

THE EFFECT OF EBOLA VIRUS ON CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AND ITS WAY OUT

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A. INTRODUCTION

The recent emergence of Ebola has caused lots of standstill in Missions. It makes life difficult for the people of the society by setting every member of the society on motion. There was fear and helter-skelter movement in every place that its effect was felt. To receive visitor to your house or have your neighbor paying a visit becomes a problematic condition-Because, you don't know who and who have contacted the disease. Going out for any interactive issue like business become a very hard Adventure to embark upon. In some public places that involve social interaction of people like banking sectors, Educational sectors, Hospital, Market, Church etc. no one has confidence to go there. The whole countries of the world scared of receiving immigrants to their countries. Their citizens also dread of traveling to any part of the world. All these happen because of the deadly disease called Ebola. Its out breaking fears people dead than the outbreak of war. It seems that war has control over than the Ebola virus. It is possible to curtail war to a certain regional part of the world but Ebola spread faster uncontrollable. Because of this inability to demarcate the boundary of the Ebola virus, so many areas of human life were affected negatively: Christian missions also was not excluded in the scene. In spite these evil effects caused by Ebola virus mention above, there are good effects that can be identified in Ebola virus on Christian missions such as compulsory seeking of the face of God by the entire world.

This paper intends to examine the effect of Ebola virus on Christian missions and its way out. The concept of the Ebola virus will be briefly discussed. Christian missions will also be short noted before going to effect and way out which is the main goal of this paper. This paper is purely researched in the library and internet couple with the author's experience during the time.

B. CONCEPT OF EBOLA VIRUS

Ebola virus was first known to the society in 1976. Its emergence took place in the Democratic Republic of Congo in a river called River Ebola. The disease was named Ebola after River Ebola where it was first discovered. This is well reported by Michael W. Smith (2015) a medical Doctor who opines "The Ebola virus first appeared 1976 outbreaks in Africa. Ebola gets its name from the Ebola River, which is near one of the village in the Democratic Republic of Congo where the disease first appeared." Since that 1976 outbreak, nothing much was known about it until recently that it became terror, claiming the life of innocent people. Year 2014 outbreak was rapidly sent so many souls to grave. This attracted the attention of the whole world to find way to fight out the disease from the society. So that people of the society will have rest from the

disease. In finding solution to this deadly problem, education about the disease started spreading about through the faces of media e.g. Radio, Television, Newspapers, Magazines, Internet, Oral declaration in the various social set up, etc. The attempt to reveal the whole truth about Ebola virus leads medical personnel to develop a simple concept that includes Ebola, its type, its symptoms, its diagnosis, its treatment and its prevention. In addition to saving people from this deadly disease, its origin was traced to animals like chimp, Monkey and Bats. They therefore concluded that people should avoid eating bush animals, especially the above mentioned animals. Those who care for sick person or bury someone who has died from the disease often get it.

The medical personnel took up the challenge to spread the news about Ebola when it was realized that almost all the continents of the world were affected e.g. Africa, America, and Europe etc. Consciously and unconsciously everybody became the agent of information about Ebola to his/her neighbor.

I.What is Ebola?

Ebola is a deadly disease caused by virus. There are five strains and four of them can make people sick. After entering the body, it kills cells, making some of them explode. It wrecks the immune system, causes heavy blending inside the body, and damages almost every organ (Smith, 2015). Tara waterman (1999) collaborates this as he explains; Ebola is a rare but deadly virus that causes bleeding inside and outside the body, it damages the immune system and organs. Ultimately, it causes levels of blood- clotting cells drop. This leads to severe, uncontrollable bleeding. The disease also known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever or Ebola virus kills up to 90% of people who are infected. Ebola is a member of the filovirus family.

II.Type of Ebola virus

There are five types of Ebola virus. Four of them caused the disease in humans (Smith, 2015) namely:

1. Ebola Sudan
2. Ebola Zaire
3. Ebola cote d'Ivoire
4. Ebola Reston. (waterman, 1999)

All these type of Ebola virus are named after the countries they were discovered.

III.Symptoms of Ebola virus

Early on, Ebola can feel like the flu or other illness. Symptoms show up 2 to 21 days after infection and usually include.

1. High fever
2. Headache
3. Sore throat
4. Stomach pain
5. Lack of appetite.

As the disease gets worse, it causes bleeding inside the body, as well as from the eyes, ears and nose. Some people will vomit or cough up blood, have bloody diarrhea and get a rash. (Smith, 2015).

IV. Diagnosis of Ebola virus.

Sometimes it's hard to tell if a person has Ebola from the Symptom alone. Doctor may test to rule out other diseases like cholera or malaria. Tests of blood and tissues also can diagnose Ebola. If you have Ebola, you will be Isolated from the public immediately to prevent the spread (Waterman, 1999)

V. Treatment and prevention of Ebola virus

There's no cure for Ebola, though researchers are working on

It. Treatment includes an experimental serum that destroys infected cells. Doctors manage the symptoms of Ebola with:

- Fluids and electrolytes
- Oxygen
- Blood pressure medication
- Blood transfusions
- Treatment for other infection (Waterman,1999)

Also, there's no vaccine to prevent Ebola. The best way to avoid catching the disease is by not traveling to areas where the virus is found (Smith, 2015).

C. CONCEPT OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

Briefly, the concept of Christian missions will be discussed as this will throw more light to the matter at hand-The matter, “effect of Ebola virus on Christian missions and its way out.” Several Scholars have attempted to define Christian missions. Some called it “missions” or “cross-cultural missions”. These names were come about in order to differentiate it from Christian missions. The attempt to differentiate them has generated lots of controversies among Christian scholars especially theologians. This fact is affirmed by fuller (2005) who says “A problem arose with the definition of some theologians...” Anyway the sole aim of this aspect is not to handle the controversies caused by some theologians but to encapsulate to the mind of the readers of this paper the periscope of the Christian Missions for the purpose of understanding the subject matter.

So Christian Missions is the same thing as missions. The term Christian added to the terminology is a designative word in order to particularize the missions referring to from other missions that pervade the society today. Because the term missions is not only used by Christian body, other religions like Islam, Voodoo etc are making use of the term to refer to their efforts in spreading their beliefs in the world. Therefore, in this paper Christian Missions will be more appropriate to adopt but meaning the same thing with Missions in Christian context.

Christian Missions can be defined as the activities of the local church in joining God in Mission by crossing its boundary to other boundaries to preach the gospel of Christ Jesus to unbelievers by bringing them to God and disciple them to be good followers of Christ and establish them as a body of Christ then send them to go out to win their own region and the regions beyond for Christ (Akintola, 2010). It involves sending of people of God (the missionaries) who are called and trained to the Mission field. Mission field is a place where the mission activities take place. The place where the unreached people are met to be reached for Christ: Or a place where the non-Christians or unbelievers live. All the resources provided by God to his Church are expected to be channeled towards Missions. Human, financial, material and spiritual resources respectively must be involved in Christian missions.

D. EFFECTS OF EBOLA VIRUS ON CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

Effect as something that is produced by a cause or agent (Wooldridge, 1999) has both negative and positive result. Likewise it does in the topic considering for this paper. Effect of Ebola virus on Christian Missions has both negative and positive phases. The negative effects will be dealt with firstly before the positive effects.

I. Negative Effects of Ebola Virus on Christian Missions

There are six identifiable negative effects of Ebola Virus on Christian Missions:

1. **Relationship:** Outbreak of Ebola virus reduces the level of relationship between the serving Missionaries and the people they work amongst. It causes some missionaries to find it difficult to relate well with the people who are their target audience. Even the people they trying to reach fear to have close relationship with the missionaries. As it is noted that in some cultures, hugging and handshake are parts of the way they relate well with one another. So receiving a visitor to their residence becomes difficult.
2. **Reaching out:** The fear not to catch the Ebola virus during the outbreak makes some Missionaries to stay back at their residence. Going out to preach the gospel to the unbelievers or people outside was not easy. It is not an interesting thing to do but the disease that was killing people forces them to stay at home. So preaching gospel to the people outside their residence was hindered.
3. **Posting of Mission Workers:** Ebola outbreak causes some Mission agencies or denominations to cancel their plan to send new workers to the Mission field. The short term Mission workers refrain from visiting mission fields. I was a victim of this, i.e. sending of my family to the field by my denomination at the period was canceled.
4. **Worship Service:** Ebola virus makes some Christians to withdraw from attending church service in the mission field, especially the affected mission fields. People have the fear of contacting the affected person in the church. The reason for this action is that, you cannot rule out the relationship among the worshippers. People of the affected fields were displaced at the period. Therefore many of the community that the occurrence was felt could not go to church for service in order to avoid contact with affected people.
5. **Withdrawing the Missionaries:** Some Missionaries were called home by their sending body to safeguard them against Ebola virus. This makes the mission work in the field to suffer stagnancy.
6. **Sending people to Hell:** Among the people killed by Ebola, no doubt some that could not have access to salvation would go to hell.

II. Positive Effect of Ebola Virus on Christian Missions

In actual sense, no one can think beyond negative effects caused by Ebola virus to missions unless God himself opens the eyes to see beyond the physical. As Ebola virus has played negative roles toward missions likewise it has played positive roles. The following three positive effects are observed during the outbreak of Ebola virus:

1. Seeking God: Both believers and unbelievers were honestly sought the face of God in prayer. They both solely depended on God for protection against the Ebola virus. The fear of death that overwhelms people drew so many to God to make their decision with Christ as their Lord and personal saviour.
2. Knowing God: The outbreak of Ebola virus revealed God to the Whole world especially the affected areas. Both believers and unbelievers then believed that “there is God.” Doubling of the existence of God was replaced with assurance of his existence.
3. Preparing saints: The presence of Ebola quickly reminded the saints of the end time, closing approach of the return of the Lord Christ. So that experience makes some people to check their faith in Christ, whether is intact or not.

E. THE WAY OUT OF EFFECT OF EBOLA VIRUS ON CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

No problem without solution, especially with God. For Christian mission not to suffer in the force of Ebola, there are suggested ways that can help and be done physically and spiritually

I. Physical way out

This is the physical measure that can be taken to avoid natural death of Christian Missions in the field.

1. Raising leaders among the people: The Missionaries should learn to raise leader who will understudy them among the people they are trying to reach. This can be done before the re-emergence of the disease. Mission agency or sending body should encourage her Mission workers to raise leaders among the people they are to reach to ensure continuity in case of any eventuality.
2. Withdraw Missionaries from the field: Whenever there is occurrence of such in the future, the sending body should make efforts to bring back home her missionaries and ask their missionaries to handover the field to indigenous leaders to act for the period. There should be proper arrangement to safeguard the life of those that are affected among the indigenes.

3. Having Medical programme: There should be good medical programme for the missionaries. That is, proper medical checkup and treatment should be arranged for the Missionaries working in the affected fields. Also the medical programme should cover people they are trying to reach for Christ.

II.Spiritual way out

The followings are the spiritual way out:

1. Opportunity to preach undiluted gospel message: Missionaries and Christians should preach undiluted gospel message to people.
2. Opportunity to get closer to God: It is the time to persuade people to come closer to God
3. Opportunity to live right: It is the time to check your life and live right with God
4. Opportunity to get prepared for heaven: Ebola is a signal to prepare both believers and unbelievers for heaven. So that if at all you are affected and died you have assurance of making it to the kingdom of heaven.

F. CONCLUSION

This paper has undergone the process of excavating the concept of Ebola and Christian missions. That is, it has briefly showed us what Ebola is all about and what Christian missions is all about. In it, the fact that Ebola virus played both negative and positive effects on Missions cannot be denied. Both physical and spiritual way outs are very essential to pay attention to as they will safe us a little if not all from having Christian Missions being hindered and having lots of people trooping to hell. Ebola virus is a paradoxical situation to Christian Missions: As it turns bad face to people so it turns good face.

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