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May/June 2008

Dear Friends,

In recent weeks three significant events have taken place in South Africa: The first was the *Mighty Men's Conference* (17-19 April on a farm near Greytown), the second was the *National Initiative for the Reformation of South Africa* [NIRSA], (22-23 April in Boksburg), and the third was the *Million Man March* (10 June in Pretoria). These gatherings called on South Africans to return to God and His Law. The *Mighty Men's Conference* was organised by Angus Buchan, the farmer and author of "*Faith like Potatoes.*" It drew more than 60 000 men in a true spirit of revival. The *National Initiative for Reformation (NIRSA)* was called by Dr Michael Cassidy of *Africa Enterprise* and brought together 450 church leaders for urgent prayer and action. It also focussed on poverty, AIDS, crime, corruption, family breakdown, and xenophobia. The *Million Man March* was staged by the broadcaster/comedian Desmond Dube. Five thousand men and women marched up to the Union Buildings as a protest against the high rate of crime. The message was clear:- Secularism does not work. We need to come back to the Lord. We need to trust Him, obey His Law, and follow our Saviour Jesus Christ. "*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.*" (Proverbs 14:34)

The united commitment of all these people and their millions of sympathisers shows the great longing of South Africans to return to a godly and civilised life. For crime has become so intense that nearly every family in the land has been affected by it. "*In 2007-2008,*" records Shaun Willcock of *Bible Based Ministries*, "*South Africa, with a population of an estimated 49.9 million people, had 31 000 murders – that's a murder rate of 65.27 per 100 000 people. Only one country had a higher number of murders for the same period: India with 32 000.*" But India has a population of 1.13 billion, and thus her crime percentage is well below that of South Africa. "*That's not all,*" continues Willcock, "*In the same 2007-2008 period, 54 900 women were raped in SA. That's a rate of rape of 115.8 per 100 000 people... The statistics are horrifying: over 4.6 million South Africans have been victims of violent crime.*" 1)

Children – a heritage of the Lord, or a sorrow to their parents?

Youths are to honour the Lord and make their parents' hearts glad. But the prisons of South Africa are full to overflowing with them. "*SA's imprisonment rate, at 348/100 000 of the population, is the highest in Africa,*" writes Sue Blaine in *Business Day*. "*The prison population is very young (38% are younger than 25), very violent (72% were convicted of violent crimes) and while there are about 163 000 prisoners in SA – of whom 53 000 have not yet been sentenced – 360 000 people 'circulate' through the prison system each year.*" 2)

Children are a gift of God – to be brought to Jesus and taught the commandments. But a *National Schools Violence Study*, conducted by the *Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP)*, showed that 1.8 million of South Africa's c. 12 million pupils (15.3% of Grades 3-12) have suffered violence at school – from verbal abuse to sexual assault and rape. About every tenth school child has a caregiver or parent who has been in jail, and almost every fifth has a sibling who has been in prison. "*These children have criminal role models,*" says Patrick Burton of the CJCP. Children take the brunt of crime. 19.5% (as against 4.7% adults) have been victims of theft. 16.5% (as against 2.2% adults) have been assaulted. 3) Figures like these should compel us to again teach the fear and love of God in our schools. Nearly 500 years ago Martin Luther warned: "*I am much afraid that schools will prove to be wide gates to hell unless they diligently labour in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them on the hearts of the youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not constantly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt.*" 4)

If they ask for bread, will you give them a stone?

The two most endangered professions in South Africa are the police and the farmers. Policemen are murdered at the rate of 153 per 100 000 people, but farmers are murdered at the rate of 313 per 100 000 people. In 2007 the *SA Institute of Race Relations* recorded that, between 1991 and 2006, 1564 farmers had been killed in 10 000 farm attacks, and that the killing was accelerating. *“Put this into perspective,”* says Willcock. *“The world average for murder is 5 in every 100 000 of the population. In the United States, the figure is 4 per 100 000 people, and in countries such as Australia, Chile, France, etc., the figure is only one per 100 000.”* - Did not even the wise king Solomon ask: *“Why do people commit crimes so readily?”* He came to the conclusion: *“Because crime is not punished quickly enough.”* (Eccl. 8:11)

In spite of the threat to South Africa's food source, State President Thabo Mbeki, on 2.5.08, told 15 religious leaders that he *“unashamedly supported”* President Mugabe. 5) How? Zimbabwe's farmers have been driven off the land. Her people are starving. Five out of twelve million have fled the country. The land is racked by violence and gripped by hyper-inflation. Mugabe has even declared war on his people, should they vote for the opposition in the repeat election on 27 June. 6) Yet, the South African government is also preparing for the dispossession of its white farmers. It has drafted an *Expropriation Act*, and when this comes into effect in July 2008 the government will be able to expropriate farm land and *“any property in the public interest or for public purposes.”* Property owners will have no legal right to dispute the price offered. 7) This is *“legal theft,”* says the *Transvaal Agricultural Union (TAU)*. 8) Land restitution has already caused shortages and food now needs to be imported. In 1994 South Africa had between 60 000 and 65 000 commercial farmers, now there are only 40-45 000. The *TAU* reports that *“in the Levubu area - South Africa's 'fruit basket' - where almost all farms are under claim, 80% of farmers have been lost in the past decade. The Mail & Guardian reports that in the fertile Levubu valley, production has decreased from 300 tons a week to 60.”* But having coveted and claimed the land, the new owners often shirk its attendant responsibilities. In *Rapport's aanlyn etiket* a farmer's wife writes: *“I am not a politician, but I am staying on a farm which has already been claimed, and I am renting another which was also claimed. Not one of the claimants wants to live on it. They lease it back to me at a ridiculously low price... They do not want to stay here themselves. On the contrary, they said we could rent the farm for 5 years and have the first option of buying it back!!!”*

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom

It is not a moment too soon that South Africa is looking to God for help, recognising that these are not political problems but problems of the human heart. Present conditions reveal a spiritual and moral sickness which only God can heal. The Bible says: *“What does the Lord your God ask of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul.”* (Deuteronomy 10:12) The *Mighty Men's Conference*, the *National Initiative for the Reformation of South Africa (NIRSA)*, and the *Million Man March* have given us a sign. Their leaders have acted as prophets for our age. They have called us to repentance and obedience. Angus Buchan, Dr Michael Cassidy and Desmond Dube have made a beginning. It is time to follow their call and appoint a day of national repentance for all, a day of prayer when South Africans of every sphere of life can recommit themselves to the Lord and His Law. *Africa Christian Action*, led by Dr Peter Hammond, has long observed such a day on the anniversary of the legalisation of abortion. But now is the time for the whole nation to unite and *“repent and believe in the gospel.”* South Africa needs to let the Lord reign. He is sovereign! *“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us.”* (Isaiah 33:22)

May God bless you richly,
D. Scarborough.

Footnotes:

1. Shaun Willcock, Bible Based Ministries, citing from The Witness, June 3, 2008, in Snippets from South Africa: June 2008.
2. Sue Blaine, SA needs to change cultural view of 'crime is normal', Business Day, 20.5.2008.
3. Ibid.
4. Quoted by Dr Peter Hammond in Biblical Principles for Africa, p. 11.
5. Gerald Harper, Mbeki tells SA pastors bluntly that he supports Mugabe, zimbabwemetro.com., May 5.2008.
6. B Philp & B Boyle, Mugabe declares war, Sunday Times, 15.6.2008.
7. Lizel Steenkamp, Staat kan onbepaalde mag kry om the oteien, Rapport, 8.4.2008.
8. TAU Media Release, 4.6.2008