

SACLA II – Pretoria – 7 - 11 July, 2003  
Wednesday Evening, July 9, 2003

## **FINDING A LIVING HOPE PERSONALLY**

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Just before I humbly call your attention to Christ the Hope of Glory, I would like to thank the visionary leadership of SACLA for trusting me with your lives tonight. I thank God for SACLA and for the leadership and the organisers of this enormous assembly, this historic, strategic and challenging assembly.

No one can deny that we live in a hopeless world. We live in a world full of endless crisis. The whole entire world is in trouble spiritually, mentally, physically, socially, economically, politically and environmentally. In spite of all the wonderful leaders we have in every continent of the world, you will be amazed that the world is still looking for a leader, especially in our contemporary world where there is a leadership bankruptcy, a poverty of leadership and a deterioration of credible leadership.

There is a urgent need in South Africa, in Africa and the entire global village for a living hope. We must have hope. Faith pertains to the present, but hope pertains to the future. And where there is life, there is hope.

One of the greatest enemies of leadership in the home, in the church, in the learning institutions, in society, in governments, is discouragement, despondency and bewilderment. We, as South Africans, need not allow circumstances to pull us so low so as to drink from the cup of discouragement. There is hope. I am very much impressed by three verses in the Scriptures, 1 Peter 1:3; Colossians 1:27 and Hebrews 3:6.

We need to find a living hope personally. One great truth that blesses me is the fact that the hope I am sharing with you is not a cheap hope. The source of this living hope is from the birth, the death, the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus. Especially His resurrection. Because Jesus arose from the dead, we can all have a living hope. Because Jesus conquered sin, He conquered disease, He conquered demons, He conquered death, He conquered hate, He conquered prejudice, He conquered tribalism and He even conquered the overemphasis of ethnicities.

As I stand before you tonight, I don't feel too much black; I feel sonship. The Bible says: "As many as received Him (not as few, we are not a few here), to them He gave power and authority to become sons and daughters of God." I wish you all had the privilege I have tonight of standing behind this podium just to throw your eyes and see this beautiful sea of faces. Did you know that black is not quite beautiful until you compliment it with white!? And did you know that white is not quite beautiful until you compliment it with that brown/black - like!

I love people. I think people and dream people all the time. You don't have to be a Shangaan in order to be loved by me. I love all people of all classes, of all linguistic groups, of all cultures, because of one major reason – all people are made in the image of God.

I am a Shangaan from Limpopo, but I married a beautiful Xhosa girl, and just last week we celebrated 32 years of marriage. Our love for each other has stood the test of time. She's my honey, she's my lovey, she's my baby, she's my turbo - charger, she's my aeroplane! But sometimes she can be highly controversial. Women have a way of confusing a man thoroughly and they remain unconfused. And after women confuse you they are shocked as to why you are confused. If you don't believe me that women are highly controversial, you see the beautiful ring I am wearing, my watch, my wrist chain – my wife bought all these things for me, but I paid for them!

We must find a living hope and our living hope is not from history. It's not from art and science, it is not from religion, it is not from culture. I am a cross culturalist from studies. All human cultures are unique, valid, dynamic and sinful. Never believe everything in your culture and never throw away everything in your culture. All human cultures are made up of good things and bad things, and no culture is static; all human cultures go through evolutionary or revolutionary changes. It is only God's supra culture that must judge all cultures. Only the Bible has the right to judge all human cultures.

We must have hope especially in South Africa and Africa, where we have been damaged psychologically by slavery, colonialism, imperialism, apartheid, the negative family, the negative Church.

There is a very interesting book entitled Culture Matters. Some cultures are not open to development. Africa is not poor; it is the African who is poor. Why? Number one, because of poor governance; number two, because of mismanagement; number three, corruption in high places; number four, misunderstanding. You see, leadership is not necessarily a title. Leadership is a function. Leadership is not a position. Leadership is a responsibility and accountability. Leadership is not just a profession, leadership is a calling. Leadership is not just a portfolio, leadership is the spirit of a servant, to serve people. It's pathetic today when you travel all over Africa and see the state of this continent. Yet it's so rich but with so many poor leaders. You know if you fail to plan you have already planned to fail. My wife and I were in Gambia. We had the privilege of meeting the Head of State, the President Jami (sp?) with his Parliament and I was privileged to address them and when we finished talking I asked: "Mr President, would you mind if I prayed for you?"

And he said to me: "Please."

I moved towards him in his Presidential Seat. You must be very courageous and bold if you are a preacher of the gospel. Respect all leaders but don't fear them. I laid hands on him and he vibrated.

I did the same with the President of Malawi. He is also a Moslem.

You know if you are a Shongane, you know Shongane's are usually meek and when you are meek they think you are weak. The Bible says: A Greater is He who is inside us than he that is in the world."

We must have faith, hope and love. And with these three we shall conquer the world.

In conclusion I believe there is a living hope in Christ. Number one, hope for the individual. Just like salvation, forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, to be blood - washed, to become a new creature, to cross from death to life. To become a partaker of His divine nature. You can experience that as a individual. You don't have to wait for your mother, your father, your cousin, your niece, your dominee, your predikant. When God calls upon you for salvation, you must come rushing because the wages of sin is death and the soul that sinneth shall die. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. Don't just be content by just becoming a member of some denomination of some kind. Christianity is not churchianity. And salvation from God is not worse than civilisation. Unspirituality is not materialism.

We must find this hope. It is your responsibility to find this hope. It is my responsibility to find this living hope. It's not a dead hope. It's a living hope.

You look at me now and may be tempted to think that I was born with a King James Bible in my hand. Wrong. I was born in a dismal family of 14. My mother was a witchdoctor, my father was a habitual alcoholic and I was the first in 1960 to get saved in that family. And God used me to bring the light and I saw my mother and my father get saved when I was preaching in an open air meeting. And I burnt my mother's witchcraft stuff. And you all know, you black Africans, because there are white Africans here, but some of you black Africans, you know that if you burn witchcraft stuff they say you will become crazy or you will die. Here am I, I am still kicking in Jesus' Name. And I have handled over 40 witchdoctors. I have been to India 13 times. I introduced Rino Bonke (sp?) to India. I met the late Mother Theresa many a times in Calcutta. A great woman. She made me feel as if I am not called by God. Her love for God, her commitment, her dedication, her selflessness.

You can have this hope as an individual. Whether you are a preacher, a pastor, an apostle, prophet, we are no more carried away by titles. Nicodemus also had a title but he was not born again. And you don't have to come to Jesus Nicodemusly - it's good to come to Jesus. You may go to church all your life and still go to hell. And you may preach and teach and even cast out demons and still go to hell. Somebody once asked me: "Elijah, how come that if you are not saved you cast out demons?" Easy! It is the big demons that chase away the small demons.

We need this living hope as individuals. No one can get saved on your behalf. Everyone must come to Jesus as an individual. You were born alone. And you will die alone. And you will give an account before God alone.

Some of us boast a lot about water baptism. You may have been immersed and baptised in water only

to come out as a wet sinner. It is not actually the water that does it. It is the meaning of it. The death and the resurrection of Christ is the meaning behind water baptism. You should be baptised after you are saved.

And number two, we must find hope for our families, for our marriage. Many bedrooms today have been turned into boxing tournaments. The Bible says if you are a husband, not a house burned, a husband, you must love your wife. And if you are a married woman, the Bible says you must submit yourself to the leadership of your husband. You cannot beat the scriptures. And children, the fruit of love, must honour their parents. If we can do what God says, there will be peace in the world. And if you are a husband you need to love your wife creatively. Get hold of my books over there. They will open your eyes. Let me quickly tell you, when the Bible says "Love your wife", it means you must love your wife the way she defines love, the way she perceives love. Women are not the same. Some of us pastors and preachers, especially we noisy Pentecostals, whenever your wife has a birthday, instead of buying her a perfume or something personal, you buy her a hymn book. You must be creative in loving your wife.

Some of us husbands who belong to the old school of thought, we never, never kiss our wives during the day. We only kiss them at night in a dark room where we can't even see the mouth! And you must search for the mouth - "Waar is die mond?"

And number three, we need hope for the church. The church is the salt of the world. The church is the light of the world. The church is the written epistles. When the unsaved look at the church they must see hope. Therefore as Christians in South Africa we must (.....some words lost in the turning of the tape over.....). And life in the church is not based on us, the preachers, it is based on the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That is why when Paul died, when Peter died, when James died, when Philip died, when Andrew died, the church is still rolling on.

And number four, we must have hope for our society. We must have hope in our own country South Africa. I am often asked on television in America, Australia, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Europe, Korea and many parts of the world, they ask me: "What do you think is the greatest need in your country, South Africa?" I say to them, "It is balance maturity."

Did you know that when people are mature, they forgive in advance, they forgive unconditionally. Difference is not necessarily division. Unity must never be based on uniformity. If you are black and you only love black people you are immature. If you are white and you only love white people you are a big baby. Listen to what the scripture says, it says God loved us, in plural, when we were yet sinners. That's great love.

South Africa is a beautiful country. South Africa is our country. You know one thing I like about Americans whether they are black or white, they are proud of America. You often hear them say "I am an American." Now you and I are still full of this spirit of tribalism. A Zulu is full of Shakaism, a Tsonga is full of Ngungunyanism, a Pedi is full of Skukuleism. We must be full of God. We must allow God to possess us. What South Africa needs is baptism of love.

And lastly. We need hope for Africa and the world. We should never forget South Africa is in Africa. And we are all moving towards a global village where we need to learn from each other, to take notes from one another and God used Dr Michael Cassidy and the Bishops and the others to bring us together. We should never lose this. I said to my wife when we were having dinner: "I wish we could have another SACLA soon."

Did you know that the spirit of denominationalism is another form of racism? We need each other desperately. I am what I am because of many pieces and many information from NG dominees, Lutheran theologians, Presbyterian theologians, even Catholics, Mother Theresa was Catholic. Don't judge people, you are not Jesus. God can use anybody. I learned so much from the Apostolic Faith Mission, Assemblies of God, my own church. Different Pentecostal denominations. Gone are those days when you and I as Pentecostals used to say we own the Holy Spirit. You own nothing. The Holy Spirit is God. He moves the way He likes and He likes the way He moves.

I want to pray with you and for you tonight. Great truths have been spoken on this platform by different men and women of God. God is building His church and I believe it will not be long before Jesus will show up to take His church. We must get ready. We must die to self and we must seek God while He can still be found. If you have lost this hope, I want to pray for you.

Let us all stand.

(.....Prayed in another language ..... then in English)

"We thank you Lord for SACLA. And we thank you Lord for all the speakers who spoke, who led us through your Word to move a little further. And now Lord we pray that you will restore to us that living hope, the Hope of Glory. I pray for your blessing upon everyone. In Jesus Name. Amen and Amen."

God Bless you.