

**BEING TEXT OF SPEECH BY PASTOR 'TUNDE BAKARE
AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE BOOK,
STRATEGIC INTERVENTION IN GOVERNANCE (SIIG) VOL. I
ON FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2015**

**VENUE: BANQUET HALL, SHERATON HOTEL & TOWERS, IKEJA, LAGOS.
THEME: MY POLITICAL TRAJECTORY: FROM THE PULPIT TO THE PODIUM**

Scriptural Texts:

I Chronicles 17:7 & 8 (NKJV):

⁷ Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. ⁸ And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a name like the name of the great men who *are* on the earth.

Psalms 78:70-72 (NKJV):

⁷⁰ He also chose David His servant, And took him from the sheepfolds; ⁷¹ From following the ewes that had young He brought him, To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance. ⁷² So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

Romans 13:1-7 (NKJV):

¹ Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do

you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ **For he is God's minister to you for good.** But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; **for he is God's minister**, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, **for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing.** ⁷ Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due*, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

PROTOCOLS

I have come to realize that the society, whether it believes in the Lord of the Church or not, reveres men of the cloth and expects them to be untainted by the affairs of this life. In its perception, the clergy man occupies a pedestal that is perched above the mundane. Society believes that such non-entanglement preserves the clergy man's communication with divinity on behalf of humanity. This is why the Pope, for instance, is referred to as "His Holiness" and is highly respected all over the world even by non-Catholics. For those who may not know, the Pope is both the Head of the Roman Catholic Church and the Head of State of the Vatican City which has embassies all over the world. Thus, the Pope combines religious and political roles simultaneously. Nonetheless, society demands of the clergy strict adherence to the biblical injunction to the High Priest as stated in **Hebrews 5:1-4 (NKJV)**:

¹For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. ³ Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. ⁴ And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

It is against this backdrop - and sometimes in line with the principle of the separation of Church from State - that some maintain that pastors have no business in politics. However, what the proponents of this view fail to realize is that the Church, described as the salt of the earth by Christ in Matthew 5:13, must make contact with the world just as the salt cannot sweeten a pot of soup until it makes contact and diffuses.

The conservative viewpoint also does not realize that in the new covenant ushered in by Christ Jesus, the Aaronic priesthood, which required the separation of the priestly office from the affairs of men, has been replaced by the priesthood of Melchizedek in whose order believers have been made kings and priests unto God and are mandated to manifest His kingdom in every domain, in every nation and in every generation.

Hebrews 7:11-17 (NKJV):

¹¹Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? ¹²For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. ¹³For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. ¹⁴For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. ¹⁵And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest ¹⁶who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. ¹⁷For He testifies: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

Be that as it may, I do not, by my position, discard the concern of believers who hold the conservative view on this matter, nor do I disregard the skepticism of the world regarding what appears to them to be a deviation from the sanctity of priesthood for, indeed, I admit that the pulpit, the symbol

of my constituency, has over the years produced aberrations which have confused the world, which is the immediate environment of the church before whom it has been called to shine as light.

In this regard, we have seen many psychologists and metaphysicians on the pulpit those who deviate from the mind-transforming power of the Word of God and resort to humanistic philosophies and extra-sensory perception to propagate what has become the health and wealth gospel. We have seen magicians on the pulpit, who turn away from the miracle-working power of God and deploy extra-scriptural devices to perform lying wonders by which they hold congregations and television viewers bound. We have seen false prophets who prophesy lies by declaring what God has not said just to take advantage of the vulnerable. We have seen money-doublers on the pulpit who read their greed into God's creed.

In addition, we have also seen politicians on the pulpit. However, if you think the politicians on the pulpit are those who actively engage the political arena from the pulpit, then you need to reconsider because these are not the real politicians on the pulpit. The real politicians on the pulpit are those who hang around the corridors of power to give false prophecies to rulers in return for favours, waivers and wages of unrighteousness. Apostle Peter spells out their character trait and doom graphically in his second epistle thus:

¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children. ¹⁵ They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; ¹⁶ but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. ¹⁷ These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. ¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling *words* of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. ¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. ²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world

through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. ²¹ For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²² But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: “A dog returns to his own vomit, and, “a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.” (II Peter 2:14-22; NKJV)

We must not confuse such with those who speak truth to power from the pulpit. These are pastors, priests or church ministers in and out of the domain of politics. History has a record of many such persons. They include: Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch Reformed Church minister, who was Prime Minister of the Netherlands between 1901 and 1905; Makarios III, a Cypriot Orthodox Church priest who became the first President of the Republic of Cyprus between 1960 and 1974; Walter Lini, an Anglican priest who was the founding Prime Minister of Vanuatu between 1980 and 1991; and John Bani, another Anglican priest who was President of the same country, Vanuatu, between 1999 and 2004. Others include:

1. William Aberhart, Baptist preacher, founder of the Social Credit Party of Alberta, Canada, and seventh Premier of Alberta;
2. Ross Clifford, a Baptist theologian who served in the New South Wales Legislative Council and an Australian Senate candidate;
3. Walter E. Fauntroy, a Baptist pastor and former member of the United States Congress;
4. Ernie Fletcher, Baptist minister and former governor of Kentucky; and
5. Mike Huckabee, Baptist minister and former governor of Arkansas.

Many a time, such persons are nation builders who are burdened by the deplorable state of their nation to the point of weeping for it as did Nehemiah, praying for it as did Daniel, preaching hope to it as did Zechariah, prophesying concerning it as did Isaiah, and working to rebuild it as did Nehemiah. God is interested in the business of raising nation-builders but he has no business with politicians on the pulpit.

Since the dawn of the democratic era in 1999, Nigeria has seen the emergence of pastors in politics vying for key positions, from Reverend Chris Okotie of the Household of God, presidential candidate of Fresh Party in 2003 and 2007, to a Redeemed Christian Church of God pastor, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, running mate to General Muhammadu Buhari in the 2015 presidential election, now Vice-President elect on the platform of APC and, in-between, yours truly, running mate to General Muhammadu Buhari in the 2011 presidential election, the account of which forms part of the book we are presenting today.

One may ask: What is it about the political arena that attracts pastors or clergy men? However, I think the attraction is the other way round. Perhaps there is something about pastors that attracts the political class to them even when they are uninterested; for as Pericles, the Greek statesman, once said, “Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you”. Could it be eloquence or the ability to galvanize people using the instrumentality of the spoken word, a grace that comes with preaching? I am reminded of how an analyst examined the 2011 vice presidential debate in which I participated as vice presidential candidate on the platform of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). In his analysis, I carried the day because it was my natural terrain; in other words, according to him, I won the debate because I am a preacher. Whether he was right or wrong, he made his point, forgetting however that I am a trained lawyer and only a preacher or pastor by vocation.

I am also reminded of the presidential debate in 2003 between Rev. Chris Okotie and Senator Jim Nwobodo. I understand that Jim Nwobodo became so frustrated by Okotie's erudition that he advised him to go back to the pulpit and leave politics for the politicians, just as I was told recently in London by Governor Akpabio of Cross River State at the Nigeria Arise Award where we were both honoured.

Perhaps it is not just the eloquence but the heart of a shepherd that yearns to put an end to the suffering of people, like Jesus was moved to compassion when He saw the crowds troubled and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus did not of course respond to this need by seeking political

power because that was not why He came into the world and that was not what the Father sent Him to do. However, having obtained the keys to the kingdom when He died and resurrected, He gave the keys to the church and mandated us to go into all the world and preach the gospel of His Kingdom. See **Matthew 16:19 (NKJV)**:

¹⁹And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

With this shepherd-like compassion comes a zeal fuelled by the conviction within an individual that the Kingdom which He represents has the solution to the problems of the people; a solution which is not unconnected with the equitable redistribution of resources and an authoritative allocation of value in line with the blueprint of God's kingdom. It becomes an unquenchable passion if the individual is given this mission for active facilitation of national transformation by God. Because it is a divine mandate, in due season, it will become evident. Therefore, only those shepherds who are sent to the political arena like King David should proceed. Going on a frolic of one's own could lead to destruction because it is a dangerous arena akin to shark-infested waters.

More than five decades ago, in a continent whose memories had been marred by the scourge of slavery, whose consciousness had been battered by the chains of political and economic subjugation, and whose future seemed threatened by dark ominous clouds of post-independence conflicts, a star-nation was born at the time appointed and in line with boundaries predetermined by the Almighty. In a striking deviation from the tumultuous transition to independence experienced by other African nations, the political genius of the founding fathers of our nation - the likes of Herbert Macaulay, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Chief Anthony Enahoro, Jaja Wachukwu, Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti, among others - was manifest as they engaged fellow compatriots on the one hand and the British Crown on the other.

These arrowheads of Nigerian nationhood dialogued with one another and engaged the colonial masters in the search for acceptable frameworks and the necessary conditions for the peaceful and prosperous coexistence of the sub-national constituents of a nation that seemed poised to teach the world the invaluable lesson of unity in diversity - that a people of different tribes and tongues can speak the same language of peace; that a nation of diverse creeds and cultures can coexist in harmony; that a country of disparate perspectives and preferences can find common grounds in the spirit of trustful give-and-take; and that a nation of divergent views and voices can sit together at the table of brotherhood to disagree only in order to eventually agree.

The world watched with keen interest as this beacon of hope shone forth out of what had hitherto been known to it as The Dark Continent. It appeared that the people who once sat in darkness had seen a great light and that light had dawned upon those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death. The powerful nations of the world stood in awe as they watched the rise of this unlikely entrant into the league of the world's leading nations. International media captured in vivid terms the reactions of the world to the events that heralded the emergence of the Nigerian state on the global scene: "Huge New African State is Taking Shape at Nigeria Talks", reported the October 10, 1958 edition of *Contact* magazine; "Biggest African State Nears Freedom", the same paper reported on January 1, 1960. Even the colonial government could not but admit the great promise of this nation which, according to it, was "a land of history and pageantry", "of modern thought and modern progress" whose story "is an outstanding example of an ordered progress towards independence". As the world awaited the lowering of the Union Jack and the hoisting of the Nigerian flag, the British government admitted that a great new nation was emerging, "a nation...who have put their faith in the democratic life and whose voice will command respect throughout Africa, the Commonwealth and the world"².

I was about six years old at the time but the electrifying impact of those moments of great promise for our nation were not lost on me. They resonated with the pictures of a preferred future that were painted on the

canvas of my heart by the Creator Himself, though at that time I could not articulate them as well as I would decades later on both the pulpit and the podium.

On April 10, 1967, at just a little over 12 years old, I had a dream in which I was on a mountaintop seated between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the then Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon. In this rather mysterious encounter, we were discussing the future of this nation. After that experience, a seed of destiny was deposited in me which, though I did not fully comprehend it at the time, I could not deny or disregard.

In the course of my voyage of destiny, I would later be exposed to certain aspects of the Nigerian promise and of our national pride, as embodied by our founding fathers, which I was not privy to at the time of our independence. In 2012, while in the United States on a mission to the churches, I watched a video obtained from the Library of Congress in the United States. It contained footage of the official visit of Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa to the United States as the world's most powerful nations competed for the attention of this nation of great promise that had just joined the community of nations. The international respect accorded the Nigerian leader, the dignity with which he comported himself, and the articulate manner in which he addressed various gatherings, including the House of Representatives of the United States of America, brought uncontrollable tears to my eyes.

As I have explained before today, that video brought tears to my eyes, not just because the world's perception of Nigeria has since then changed for the worse (as I recognize that our burden is much more than an international image gone sour); it brought tears to my eyes, not just because the leaders that followed that golden class have been, for the most part, neither as intelligent nor as eloquent (for I know that our challenge is much more than the absence of intellect and oratory skills in leadership); it brought tears to my eyes not just because Nigerians visiting other countries are now treated as crime suspects and presumed guilty until proven innocent; I wept because I saw a great dream lie in ruins.

No other situation underscores the extent of our fall and the paradox of our arrested national development than the fact that, 54 years after independence, our nation, Nigeria, has become the school boy of the world, taking lessons and admonitions on good behavior and proper conduct during elections from other nations including our former colonial masters and neighbours once colonized like us. Like an errant child in the glare of a disciplinarian parent, we are being coerced into acceptable conduct through threats of non-issuance of visas³ as well as warnings of prosecution by the International Criminal Court⁴. At the same time, we are being ridiculed by neighbouring nations⁵ in relation to whom we are supposed to play the role of “big brother” because of our inability to manage ourselves and to solve our problems. One is forced to ask: What has gone wrong with Nigeria?

It was Chinua Achebe who once said, “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership”. This reminds me of a very bad joke I heard a long time ago. The angels of the Lord stood before God and asked Him, “Why is Africa exempt from earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons and other calamities that plague the other continents?” In response, God simply laughed and said, “Wait till you see their leaders. Their leaders are worse than earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons or whatever natural disaster you can think of. To add natural disasters to their calamities would be too much for them to manage”.

For Nigeria, a nation of such great potential from whose leadership the rest of Africa once drew inspiration and support, this necessitates sobering questions: In a country of over 65 million adults⁶, are there no men and women who can effectively and efficiently steer the affairs of state? Has the same country that produced the likes of Obafemi Awololo, Ahmadu Bello, Tafawa Balewa and Nnamdi Azikiwe become incapable of self-governance? How can a nation with a proliferation of professionals, distinguished at home and abroad in various fields of endeavour, suffer such dearth of leadership? How did we get to that state where, according to *The Economist*, an international magazine, an election leaves us with “the least awful” choice?⁷

The search for answers to these salient questions could take one to Plato who once said, “One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors”. I am also reminded of Edmund Burke who observed that “the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing”. One must then ask: Have good men truly stayed away from the governance of our nation?

I have had the privilege of engaging the two leading actors in the 2015 presidential election and I can assure you that each has his strengths. One could safely conclude that they are good men in their own right. However, do they have weaknesses? Yes! Just like every other human since the fall of man, but before you ask me what those weaknesses are, let me remind you of the words of Jesus Christ in **Matthew 7:3-5 (NKJV)**:

³And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? ⁵Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Also, as Alexander Solzhenitsyn once said, “The battle line between good and evil runs through the heart of every man”; a battle that is won only as man in his wretchedness cries out to the God of salvation. Rather than pontificating on the lapses and weakness of those at the forefront of national politics, let us focus our search light on the “political cave dwellers” - men and women of great intellectual capacity, competence and character who have refused to get involved, so as not to be stained, at the expense of our nation's progress.

Truth be told, our national experience suggests that the Nigerian problem is not merely one of leadership deficit but of the attitude of the Nigerian people as well. In the words of Joseph de Maistre, “every nation has the government it deserves”. This is all the more pertinent because it appears that the pillage of our common patrimony over the years by an oppressive and plunderous

ruling class has taken place against the backdrop of a docile and gullible followership. The oppression and plunder have further aggravated the desensitization of the Nigerian psyche to the essentials of good leadership. In other words, our people have for too long been misled and under-led by the incompetent. They have sheepishly followed to the extent that even a poor similitude of good governance is effusively praised.

The docility of the Nigerian public brings to mind the experience of one of our staff, Soji Olateru, at a busy junction in the Aguda-Ogba axis of Ikeja, Lagos. Two mentally handicapped young fellows attempted to control traffic at the junction because the traffic wardens were nowhere to be found. Interestingly, drivers willingly obeyed them until there was a logjam and vehicular traffic came to a halt. Some drivers began to bribe the young men in order to obtain preferential right of way. The standstill became even more chaotic to the extent that it would have been better off without the interference of the two self-appointed but mentally challenged traffic wardens. Nobody did anything about it until Soji got out of his car, drove them away and restored order.

The maxim that every nation deserves the leadership it gets implies that, since leadership is derived from among the people, the leaders actually model the prevailing character of the people such that the leaders are like the people. It also suggests that in a democracy, the people determine their own destiny through the power of choice. This would suggest that Nigerian leaders are corrupt only because the Nigerian people are corrupt and that we, Nigerians, through our choices, are the architects of our national woes.

It would mean that 54 out of every 100 young Nigerians⁸ deserve to be unemployed. It would mean that over 10.5 million Nigerian children⁹ deserve to be out of school. It would mean that 130 million Nigerians¹⁰ deserve to suffer electricity shortage and to self-generate electricity due to the failure of the power sector. It would mean that 64 million Nigerian adults deserve¹¹ to be illiterate in the 21st century. It would mean that 112.5 million Nigerians as at 2012¹² deserve to live in relative poverty; it would mean that Nigerians deserve to die before they attain the age of 53¹³; it would mean

that 12.1 million Nigerians¹⁴ deserve to live in a state of hunger or undernourishment; it would mean that 158 out of every 1,000 Nigerian children¹⁵ deserve to die before they reach the age of 5; it would suggest that more than 10,000 Nigerians in the North East killed by Boko Haram¹⁶, and other Nigerians who have been grieved by these painful losses, deserved the hand they were dealt; it would also suggest that hundreds of thousands of Nigerians deserve to be rendered homeless through the activities of terrorists.

To think that we, as a nation, deserve such a gruesome experience for whatever reason means that we are a nation under **Judgment**. However, judgment is for those who reject God's message of salvation. Judgment entails giving to a person or people what they deserve; but beyond judgment is **Mercy**, which entails taking away from a people the punishment they deserve. Since in the Divine Court of Justice, the consequence of sin must be fully paid for, God, in His infinite mercies, provided not just an attorney but atonement for sin. He provided Himself a Lamb. He became sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus for, although sin brings reproach to any people, righteousness exalts a nation (**II Corinthians 5:21; Proverbs 14:34**). Therefore, by His sacrifice, He has made provisions not only for individuals or for one nation but for all nations, that they might experience genuine transformation from darkness to light as He said in **Isaiah 49:6 (NKJV)**:

‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,
That You should be My salvation to the ends
of the earth.’

This provision is a function of the third component of the message of salvation - **Grace**. By this provision, just like individuals can experience healing, restoration and prosperity, nations can transit from economic downturn to economic recovery, from insecurity to peace, from oppression

to good governance, from political upheavals to national order, from chaos to the institutionalization of progress and from the ruse of law to justice and the rule of law.

As it is for individuals, the transformational journey for any given nation begins with an unacceptable status quo. The alternative to this status quo is the desired end in the mind of God encoded in a message of transformation or change. To bring the message to the nation, God looks for a man. I use the term “man” generically and not with any gender limitation as the messenger could be a woman. The man with the message therefore propagates the transformational agenda and raises or attracts men and women who will implement exponential dimensions of the transformation envisioned. **It takes transformed people to transform nations and changed people to change nations.**

The platform on which the messenger disseminates the message is what, in our cultural preferences, we refer to as either the pulpit or podium. However, a pulpit, “a raised enclosed platform in a church or chapel from which the preacher delivers a sermon”¹⁷ is synonymous with a podium, “a small platform on which a person may stand to be seen by an audience, as when making a speech or conducting an orchestra”¹⁸.

In relation to the message given to the messenger, we tend to bring three elements into focus in an attempt to create distinctions between the pulpit and the podium. These are the context of the message, the content of the message, and the conveyor of the message. We use the term “pulpit” to depict the message in the context of the church environment and the term “podium” in the context of political rallies and debates, mass rallies and other non-religious gatherings. When the message comes to us from the “pulpit”, we can infer that it is a sermon and when it comes from the “podium” in the political context, we adjudge that it is a manifesto. When the messenger is on the pulpit, we regard him as a preacher and when he is on the podium in a political environment, we regard him as a politician.

This attempt at compartmentalizing the messenger is what has created

controversies in the minds of some concerning me as I walk the path of destiny. They ask, "Who is he? Is he a pastor or a politician?" It simply stems from the failure to understand that the message of the Kingdom, given by the King of kings to His messenger, is one and the same, no matter the environment and no matter the audience, whether it is preached from the pulpit or it is declared from the podium, as long as the messenger goes where he is sent by the God who called Him, and as long as the messenger is walking on the path mapped out for him by the God who leads him. Therefore, from the pulpit to the podium, I have only been a messenger of the God who sent me - that is the constant.

What then, you may ask, is the content of this message as has been committed to me for our nation? It is a message of change, not the kind of change that presumes that the end justifies the means as though a destructive means could bring about a constructive end. It is a message of transformation but not the kind of transformation that exists mostly on the glossy pages of newspapers, in scintillating advertorials and bogus statistics that have little or no bearing on the lives of the people – absolutely not. The message I have been given is the message of His kingdom, His power and His glory. It is a message of a kingdom that cannot be shaken, a kingdom that has the capacity to hold society together, a kingdom that is advanced by a new breed without greed who are uncompromising non-conformists and a radical opposition to corruption.

From the pulpit to the podium, it is a message that is not defined or limited by religion and a message which will root out every impostor and every system and structure that perpetuates oppression and injustice. It is a message of people empowerment, economic recovery and equitable redistribution of wealth. Furthermore, it is a message of healing and reconciliation, and of resurrection and hope; healing from sectional grievances and historical wrongs, reconciliation and integration of the Nigerian people into one united nation under God, resurrection of the pillars of righteousness and justice, and hope that no matter the shame of our past, this nation will rise up from the dark and filthy cesspool of infamy and transit from shame to fame in Jesus' name. Amen.

That is why I refuse to believe that Nigerians do not deserve good governance. To those who say Nigerians deserve the leaders they get, I refuse to believe that the young Nigerian walking on the streets of Port Harcourt, CV in hand, knocking on doors from office to office in the hope of finding a job opening that will put food on his table and make him useful to his family and community, does not deserve leadership that will create a conducive environment for job creation. Nigerians deserve better than this.

I refuse to believe that the artisan living in the suburbs of Lagos with a family of eight, who works hard to purchase a 1kva "I better pass my neighbor" generator to power his one room apartment, at the risk of exposing his family to toxic fumes, does not deserve a government that will make provision for uninterrupted power supply and guarantee access to affordable and decent accommodation. Nigerians deserve better than this.

I refuse to believe that that teenage trader on the streets of Onitsha, whose dream of becoming a world class business administrator was killed when she dropped out of school in JSS 1, because both parents died in a ghastly accident along Benin-Ore road, does not deserve leadership that will give life back to her dreams through appropriate public policy that guarantees access to affordable and quality education for every citizen no matter how poor, and that will transform the transport sector ensuring that roadworthy cars are driven on worthy roads. Nigerians deserve better than this.

Don't tell me that the construction worker in Abuja, struck with lung cancer after labouring for years in a hazardous work environment to help build his nation's infrastructure and to put food on the table for his family, does not deserve a government that will choose to provide state-of-the-art medical facilities for the benefit of Nigerians in Nigeria and to use those facilities along with Nigerians, rather than run abroad for treatment in well-equipped hospitals at the expense of tax payers.

Don't tell me that that farmer in Kebbi State who tills his one acre farmland to produce two bags of beniseed every year does not deserve leadership that

will harness the nation's land and mineral resources, to facilitate meaningful development in agriculture and industry, thereby ensuring that no Nigerian goes to bed hungry, that no Nigerian is unemployed, and that no Nigerian lives below a minimum irreducible standard.

Don't tell me that that young man in Maiduguri who defied every ounce of fear and came out armed with nothing but a stick against the onslaught of heavily armed Boko Haram terrorists, because he believes it is his duty to defend his fatherland, does not deserve leaders that will eradicate terrorism, secure the Nigerian territory and borders and ensure that every Nigerian goes to bed with their two eyes closed without fear of terror or robbery.

Don't tell me that Nigerians who pray and work night and day for the Nigeria of our dreams don't deserve good governance. Don't tell me that Nigerians, who decided to hope against hope and to trust the institution of governance, despite having been lied to over and over again by the political class, and came out to exercise their voting rights this past Saturday and Sunday, defying all odds and, in some cases, queuing until late in the night, assisting INEC officials with their private generators and car headlamps just to ensure that they cast their votes and that their votes count, don't deserve leadership that will produce the Nigeria of their dreams. Please do not tell me Nigerians don't deserve good governance!

I am persuaded that Nigerians have gotten to that state where all that matters to them is a nation that works and they don't care who God uses to build such a nation, whether he or she is a pastor or not. I refuse to believe that Nigerians should be denied the opportunity for good governance simply because it is coming from a man or woman of the cloth or from the pulpit. What Nigeria needs today as a matter of urgency are men and women of goodwill, selfless in their thinking and pursuit and determined with passion to make Nigeria great as they collaborate for the same purpose regardless of their ethnicity, gender and religion.

This is why I have declared from the pulpit and on the podium across the nooks and crannies of our nation, from the pulpit at The Latter Rain Assembly

in Lagos to the podium at the Unity Fountain in Abuja; from the pulpit at the crusade ground in Ilaro to the podium at the Ahmadu Bello Stadium in Kaduna; from the pulpit at the Word of Faith Christian Centre in Kano to the podium at Mapo Hall in Ibadan; from the pulpit at the crusade ground in Abeokuta to the podium at the Polo Ground in Minna.

It is why I pray, preach and prophecy until revival comes. It is why I have consistently and strategically communicated this message from the TV screens to the city streets within and outside this country and from the conference centres to the debate stands. It is why I have facilitated dialogues with princes and nobles on the platforms of the International Centre for Reconstruction and Development (ICRD) and the Save Nigeria Group (SNG). It is why I conferred with men and women of wisdom: the four hundred and ninety two distinguished delegates of the 2014 National Conference. It is why I consult with an apostolic community of like-minded persons within and outside the country. It is why I have travelled the path mapped out by the One who called me and to whom I owe account. It is why I have fought and will continue to fight the good fight of faith until the counsel of God is established in Nigeria.

As my Master, the Shepherd Ruler, who sent me, once declared, “to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world” (**Matthew 2:6 & John 18:37; KJV**), I firmly believe that out of this present grave darkness, the light of God will dawn in Nigeria, and our nation will encounter God afresh and Nigeria will be saved, Nigeria will be changed and Nigeria will be truly great in my lifetime.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless our beloved nation, Nigeria.

Pastor 'Tunde Bakare

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