

SHEDDING OF INNOCENT BLOOD IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

In Nigeria, innocent blood is shed through abortion, ungodly sacrifices, and other physical means perpetrated by individuals, armed robbers, assassins, boko haramists and herdsmen. The actions are triggered as a result of sexual immorality, greed, demonic power, religious teaching, and politics. These atrocities precipitate several negativities such as mental illness, severe psychological problems, sexual relationship with no commitment and no worry of pregnancy; economic recession; lack of peace in the country; generational misfortunes and defilement. To avert the adverse implications, the recommended steps are: acknowledgment and confession of the sin; forgiving one another; and praying for God's mercy and forgiveness for every blood of unborn baby, ungodly sacrifice, and other killings in the nation.

Keywords: Shedding, blood, abortion, sacrifices, national development

Introduction

In Proverbs chapter 6 versus 16 and 17, shedding of innocent blood is listed among the six things the Lord hates. One medium of shedding blood by individuals unknowingly is through abortion. This is the expulsion or removal of a growing fetus from the womb; an act of forceful removal or killing of unborn baby. Much of this could be as a result of sexual immorality. The second medium is through ungodly sacrifices or witchcraft practices. Those who engaged in such practices could do it personally or hire someone to do it with the aim of empowering selves without mercy for their victims. Other physical killings are perpetrated by boko haramists, Fulani herdsmen, kidnappers, armed robbers and assassins. The motives of these categories of groups differ. For instance, that of boko haram is based on religious teaching and understanding. It is a dangerous doctrine to those who do not belong to the sect also. Others could be as a result of greed, political differences and intolerance. In an attempt to get what one does not sincerely work for or get quick money, some are hired to kill, become armed robbers and kidnappers.

Mediums of shedding innocent blood

Abortion

Life begins at conception; science cannot alter that reality. Studies have shown that babies begin learning language within 30 hours of being in the womb. The Scriptures reveal that even before conception, God has planned the future course of the future being. Therefore, abortion has serious moral implications. In some developed countries, abortion is an acceptable practice. For instance, Collins (2013) morally observes that legalized abortion reveals the moral decadency of

a nation, people, and culture; a culture which has totally rejected God. When you total up all forms of abortion, including those caused by abortion drug RU486, the grand total comes to much more than 1 million abortions performed in the United States alone every single year. McGarvey (2016) concurs that the American government has failed to protect the innocent from being murdered in the womb. Civil authorities, mayors, judges, congressmen, senators, and presidents, have denied preborn children their right to life. Why this harsh conclusion? In 1973, the United States Supreme Court legalized abortion in all 50 states for the full 9 months of pregnancy for social and economic reasons.

According to Collins (2013), the pro-choice abortion advocates those pregnancies that are harmful to the pregnant woman's mental health. He concludes that legalized abortion reveals the moral decadency and spiritual bankruptcy of a nation. This point was made by the Canadian philosopher George Grant in his response to the striking down of an anti-abortion law in Canada. In his 1988 essay: "The Triumph of the Will", Grant compared the philosophical basis for the pro-abortion movement to the same element that drove the Nazis.

Sacrifice and witchcraft

The second medium of shedding innocent blood is through ungodly sacrifices or witchcraft practices. This could be physical or spiritual but has physical manifestations on the lives of those who make them. McGarvey (2016) rightly observes God's disbelief as His people persisted in the sacrifice of their children to the pagan demon god Molech as recorded by Prophet Jeremiah, "... and have filled this place with the blood

of innocents, They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind (Jeremiah 19:4b-5). This atrocity destroys the future posterity that will be instrumental to the development of the nation. It is on this background that Prophet Isaiah declares "... I will contend with them that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob (Isaiah 49:25b – 26). In 2 Kings Chapter 21 Verse 16, Manasseh was singled out to have shed very much innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another. He was not alone but held accountable for the killing as the leader. This implies that leaders will be held accountable for bloodshed in their domains.

Physical means

Shortly after independence, the nation witnessed the first mass killings following the January 15th 1966 coup. Since then, the bloods of innocent Nigerians have been shed ceaselessly by state and non state actors. The blood of the innocent in Odi, Bayelga State and Zaki Lbiam in Benue state shed by agents of the government stand out as sour thumbs. Boko Haram terrorists in the North of Nigeria and herdsmen have kept up the pace ever since. Anaesiubaon (2018) concludes that Nigeria has gradually become a land flowing with tears and human blood. In Proverbs 24:12 and Nehemiah 6:14, the evil of bloodshed must be recompensed. Paul categorically prays for judgment on Alexander the coppersmith who did him much evil in 2 Timothy 4:14. This is also the prayer of the dead and their living relations in Nigeria every day.

Why shed blood

Some of the possible factors for shedding innocent blood are presently highlighted.

Sexual immorality

The expected result of sexual intercourse between a man and a woman is pregnancy. When it is done in an inappropriate way and manner, the pregnancy will not be welcomed. This could be in a consent sex, rape, incest among others considered to be immoral. The alternative remedy to the shame and disgrace is abortion. Some countries have approved it while others have not. One of the leading arguments used by abortionists is that a baby is not human until it has been born. Collins (2013) proves this assertion wrong based

on scientific grounds. He reports that a team of researchers at the Institute of Learning and Brain Sciences at the University of Washington and from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington have studied the ability of unborn to learn languages. They studied babies that were less than 30 hours old in both the United States and in Sweden. The group of babies was divided evenly between male and female. The researchers played different vowel sounds in the parent's native language and in foreign languages. They used the pacifier sucking response of the babies to determine whether or not they were familiar with the sounds they heard. When the newborns heard their parent's native language, their sucking on the pacifier was shorter. When they heard vowel sounds from a foreign language, the sucking on the pacifier was longer indicating that they were not familiar with the foreign language.

Abortion can be directly linked to sexual immorality in several forms. Moody (2018) sums up the five common roots that lead to abortion: Lust, because it is often the context for irresponsible conception. A rightly married couple would take responsibility for the pregnancy. The second is love of comfort, because the decision to abort is often made simply to avoid the discomfort of pregnancy especially when it is not needed or comes at a wrong time. The third is love of money, because of a desire to avoid financial sacrifice yet there was neither self-control nor abstinence from sex. Rejection is the fourth. An unwed pregnancy can attract social rejection and this fear might lead to abortion. Unbelief is the fifth, because people discount the existence of a just God who will surely honour a difficult but righteous decision.

Religious teaching

Religion is a powerful weapon in Nigeria. It could be used to achieve the desires of the leaders through teachings. Baje (2013) notes that the bloodshed could be through premeditated killing based on the dangerous dogma of religious extremism, as with Boko Haram insurgency. Oluwadare (2017) expatiates that these extremists are unfortunate victims of wrong doctrines and beliefs. They were wrongly and demonically taught that killing is their visa to the 'oven' which they believe to be the heaven.

Demonic power

Selfish ambitions and uncontrolled desires have moved some people to acquire demonic powers. It is not everyone that is satisfied with what God has given. In an effort to become great or greater than someone or be like somebody, many are lured into obtaining their wishes and desires by demonic means. Baje (2013) attributes some hideous ritual murders to mindless

money or fleeting power and fame. Both the motive and method are crude, conscienceless and unjustifiable. A murderer has no other name. For instance, both the King of Moab (11 Kings 3 verse 27) and King Manasseh (11 Kings 21 verse 7) sacrificed their sons to win war and for spiritual powers and both were punished for their crimes.

Politics

Political differences and intolerance account for so much blood being shed in Nigeria. Political losers have often instigated mass killings out of frustration. This is perpetrated through ethnic clashes, kidnapping and other conceivable means. Akinola (2018) concludes that the bottom of all the crises is the fierce struggle for power; power to dominate and control, especially at the centre where there are huge resources.

Implications of shedding innocent blood

Akinola (2018) has stated clearly that Nigeria is a land polluted with human blood, with severe implications for national development.

One implication of shedding innocent blood is mental illness in the society. Collins (2013) indicated the mental problems of the post-abortion mothers. He noted that their health status hopelessly deteriorates along with their siblings, the impregnator or spouse, and the extended family. This has ripple effects on the loved ones and relatives. Mentally retarded individuals could be nuisance in the society that would have contributed to the development of the nation.

Secondly, there are severe psychological problems that affect the mother of an aborted child. They experience guilt, anxiety, sexual dysfunction, and even suicide. Greenglass (1976) states that women with a history of psychiatric disturbances were 3 times as likely to have some psychiatric disturbances after an abortion than others who had no such history. Sandburg (1980) confirms that the more severely ill the psychiatric patient the worse is her post-abortion psychiatric state. Explaining further, Willke and Willke (2008) say guilt is ever-present in many guises, along with regret, remorse, shame, lower self esteem, insomnia, dreams, nightmares, flash backs, and anniversary reactions. There often is hostility and even hatred toward men. This can include her impregnator and she may become sexually dysfunctional. Crying, despair, and depression are usual, even at times with suicide attempts. Recourse to alcohol or drugs to mask the pain is frequent, sometimes leading to sexual promiscuity.

There is also a numbing and coldness in place of more normal warmth and maternal tenderness. On the part of those men who impregnate them, Collins (2013) concludes that they end up blaming each other for not defending the life of their unborn offspring and reap guilt, shame, and anger. Therefore, some turn to alcohol and drugs to dull the pain of the feeling of the unborn baby. Many become workaholics to avoid contact with other people or in a desperate effort to succeed in a crucial aspect of their lives. Future relationships with woman are often difficult or impossible.

Another implication according to Collins (2013) is some men experiment with homosexuality because it allows them to have a "successful" sexual relationship with no commitment and no worry of pregnancy. Men may suffer from other forms of sexual dysfunction such as impotency and addiction to pornography. Other symptoms of a man struggling with the loss from abortion may be that he suffers from sleeplessness, panic attacks, poor coping skills, flashbacks, nightmares, or self imposed isolation. He may be unable to hold a job due to his inability to handle decision making or he may be an excessive risk taker in work and social environments, setting himself up for failure.

Leaders will incur the wrath of God upon themselves. Fayose (2016) opines that God is angry with governments involved in shedding the blood of innocent people. God expects leaders to be above board and will not hold them guiltless for the happenings in the society.

Economic recession is another implication. Mimiko (2017) alludes to this view when he declares that we cannot be praying for economic progress if we continue to shed the blood of innocent people. Oluwadare (2017) believes that the recession bedeviling Nigeria has spiritual origins. He traced it to the killings of righteous men of God in the North.

Loss of peace prevails in the country as a result of shedding innocent blood. Baje (2013) infers that no nation that sheds so much innocent blood of its voiceless citizens can ever know peace or progress. God decries the wanton wasting of precious lives by those who value their own but not that of others. This is why Duruiheoma (2017) explains that Nigeria is confronted with myriad of problems, which pose great challenges to the peaceful coexistence and welfare of the Nigerian people.

The children of the killers will suffer for their parents' atrocities. Moody (2018) uses I Kings 21-22 and II Kings 10 as an example of the results of shedding innocent blood on Ahab's household. God issued the results of that curse. I Kings 21:19, To Ahab; where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall they also lick your blood, even thine. I Kings 19:21, To Ahab's sons: Behold, I will bring evil upon thee and utterly sweep away and cut off from Ahab every male, bond and free. I Kings 19:23, To Jezebel: the dogs will eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. All these things happened just as God said. Al-Mustapha (2017) affirms that the perpetrators and sponsors of the dastardly killings should know that the innocent blood they shed on Nigerian soil will definitely work against them.

The last implication of shedding innocent blood for national development is defiling the land. The lands where those bloods were spilled are cursed. Farmers can testify to this fact. Despite the efforts and fertilizers (both organic and inorganic), there has not been commensurate yield in production as a result of the curse. Government has employed certain strategies but the more she tried the more failure is recorded. The curse must first be lifted before any expected bumper agricultural harvests. This has also affected the livestock farming and other agricultural sectors in Nigeria.

Recommendation

To avert the adverse implications of shedding innocent blood, the first step is to acknowledge and confess the sin. Many Nigerians are guilty in one form or another of the offence. Even those pointing accusing fingers on leaders have not truly confessed and pardoned. Like Nehemiah (1:6 & 7) who confessed the sins of his fathers and people to God, Nigeria has to confess the wrongs to get God's attention and mercy. Humility is a great and number one requirement for national development.

The next step is to forgive one another. Those who have been wronged should be able to forgive. However, those who offend should first take the bold step to approach those they killed their relatives to beg for forgiveness. God expects men to first settle their differences before approaching his throne.

Next is prayer. All have to pray for God's mercy and forgiveness for every blood of unborn baby, ungodly sacrifice, and other killings in the nation. This has to be done genuinely and not hypocritically. Genuine confession and repentant prayer must by offending Nigerian people. The sure way to get God to lift the

curse upon the land and heal it again is recorded in 2 Chronicles 7 verse 14.

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