

New Challenges That We Are Facing:

Dear Friends,

As the subject of this letter suggests, the challenges being addressed in this letter are varied, complicated, and do not have clear answers. This is intended to highlight my own personal concerns in my interactions with the people of Akrampa and their neighbors.

In our "*Covid world*", new challenges of different natures, and their effects on individuals and the people in and around Akrampa, and in Ghana as a whole are becoming more apparent. Without being in any particular order, I am touching on issues like social, economic, government policies, and local administrative issues from government agencies in their attempt to implement government policies.

My mindset in writing this is how these concerns are affecting efforts on the ground with respect to our work of reaching the people with the Good News of God in Christ Jesus. Our mission has been bringing the people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and trying to give them hope as they apply the words of Scripture to their daily lives. Our hope is that in trusting Him as their Lord and Savior they will continue to receive assurances of God's love for themselves and the performance of His will in their individual and corporate lives. I see despair and frustrations all around, to the extent that homes are being broken, marriages destroyed, crime and suicides. On August 9<sup>th</sup>, a ten-year old boy hung himself in his parent's room. The police are investigating, but people are giving all kinds of interpretations to this action by the boy.

This young boy's tragic death is a horrible example of the collapse of the social and economic challenges many are facing in managing their lives in these Covid times. I know that Covid has affected the whole world, so drastically, that economies are generally failing, even in the developed countries on whom countries like Ghana depend on for aid and grants to support local governmental budgets. The reduction in financial aid and grants for our country affect us so much that developmental projects are either scrapped altogether or suspended. These projects are aimed at improving the social and economic lives of the citizenry; building and equipping of hospitals and schools, job creation, etc. One of the reasons cited for the ten-year-old boy taking his own life was the collapse of his parents' marriage which had affected his education and basic needs (clothing and nourishment). Maybe, at such a young age, he saw society fail his parents, and he didn't trust that his parents or society would be there to help him as he grew up to be a man. We don't know why he chose to take his own life.

Some marriages fail due to economic changes in the society and in the lives of the partners, or related pressures of life. I see the frustration and despair building up in Akrampa, and it raises new challenges for our work in Akrampa.

Some family farms in Akrampa are failing in their yield (quantity and quality), thus affecting family income to support their children with food at home and supporting them in school. Thank God for the supporting meals we provide three times a week while they attend our Akrampa School!

But the kids need more to make them want to stay in school to be educated. A few times in the past some money had been sent to us to provide school uniforms, and footwear, for those children who needed them. The last time such a blessing was received, was in 2014, and the smiles on the faces, and the joy in the community and in the school was so gratifying. In short, I am saying that it is certain that because the benefactors (you, our sponsors) personal social and economic circumstances have changed, we are also affected, ultimately.

The local government is failing to respond promptly, in regard to, for example, managing and equipping schools and school buildings. It fills my heart with intense pain as I see the environment of the children's future, their education, which is the Akrampa school building, deteriorating rapidly from erosion at the foundation. The economic circumstance of the community and particularly, that of the parents, is such that they cannot come together to provide the substantial help for the maintenance of the school. Let me be quick to reiterate what I had already said in my July letter, that this is not *technically* the responsibility of our USA sponsors. Although, your love, prayers, and support are always a welcome blessing.

My point here is that, the drastic changes in the social and economic status of Ghana, and the failure of our government to take care of its citizens, are making it difficult for our preaching and teaching in Akrampa and beyond. I know it is difficult for other Pastors in Ghana also. The difficulties of current life are making it more challenging to teach and impress upon the populace that the **God factor** - looking unto Jesus - as the One most capable to help us through these difficult times is still a necessity in our lives.

I, along with other Pastors of Ghana, are determined and will continue to engage the people on all fronts, so they will understand that we have genuine interest in their welfare, and that God has their best welfare also at heart (Jeremiah 29:11).

We appreciate your continued prayer support for wisdom to deal with these realities confronting us. Thank you all for continued support. We love you so much.

Pastor Ben