the word that brought transformation in the life of his congregation (Ezra 9-10, Neh. 8:1-18). In the same vein, the international missionary Jonah, whom in the flesh did not want his enemies to repent, hence he tried to escape the call of God. Some leaders in Africa are like Jonah who at first did not want to carry the message of God to the Ninevites for their deliverance and restoration.

That cross-cultural missionary Jonah was egocentric, sentimental and tribalistic, decided so, he flee to Tarshish. However, he couldn't escape the omnipotent, omnipresence, and omniscience of God. The Lord who controls the nature and everything permitted the great win which at the end, the passengers of the ship identified Jonah as the cause, there after he was thrown into the sea. The loving and merciful Lord preserves his life for the intended mission; thus, he was swallowed by a big fish whereby he spends three days in the belly of the fish. The Almighty God and gracious God, control the fish which vomited the pastor alive. Thereafter, he proceeded with his mission as he went and preached to the Ninevites as the Bible declares, "On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink." (Jonah 3:4-7, NIV).

Considering the above, the good news proclaimed by Prophet Jonah leads to genuine repentance of the Ninevites. The president of the country all stake holders and citizens of Nineveh turn away from their sin. This becomes clear as the king declares fasting in the nation. This fasting is not limited to human beings but animals are involved. Hence, the gospel of Jonah brings total transformation and salvation to the citizens of Nineveh. In view of this, pastors and missionaries are urged to eradicate sentiments, nepotism, sectionalism, and tribalism. A pastor who is ready to be used by God wherever the Lord sends him he will go. Many African political leaders are possessing bad character of Jonah, They don't want the progress of their people, because of the same bad habits of corruption in so many ways.

One who deviates from the call of God in leadership or even claims that he is in the ministry but doing a contrary thing will surely face the penalty. The judgment of Jonah is easy going than any pastor of today. This is because in the days of Jonah it was a time of progressive theology or revelation. In other words, Jonah was not privilege to have all the divine revelations that the contemporary pastor has today. In our days, a genuine believer is filled with the Holy Spirit and the scripture is available to us. Another lesson in this biblical text is one who devotes, obeys and faithfully deliver Gods message, such is rich and rewarding. The gospel proclaims by faith in sincerity, Christ is always the Centre rather than the preacher himself. Any preaching that is man Centre is not biblical. It is like comedy. Thus, people enjoy it for a while, but lacking spiritual transformation and salvation.

In the light of the forgone, the power of the pulpit when rightly handled cannot be over emphasized. The pastor is responsible for preaching and teaching the sound holistic gospel. This brings dynamic changes in the socio-political economic life of man. More so, the psychological and spiritual lives of people experienced positive changes. Most important is the encouragement and assurance of salvation that is proclaimed to the congregation by a faithful ministering who truly handles the pulpit. To sum it, biblical expository affects the total life of man.

The above reveals that, some leaders misused their leadership positions. They do what pleased them selfishly. what their itching ears want to hear and not law and order. These leaders have failed in their responsibilities so that their material needs will be supply by the government or they forcefully take what does not rightfully belong to them. Governance in Africa have been turned into commercial avenues or profit-making. Some of these leaders have established somemeans for money making.

5. PASTORS AS MODELS OF INFLUENCE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The above, teaches and prove Jesus as a role model to all pastors and leaders in the area of leadership. He uses the temple for biblical exposition and teaching of the word to God's people. Thus, ministers in the 21st century should emulate Christ and not be carried away by the false teachings in difficult times of falsehood. Ministers are encouraged to cherish biblical expository and use a church to glorify God rather than social or political entertainments. Consequently, the pastor needs to return to the land mark or re-examined his calling, thus he needs to be faithful, `committed and serious in his work. In this contemporary world, many Christians love to hear myth, stories, dreams, revelation and prosperity gospel.

The Despise the changes and tribulations, the evangelical pastor is call upon to remain focus. The minister of the word who is visionary from his calling. The minister of the word will not be shaking by the happenings.

The pastor who truly knows the will of God for his life and the people knows that the difficulties the church is undergoing will soon come to an end. In the same vein, the false teachers have no benefit of the kingdom. The evangelical minister is caution not to follow the multitude that preach heresy of materialism rather the content of his message at all times is Christ the crucified. He is to encourage his members to persevere in the faith as they prepare for the glorious return of Jesus Christ. The evangelical pastor is to preach against the new gospel which is against carrying the cross. The man of God is reminded that he will not find it easy. Hence, he is to rebuke and encouraged and exhort as he endures and his patient with all those that oppose him especially members that have become church prostitutes. They have diverse beliefs therefore they are confused. This false teaching includes issue of speaking in tongues. False teachers, teaches that speaking in tongues is a sign that one is fill with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, such teacher's emphasis that every true believer must speak in tongues. This is unbiblical (1 Cor. 12-14).

Another false teaching that is confusing the Christendom is the issue of occultism. False teachers teach that members of occult can be identified by prayer, magical acts and painful injuring of the suspects. Thus, there are magicians who used the Bible in other to identify cultic members. Worse of all, at times suspect are being killed. Similarly, the issue of healing and exorcism confused the immature believers there after the run from ministry to ministry in search for solutions to their diverse problems. The evangelical minister is encouraged to hold firm to biblical truth and sound doctrine whereby Christ is the solution to all problems. In the same vein, biblical Christianity doesn't teach the absence so sickness, sufferings, and difficulties. However, negative things may occur to the believer which may serve as the test of his faith. In another development, the Bible has the answer or solution to those who claim and teach or emphasize on dreams and revelation. The readers of the book of Hebrews where almost deceived in the same manner.

Therefore, they were turning away from sound doctrine to Judaism's and other teachings. Thereafter, the author of Hebrew writes to correct this mistake, thus the final revelation which God speaks to man is Christ Jesus. In other words, no revelation will come that is more authentic than the Holy Bible. Therefore, anyone who claims that he or she has seen a vision, while it is contrary to the biblical teaching, such is false (Heb. 1:1f, Heb. 5:11-14). Considering these happenings, the minister of the word is urged to listen to God in other to receive authentic message in relation to the contemporary to be deliver to God's people. The principles of listening, receiving and proclamation of the gospel can be explained in this diagram below. A congregation that takes good care of her Pastor's material needs will grow spiritually for the minister will have the opportunity to in turn feed them well (I Pet. 2:25; Heb. 13:17, Rom. 13:5). Pastors are urged to be relentless in the teaching ministry. The author would like to suggest that seminars and Workshops should be organized and conducted by the pastor to his congregation according to their groups and stages, topics should be based on the congregational need. Group counseling is necessary for the 21st century church. When the laborers work relentlessly trusting on the dependable God, then the church will grow (I Cor.3:5-6, 4:1ff, 2 Cor.6:1). Principles of shared goal leads to spiritual growth that is in consonant with division of labour. The spiritual gifts bestowed on the church is for individual and the congregational edification (Eph. 4:1-16).

Furthermore, the principle of delegation of responsibility encourages and motivates the spiritual life of the individual believer. When everyone has an assigned role, the entire church will grow to maturity steadily since the individual is not only satisfied and filled with joy but also gives out his best towards the wellbeing of the church. The spiritual growth must begin in the individual life and the family. When the family life .is transformed the church will experience the same spiritual change. The Christian life is characterized by life-long transformation beginning from when an individual gives his/her life to Jesus till the believer enters the glorious home [heaven] (I John3:1-3).

In the light of the preceded, it is clear that the church is a child of the mission. Also, discipleship is a child of evangelism. The truth remains that the church exists for the ministry of evangelism. The pastor who learns from Christ the good shepherd ever remains the director of all programs, specifically the God giving programs, evangelism and discipleship. Hence, evangelism is God's heartbeat; therefore, a pastor who neglects it displeases the Lord and has no vision. One can say that

such a minister is not truly call for the ministry. In the same vein, every genuine pastor must redouble his effort towards discipleship since it is the only divine principles for spiritual growth. Hence, the pastor as a director of such programs is advice to train personnel, recruit personnel, focuses on mission for conversion. The new babes need spiritual food for spiritual growth; therefore, the minister of the gospel is to train disciples who will in turn train the new converts. Thus, it becomes mandatory for churches to send pastors and missionaries in new area of evangelism where converts are thirsty for the word. Jesus Christ the good shepherd and his Holy Spirit is the good director for spiritual programs, thus every pastor who would like to be a sincere director and biblical should strive towards learning under the Lord and always listening and following the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

6. THE NEED FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR EDUCATION FOR LEADERS

There need for leaders to have both religious and secular education for them to have enough knowledge of leading the people a right. Considering the significance of this subject matter as mentioned above, it becomes necessary to introduce the concept of education that is key to knowledge. The work of a pastor, the New Testament specifies teaching as a divine calling (Rom. 12:6-8, Eph. 4:11). The scriptures do not seek to separate the functions of teaching and pastoring. Paul writes, "Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money." (1 Tim. 3:2-3). The significance of this is that these two gifts (shepherds and teachers cannot be divided if they are to remain functional.)

In view of the above, education is an instrument that leads towards positive change in the life of the learner. There are two ways of learning that has been generally agreed by educationist. These are formal and informal learning. The pastor is certainly involved in these methods consciously or unconsciously. Similarly, there are two types of education in the church, the secular education and Christian education. The secular education refers to western education, in this system of education the learner is taught the three R's, reading, writing and arithmetic. In other words, it is a system of formal education that develop the learner to be educated in western education. The causes comprise; arts, commerce, sciences, and technology. It seems to be holistic and the aim is to make one become useful to himself and to the society. Christian education is the process by which those who have experienced a personal spiritual rebirth in their relationship with God partner with the in dwelling Holy Spirit to grow in the image of Christ. One can equally define Christian education as a system of learning which is basically for the purpose of Christian growth. Christian education is Bible based as reveal in the scriptures (Jn. 8:31-32, Col. 1:1f; 3:14-17, 2 Tim. 3:16).

The pastor who truly knows his responsibilities will surely know that he is not limited to Christian education in his parish. The western education refers to comprises of nursery primary school, secondary school or any other tertiary institution that the church is its proprietor. A church that owns any institution of this type, the leadership is under the pastor. He is responsible for the screening, selection and recruitment of staff. It is possible that there may be school committee that the church has appointed. Similarly, no school exist without management team. Thus, the pastor is not to monopolize the work. The school committee is under the administration of the pastor. Therefore, the pastor is to trained them and ensure that the college committee works hand in hand with the church in other to fulfill its vision and mission for establishing such small institutions. In the same vein, the pastor who represents the church is to be in good relationship with the headmaster or principal of the college. This cordial relationship is extended not only to the management of the entire staff. It is the responsibility of the pastor to work hard and mobilize the church to raise fund in other to pay registration bill and any other deuce that the ministry of education or the educational authorities expect from non-governmental institutions. The pastor must ensure to fulfill all demands to avoid the risk of being illegal school. The pastor is responsible for the academic and spiritual Excellency of church own institution. The church institution should be based on merit rather than favoritism.

7. SOCIAL PREDICAMENTS OF THE AFRICAN PEOPLE

social predicament of The African people on the continent are issues of neglect, suffering, vulnerability to social ills, molestation, ridicules, lack of rehabilitation programmes, lack of protection, care, proper guidance, good accommodations and social amenities, lack of good moral support and financial support, abandonment, lack of integration into an ideal community, joblessness,

food insecurity, sexual abuse, lack payment of school fees for children of the widows and orphans lack of, hospitals bills, discrimination, no free medical care, no charity, donation to reliably assist the widows, the orphans, the poor and the needy. No legal backing to handle the cases of the vulnerable widows and that of their children. No means of restoration to shalom by individuals and groups for the sake of peace or rest of mind.

8. NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF CULTURAL ORIENTATION IN AFRICA

The major predicament of women or widows is what culture interprets to them. They looked for justice but is denied them, they cried for their fundamental human rights but were not given to them. The dignity and integrity of womanhood has been dominated by culture or tradition in Africa. They have no children or property they can call their own. In fact, in the case of divorce, an Africa woman has no right to children or property when returning back to her parents' house.

The Africa ascension in the communal global world in the 21st century, necessitated new thinking on the challenge of traditions in Africa, since forces raging within these traditions are enormous. Africans are indeed required to reposition themselves on the concepts of traditional norms that have to do with human rights, privileges and human dignity, in line with God's institution of freedom for man and woman alike. In this regard, women and widows in Africa are the most disadvantaged when it comes to human rights and dignity. The critical factor of fairness to African women and widows should be examined by the traditional institutions themselves, with a religious and social light. The ideal concepts of gaining back women's rights and dignity in accordance with the original purpose and will of God for her existence and also in accordance with the international standard practice. The treatment of the family, man and woman affects the entire family's social and moral life. New Liberation and equality should be introduced as model for indigenous discipling. That will of course, affected both the church and society positively.

This concept of cultural adjustment for peace, unity and development is a relevant factor on issues affecting every society, for the sake of godly tradition or culture of freedom and equality, between men and women, whom God made in his image. The concept of superiority between man and woman should be completely erased. Man and woman, should rather see themselves as equal mates, although they may function differently, but they should be regarded as equally important before God and man. The cultural or traditional treatment of widows in society should reflect the treatment of God concerning them. Any human culture, that is contrary to God's culture, is a rebellious culture.

In the Old Testament, Hebrews sees widowhood as a disgrace, shame and reproach. Hence, the word of comfort from prophet Isaiah saying "you will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood" (Isa 54:4). To the Hebrews, any form of death that is not of old age is a calamity. Naomi confirmed the stage of disgrace she found herself by becoming a widow. "Don't call me Naomi; call me Mara because the almighty has made me very bitter. I went away full but the Lord has brought me back empty, why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me, the almighty has brought misfortune upon me" (Ruth 1:20-21). The meaning of the name Naomi is "pleasant" and Mara refers to "bitterness" as it was the experience of Naomi who sees her life of pleasantness becoming a life of bitterness, so also the war military widows see themselves in the Nigerian army, that the pleasant lifestyles they enjoy with their spouses while they are much alive had turned upside down to bitterness for them as widows. In ancient Israel, the death of a widow's husband means frustration, abandonment, helplessness, dispossession and disinheritance, thereby pressing her down to loneliness and emptiness. The military war widows in the Nigerian army have the same experience if not more. The military widows in the Nigerian army share the desperate situation of suffering and maltreatment with the widows of the ancient world.

Widows, fatherless and orphans are of great concern to God because of their condition of helplessness and vulnerability in society. They are passing through emotional stress, insecurity, lack of social care and economic hardship. God expect justice to reign in favour of widows in every community and every institution "for the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God Almighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribe. He defends and administers justice for the case of the fatherless and the widows and loves the alien giving them food and clothing" (Deut10:17-18).

God did not only provide justice and love for the widows, fatherless and orphans, but He demanded that society should provide them with justice and love. God wants justice to prevail in every society, most especially providing justice to the widows (Lev 21:14). God commanded that widows should eat and be satisfied (Deut 26:12-13) and that they should not be mistreated, otherwise those who mistreated them, God will kill and make their wives widows (Exodus 22:21-24), the divine providence of God towards providing love, care and justice for the widows calls for theological, missiological, and sociological approaches to address the plight of the war military widows in the Nigerian army. The following are contemporary approaches of some countries towards taking care of their ordinary and war military widows.

1. Israel: In contemporary Jewish communities, a widow takes care of her children. The law supports her welfare and protects widows, she gets her husband's pension irrespective of whether she works or not. The property of her late husband becomes hers. The widows are liberated to do whatever seems right to them. Law does not restrict them as the traditional ancient Jews.
2. Arkansas: In this part of United States of America, a widow by law has social security benefits. The state government provides her medical and all the property of her late husband belongs to her.
3. Norway: The country takes care of her widows under social security scheme. If the widow had worked before, she gets some benefits on top of the general widow's allowance paid to widows. Medical care is free. Norway protects widows by legislation.
4. Ireland: The Irish government operates a social services allowance scheme. For widows, sixty to seventy pounds paid to them a week. A widow in Ireland inherits her husband's estate.
5. England: The British government's care of widows through social security scheme. Social security is extended to widows through legislation by the secretary of state's approved by the parliament: British government takes care of the welfare of widows. There is an official security leaflet informing them about widowhood benefits available to them by law.
6. Russia: Russian women are highly valued by their men. Widows have social security. The people of Russia ensure that their women and widows are comfortable and well cared for backed by the legislation. But African widows are deep agonies due to their experiences of total neglect and abandonment, by the Government and traditional institutions, who are responsible for their general welfare, putting them through suffering, pain, shame and disgrace, which is a total embarrassment to a big continent, such as Africa.

Having discussed some sociological, missiological and theological means of caring for widows, the African Continent should urgently take pragmatic action to form a model of social welfare scheme to take care of those that vulnerable in society. A movement in that direction will have positive social, missional and theological implications by which the widows, the poor and the needy will feel comfortable. Social welfare schemes, well backed up by government legislation be introduced to integrate them into society as important citizens that are well acknowledged. The predicaments of African widows and their children have been practical and visible on the continent. These negative experiences are alarming and need urgent attention for the restoration of these widows and their children to *shalom* (peace). In the Nigerian Army concerning the soldiers, military war widows and their children are causing a lot of embarrassment and set back to the soldiers, the widows and the children of the Nigerian Army and all of Nigeria as the biggest black nation in Africa, that should be seen as a leading example for the rest of Africa. I am recommending very strongly that all the injustices and ill-treatments against widows, orphans, the poor and the needy in Africa and beyond should be abolished. New programmes and projects of reconstruction, rebuilding, rehabilitation and total restoration of the African people, most especially the less privilege citizens, should be introduced urgently. There should be absolute security to protect lives and properties. Governments, religious and traditional institutions should find reliable means of taking care of the less privilege by providing them with basic social amenities for them to live a normal life, like other citizens in society. Relevant authorities should urgently enact laws and policies that can practically be implemented to provide them with all their rights and privileges as it is rightly done in advanced countries of the world. The

United Nations activities of providing social relief materials to those in need all over the globe is commendable and that should serve as a very good example for the African leaders in power to emulate in terms of caring for the people with difficulties on the Continent.

9. CONCLUSION

Global ways of good and fair treatment of the vulnerable persons should be adopted in the whole world, most especially on the African continent. Israel, United States of America, South Africa, Norway, England, Russia and Ireland are good examples of countries that are taking good care of their war military widows and ordinary widows. The African government is expected to make achievable policies of taking care of widows and war victims, including the poor and needy in society. There are many widows and war victims in Africa due to terrorism. For example, the attacks of Boko Haram in the North Eastern Nigeria and the activities of Fulani herdsmen in central Nigeria. There should be a deliberate effort by the federal government of Nigeria and the military authorities to fashion a way of taking care of the war military widows in Nigeria. The numbers of young military widows are on the increase daily. I am not recommending that federal government or relevant bodies should make widows or war victims, rich but to bring them to the middle class where they will live comfortably not regretting daily and suffering traumatic situations. Their children are wasting away due to lack of social and moral care. Civilian widows, fatherless and orphans in Africa are challenged within ability to cope with social life alone after the death of their spouses, fathers and parents.

All these efforts put together form only a smallest part of the needs of the widows or even less than that. There are some widows who are yet to be reached. The numbers of widows are on the increase on daily basis because of the high rate of insecurity in the world, most especially in Africa. Only God knows how many widows have been recorded because of Boko Haram activities, religious crises, political crises and the barbaric activities of armed robbers on the high ways, apart from those who died due to illnesses, incidents and accidents respectively. It is believed that some were even killed by witches and wizards, although that is subject to investigation.

Wells, (1978: 121), assert that, "Salvation works in the struggle for economic justice against the exploitation of people by people, salvation works in the struggle for human dignity against political oppression of human beings by their fellow men. Salvation works struggle for solidarity against the alienating of person to person. Salvation works in the struggle of hope against despair in personal life." Esther risked her life by coming before the king. Her courageous acts give us a standard model to follow, in approaching a difficult or dangerous task. She calculated the cost and realized that, the Jewish race was more important than her life as an individual. She objectively took a bold action without thinking too long about it. Although queen Esther shared some of the king's power and wealth or position. Yet she needed God's protection and wisdom. No one is secure in his or her own strength, power or position in any political system. It will be foolish to think that wealth or position can deliver us from danger. True deliverance only comes from God. Like the Nigerian Army Motto reads "victory is from God alone." Esther and Mordecai could have decided to save themselves or waited for God to act. But they saw themselves as placed in positions for a purpose. When it is within our reach to save others, we should do so in a life-threatening situation. We should not withdraw. Ask for God's direction and act. God might have placed you where you are for a time like this. Like God told Joshua "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant, Moses gave you, do not turn from it to the right or to the left that you may be successful where ever you go (Joshua 1:7). We should act at the right time for the right cause. The book of Esther has a great and life message for the Christian in Nigeria in particular and the world in general.

For a time as this, when there is corruption, dishonesty and injustice.

For a time as this, when the so call Boko Haram are killing Christians in churches.

For a time as this, when we have evil leaders who are not ready to listen to their poor and helpless subjects.

For a time as this, when workers will be working for months without salaries.

Where are those wearing the sack cloth like Mordecai

Where are those who are ready to die for the rest of Nigerian citizens like Esther?

Boer, (1976:42) assert that, In the early church, the Christian stood firm in faith and actions. "The persecution the church suffered in the empire during that time were extremely painful, but they were extremely fruitful."

We may suffer now in the battle, but there will be victory and honour for us at the end like Esther, Mordecai and the entire, Jewish race. God will surely bring to an end every act of wickedness. For something to be done something ought to be done, for God to act, his people must remain faithful and focus.

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