

The rippling tide of bitterness

- its consequence, and its antidote

This was the first article I wrote just a few days after our farm invasion in Zimbabwe. The article was noticed by the media and published internationally. We received many messages from Christians all over the world, telling us that they were praying for us – and indeed we felt it. It was as if we were being carried by angels' wings. We had no idea what the future held for us. The whole story of God's miraculous intervention is written in my book "Another farm in Africa". Nevertheless, this is how it started.

"My farm is taken!" That phrase is almost as terrifying as the word "*cancer*". On Tuesday, the 24th of April, 2012, while I was busy cutting silage, four smart vehicles came racing into my farmyard, and out jumped about 30 big black men, dark with anger and seething hatred. I walked over to them and greeted them in a friendly manner, receiving only mumbled replies. The leader, the lands' commissioner, started. *"You are aware that the government has acquired all farmland and that you are living illegally on this farm."* "Oh," I replied. "Well," he continued, *"We have a new owner whom we wish to bring here and introduce to you."*

He asked if there was a place where we could sit down to talk, and once we were seated (sprawled out) on our veranda chairs, the intimidation started. *"We expect you to co-operate with the new owner. We want the transition to go smoothly."* A particularly large individual added his piece, deep hatred glaring from his face, *"If*

you don't co-operate, we will send our boys to you, and you will be chased off without anything – not even your clothes. You will take nothing with you."

Two hours!

Another man then asked me, *"Do you know who I am?"* I answered that I did not. He said, *"I am Mr ***, and I can get people off their farms in two hours!"* He held his two fingers up and repeated forcibly, *"TWO HOURS!"*

I had been rather quiet up to this point, but then gently replied, "Mr ***, I want to tell you something that you need to hear." "What is it?" he asked gruffly? Pointing my finger to him I said quietly, *"I do not fear you, I only fear God. You and I will both die one day, and in our own shoes we will stand before God and answer to Him for what we have done in this life, you for your actions, and me for my response to those actions."*

That seemed to rattle him considerably.

With many other threats they left as fast as they had arrived, promising to return in the afternoon to introduce the new *"owner"* to me.

When they came back in the afternoon, there were fewer of them and only two cars, and I had had time to regain my composure. The young man, Philemon, asked me how much time I needed to vacate the farm, and I said, "Ideally six months to take me through the winter." He replied that that was too long, so I asked him how much time he would give me, and he replied, *"Three months."* I knew this was gracious indeed in comparison with what other farmers had received, so I accepted. And in a

matter of hours the deal was done, and I had lost my farm, my lovely house and place of abode, with nowhere to go!

Preparing my heart

But the Lord had prepared me for this day. Over the past two years He had been speaking to me often about my own *heart attitude*, and much cleansing had taken place. The last three months or so, particularly, He had often put the thoughts in my heart that I was going to lose my farm, so I knew that a test was coming in my life and that He was expecting me, His child, to respond the way He would.

When the vehicles came racing in on Tuesday, I knew immediately that the time had come. You see, there's nothing that happens to us in this life that catches our Heavenly Father by surprise. If we are His children, He has our lives safely in His hands. If we listen to His voice, and do what He tells us, then there is no need to fear what any man may do to us, nor to fear the future.

And what does He tell us to do when this type of thing happens to us? Are we willing to apply His words to our lives?

Matthew 5:44 "But I say to you, 'Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, so that you may become sons of your Father in heaven ...'"

Are these Jesus' instructions to us, or are they not? Why do I see so many Christians with such deep racial hatred

and bitterness boiling inside them? Are we not to be sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, emanating His godly character? What witness do we portray if we respond with seething anger? In what sense are we then better than the world?

Blessing your enemies

When I met Philemon the next day, he was still just as nervous as he had been the previous day – sitting on the edge of his chair. I said to him, “Philemon, as much as I have nowhere to go, and you have taken my life-long dream away from me in one day, I am not going to be bitter or angry with you. *I want to bless you* as you come onto this farm. I will assist you wherever I can. I want you to enjoy this farm as I have enjoyed it.” He responded positively to that and gave me more amazing concessions. “You can take anything you want off the farm, and if you are willing to leave anything I will pay you for it,” he said. We shook hands and parted as friends.

The Scripture says,

Jam 1:20 "The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

We must see the bigger picture and not hold so tightly onto the few earthly possessions that we have. Our Heavenly Father is well able to supply our needs. If we hold onto earthly things with an open hand, He is able to both *take out and put in* at His will. Not even a sparrow falls without Him knowing it. Can He not supply my need for a home and a place to milk the cows? Of course, He can!

Why then should I allow my heart to be filled with hatred for a man for whom Jesus died? I would like to see this man and his violent friends brought into the kingdom, instead. *You will never win the racial hatred battle with hatred.* It can only be won with love and forgiveness. The most powerful force in the world is *love with humility.* Did He not say,

Ps 37:11 "The humble will inherit the earth and shall delight themselves with abundance of peace"?

Don't underestimate the enormous power of simple humility – where we say,

"Not my will but Yours be done."

Of course, what they have done is illegal. I could win the case should I take it to court which is not corrupt. But at what cost? With more hatred, with intimidation and violence against my workers, and terror to my dear wife! No, a farm is not worth that. I will not pursue a piece of land and thereby endanger and terrify my precious wife. She is worth far more than a farm.

God will provide

As it stands right now, I have nowhere to go. Jesus' disciples asked Him, *"Where are you staying?"* His reply was,

Matt 8:20 "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

I kind of feel that *I am in good company!* I have a supernatural peace and confidence that my Heavenly Father has something much better for me than what I had. He is closing one door, only to open another much bigger door.

So, to those who have heard about our farm grab, please don't on my account fan the flames of racial hatred and bitterness. Rather *entrust your life completely to our Heavenly Father* and wait to see how wonderfully He is going to turn this situation for His glory!!

With special love to you all,

Henry Jackson