

Message Presented by Andel Bailey, PhD on October 17, 2010 to mark the opening of the North East Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventist EXPO 2010.

Self reliance

First I have to let you know that it is a pleasure to be here, to participate in this very important event. I heartily commend the many persons who came together to plan this expo and then implement their plans. I know that a lot of work went into this planning and preparation, to ensure its success.

This Expo is being held at a very important time in Jamaica, when all of us should become more aware of the need for increased production. The Gleaner of last Thursday October 15 gave a clear report of the standard of living in Jamaica. Poverty has increased in Jamaica. More and more persons are becoming poorer. Over the past 2 years approximately 180 000 more persons fell below the poverty line!

Poverty is the lacking of basic human needs such as health care, food, clothing and shelter. People are considered living in poverty if their income falls below a certain level or what is called 'the poverty line'. The poverty line is the minimum level of income that will enable a person/persons or family to have an acceptable standard of living.

The Prime Minister Hon. Bruce Golding gave the report on poverty in Parliament. The report looked on the number of persons who were unable to adequately provide the basic necessities for their families. In 2007 there were approximately 10% of persons who were below the poverty line. This figure rose to 12.3% in 2008 and to 16.5% in 2009. This means that 180 000 more persons went under the poverty line in two years. There are now 445 000 Jamaicans in Jamaica living below the poverty line. I will add that while many persons are below the poverty line, there are many thousands who are desperately holding on to the line, trying to avoid falling below to crash on the harsh economic rocks of hardship.

Many persons may view those figures from a political colour, and so their conclusion may be influenced by other factors. I am not interested in examining these statistics from a political perspective. What we must be concerned about is how we as Jamaicans can take out ourselves and others from the depravity of poverty. We here must see it as Jamaicans suffering economic hardships, and determine what we can do to assist ourselves and others.

This is a time when people need to hold on to their jobs, unless they can find some other means for providing what they need. You cannot afford to be without a source of income, but how is that going? Are more persons being employed?

In the same news paper of Thursday October 14, 2010 we read that between October 2008 and April 2010 there were 86 000 jobs lost in private sector. 86 000 more persons without a job! These persons are no longer able to purchase as before, they no longer pay taxes, and they no longer contribute to the national income. So the government will have fewer people to tax and less income to spend. The Government is laying off and the private sector is laying off. What must we do?

A crisis may often provide the opportunity to solve the cause. Jamaica now has an opportunity to focus on improving its low standard of living. This can be done by greater emphasis on **Self Reliance**.

Jamaica has enough resources for all citizens to live above the poverty line! Think of our natural resources, land, water, bauxite, and above all our people. Jamaicans are resourceful, innovative, hard working friendly and brilliant. What is the missing link? What is lacking? Is there something that we can do to change what seems to be an inescapable path of deterioration? What can we do as individuals, families, communities and nation?

I think there is one way. That path is greater sense of self reliance. I will focus on self reliance in this presentation.

What is Self Reliance? How is it developed?

Self Reliance is a strong belief that you are capable of successfully dealing with the challenges that you encounter in life. If you have self reliance you learn to take direction from your self, instead of always depending on others to tell you what to do.

Let me emphasize that as a Christian I believe what the Bible says that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Christ Himself said that “without Me ye can do nothing”. So when I speak of self reliance I am not thinking of operating without God, my focus is the human aspect of the arrangement. The tasks that we have to do and how we take responsibility to have them done.

The story of David and Goliath is an example of the self reliance I am talking about. David depended on God to help him, but he went out alone, after telling King Saul that in caring for his sheep he had killed a lion and a bear, and in the same way he would kill the giant. He did not expect his bigger, stronger brother to fight the giant, but he believed that he could do it. It would have been easy for David to say that Abner the Captain of the army would be a better fighter, but he accepted it as his responsibility. That is Self Reliance.

The story of Caleb is another story of Self Reliance. He said to the people of Israel we can defeat the Canaanites. They did not believe him, so they rebelled, and spent 40 years in the wilderness. At the end of the 40 years Caleb said to Joshua give me that mountain with the giants. I will drive them out as God promised. As a senior statesman he could have asked Joshua to send a part of the army with him for protection. Instead he

volunteered for the most difficult assignment, and with God's help he succeeded. That is the Self Reliance I am talking about.

Dependency is the opposite of self reliance. It is based on the thought that you have to depend on other humans to tell you how to be successful. A person who is dependent looks first to persons or things outside of himself for instruction and guidance rather than listening to himself and guiding his own life. It should be clearly understood that listening to yourself may mean that you tell yourself that the best thing to do is to take the recommendation or advice of another person. However, it becomes your decision, and you hold yourself responsible for the outcome. You do not try to blame others for the outcome.

The result of dependency is the absence of self reliance, and hence an absence of the ability to solve and overcome problems by yourself. As Jamaicans we need to move from the poverty of dependency and into the wealth of Self Reliance.

When Jamaica gained independence in 1962, what we were saying is that we have become more self reliant. We have the ability to make our own decisions, and we were given the opportunity to do so. Many persons believe that in many ways we have squandered the opportunities that we received, but it is not too late to be corrected.

We need to assess how we have acted since that time. Have we been demonstrating our ability to effectively govern ourselves, or are we still dependent on persons or countries elsewhere?

I saw some figures from the government's statistical institute that I want to share with you. The pattern is the same for every year, so I will mention only one year.

In 2009 we imported, bought from abroad, goods with a value of \$443,061,787, 000, while at the same time we exported or sold abroad \$116,430,645, 000. There was a trade deficit of \$326, 631, 142, 000! We imported almost 4 times more than we exported. Is there any wonder that we are in such financial quicksand? Each year we seem to be sinking lower and lower into the debt trap.

Let us now look on food only. In 2009 the same time when persons were losing jobs, and some slipping below poverty line, we imported \$ 70,024,495, 000, but exported only \$20,917,592, 000. This is approximately \$50 billion more imported than we exported. Jamaica, the land of wood and water, excellent climate, fantastic temperature to grow crops, has to rely on foreigners to produce food for us to eat, and in return we have little to sell to them!

This cannot continue indefinitely. Some things have to give way. One such is that more and more persons will fall below the poverty line. More depression, more decay, more malnutrition, more borrowing and more suffering. What is the solution?

This Expo here is an indication of where we need to go. It shows persons who are demonstrating that they want to be self reliant and independent. It does not mean that success will come with the first try. No, you may have to try several times and in various ways to achieve your desired goal. If you succeed on the 10th try it is not that the 9 previous attempts were wasted. They represent that you discovered 9 ways that it could not be done. You call that experience.

One of the most interesting events over the past week was the rescue of the 33 Chilean miners who spent 69 days trapped 620 M down inside the earth. It had never been done before from that great depth, and for persons who were trapped for so long. It is a story of bravery, courage, tenacity, and Divine assistance. For 17 days the world did not know if the miners were alive or dead. The miners knew that they were alive, and so they had to rely on themselves. When they had no help, they had to help themselves. They rationed their little food to make it last. They had the self confidence that they could survive, and they did!

When the rescuers on the surface discovered that they were alive, they believed that they could get them out although no one had ever been rescued from such a great depth. So they made plans to rescue them. They decided to drill a hole to pull them out. When they were drilling they did not rely on one drill, but they were drilling from three different locations. If one should be unsuccessful there would still be 2 others. There are so many other good lessons from that story.

We all need to reach the place where we consider ourselves as being self reliant. I do not know what progress we are making, but we seem to live in a world where persons are always blaming others for any unwanted thing that happened to them. If it is a good outcome then they will take responsibility for it, but when it is unwanted then some one else is to be blamed.

Often you hear persons saying "My wife told me to do it", or my neighbor, or the devil made me do it. It is the government's fault why I built my house on the gully bank. It is the Met Office fault, for they did not tell me that so much rain was going to fall. It is the teacher's fault why my child is not doing better in school.

I teach mathematics, and in each class you have students of different abilities. When they are doing well they can tell you about their good study habits etc. From time to time you find someone who is not doing so well. If you should ask why is your work unsatisfactory, one popular answer is, "when I was in high school there was a math teacher who did not like me...." they blame the teacher. It is true that sometimes the teacher is at fault, but in general we must accept responsibility for what happened.

In a previous company where I worked as HR Manager, we advertised for a driver. One day I received in an ordinary mail an application with a brand new driver's license. It was a general PPV license. The holder could drive cars, busses, trucks everything. We

invited the applicant to an interview. He was a good, pleasant man, and we started talking. As we talked there was something about him that was puzzling. I was not sure what it was. I took up a news paper from my desk and said to him, please read this for me. He quickly said “where sah? Where sa? I said begin any where.

He slowly returned the paper and said “Sorry sir, I cannot read”. I was not ready to end the conversation, so I asked, “Why is it that you cannot read?” He said, “When I was a boy, my mother did not send me to school”.

“You are working now”, I said. “Oh yes sir, I started taking care of myself from I was 15”. “How old are you now? I asked? “Thirty one.” he replied.

I said to him, “For the first 15 years of your life you could blame your mother, but you left your mother 16 years ago. For 16 years you have been responsible for yourself, why did you not learn to read in those 16 years?”

I do not know what became of him. Maybe he went back to school. Maybe he went and obtained a driving job elsewhere, I will never know, but one thing we all can know is that persons tend to blame others for unwanted situations. We should never do that.

Self Reliance does not mean that you take no advice or assistance from anyone. It does not mean that children will not obey their parents. It means you do not have to be forced to obey your parents, but you make the decision to obey.

The direction that you give to your self maybe that you ought to seek the help of another person, but that is different from seeking assistance from another just because someone told you to do so. In other words self reliance means having the ability and courage to listen to your self, and act for your self, rather than listening to others telling you what to do.

When a person is able to listen to himself and follow his own intuition then he is able to trust himself, and go in the direction that he wants to go. Self-reliance is not so much the gaining of a particular skill-set (although that is part of it), rather it’s a mindset.

To become self-reliant requires a conscious effort of replacing an “I need help” attitude with an “I can do it myself” attitude. And the best part of becoming self-reliant is that it rewards you along the way. As you achieve even a small portion of it, you feel really good about yourself.

It is more than merely us as adults becoming self reliant. We have to teach it our children. We need to teach our children, and all the children to be self-reliant. They should make-up their own beds if they are able. They can clean their own shoes; wash their own cloths, unless of course they are doing other things which make it impossible or difficult to do those things. We must teach our children to be self confident and reliant. Let them think of new ways of doing things. Let them experiment when it is safe to do so. If what they

want to do is too dangerous then we have a responsibility to protect them, but if it is just a matter of experimenting or trying out different things then we ought to support their inquisitive minds.

There was a time when we as children made most of the toys we played with. We were outside running about while playing. Now if we are not careful the children stay indoors watching TV or playing electronic games.

Developing self-reliance is what leads to independence, and independence is at the centre of liberty. Liberty and self-reliance are so closely intertwined that a nation whose citizens lose their self-reliance may eventually lose their liberty, and end up in slavery. Economic slavery is one of the worse, for you exist at the mercy of your creditors.

It is so important that we all take honest look at ourselves and determine if we are striving to be self-reliant or are we looking for handouts. This Expo is an example of self reliance and a promotion of the same. Let us learn from what we have seen.

Finally let me add that Self Reliance has nothing to do with Selfishness. It is difficult to help others when you are not able to help your self. Someone said that the best way to assist the poor is not to become one.

You do not help the poor by becoming poor, but by lifting up yourself with God's help, you can carry others with you. When you have attained higher levels you can reach back and assist those below.

Please remember these Final Thoughts

1. Before you try to convince someone else, convince yourself, be self reliant.
2. Your opinion is important cherish it, but listen to what others say.
3. When you are going through bad times, keep going. When you are in the middle of bad times keep going. You will not get out if you do not move.
4. Never give up on your dreams and goals. Cherish them, but if you want your dreams to come true then wake up and start working.
5. Most important, enjoy life. Live yours and help others. Happiness is not at a destination, it is in the journey.
6. Depend on God. He is the source of life and all true success.

May this expo help us all to realize that **Self Reliance** is possible and that with God's help we can achieve it and be successful.

Thank you all.