

**Address given at the occasion of the ‘Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast’
of “The Ministry of Defense and the Uganda People’s Defense Forces”**

by Dr. Henry Krabbendam, January 28, 2012

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General Elly Tumwine

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General Katumba Wamala

Commissioner General of Correctional Services, Johnson Byabashaija

Officers and Men

Honored Guests

When I start my remarks by sharing that I have spent nearly three decades in your country, found myself in its capital barely two weeks before the NRA launched its final assault, was ambushed in Mpigi, eventually built a residence in Bwebajja, consulted with leaders in government, ministered throughout the years in nearly every section of Uganda, and have submitted two applications for a Certificate of Residence, both of which, incidentally, got unexplainably lost in the bureaucracy, it is emphatically not to establish my credentials. But it is just as emphatically to convey to you that my heart from the very outset was knitted together with yours in an inexplicable manner, and was fully determined to labor tirelessly for the WELL-BEING of your country, whatever the expense, in every area of life, educational, economic, political, but above all in the spiritual arena, and all this in the spirit of Psalm 126, which has been assigned to me as the Theme of this Prayer Breakfast. As I now read this Psalm, I invite you to stand out of respect for the Word of God.

1. When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.
2. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with joyful singing. Then they said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them.
3. Indeed, the Lord has done great things for us. We are glad.
4. Turn again our captivity O Lord, as the streams in the South.
5. They who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.
6. He that goes to and fro forth weeping, carrying precious seed, shall doubtless come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.

This Psalm displays that any WELL-BEING is and can only be served when those who pursue it have (1) A burden for it that is intolerable: they *grieve* over captivity. (2) A sense of desperation that sets them in motion: they *keep on sowing*. (3) A toil that is sacrificial: they sow *weeping*. (4)

A prayer that is fervent: *restore us*, o Lord. (5) An expectation that is indomitable: they *shall* reap. (6) A celebration that is passionate: they *shout* for joy, and, last but not least (7) A heart that pours forth thanksgiving: *The Lord* has done great things for us. Even the nations recognize it.

Having said this, what precisely is “Well-being” in and for UGANDA?” How should we define it? The first Annual Prayer Breakfast of the Defense Department and the Armed Forces of Uganda in January of 2011 had as theme “Ebenezer,” “Thus far the Lord has helped us” (1 Sam. 7:12). This spelled out the *Foundation* of all “Well-being.” “Unless the Lord builds the house, the laborers toil in vain” (Ps. 127:1). Let us face it squarely. How could a small band of 27 men on February 5, 1981, without any weapons at the time ever have hoped to prevail over a regular well-supplied army, and ever have expected to establish a stable, safe, and flourishing nation, UNLESS it was sanctioned by the presence of Almighty God in the pursuit of a just cause targeted by just men with just means?

Many folks today fail to see the Hand of God, and deny the reality of God’s indispensable Presence in the affairs of men, but only in blind self-delusion! Your President is fond of making references to the Scriptures of the OT and NT, so let me follow suit. Whenever Israel’s kings in particular and Israel’s society in general, turned their back to the God of Scripture and arrogantly ignored him, they sealed their own doom. In fact, they ended up in a seventy-year exile. But whenever they returned to Him in repentance, removed their idols, thankfully acknowledged Him, honored him, joyfully bowed before him, and directed their hearts to serve him in holiness of life (1 Sam. 7:3-6), they prospered, however overwhelming the odds were against them at times. All this formed the backdrop of the celebration of profound thanksgiving to God in the Prayer Breakfast of 2011, encapsulated in the theme, “Ebenezer,” “Thus far our God has helped us!” Present day Uganda is not just the product of man. IT IS A GIFT OF GOD. To confess this last year was not just a formality, a nicety. It was the obedient outpouring of hearts that wished to glorify Him above all else (See Rom. 1:21). I salute General Aronda, who provided the impetus behind this event as well as all the others who helped organize it. But what is more, MUCH MORE, it undoubtedly evoked the smile of God’s approval. And that is ultimately ALL that counts!

This year’s theme adds a powerful dimension. It SPELLS OUT the Well-being, and especially the *Way toward* Well-being. One cannot expect to reap with joy (Well-being) without sowing in tears (The Way to Well-being). These are not tears inflicted on others. During the first twenty-five years of Uganda’s independence such tears were virtually found everywhere. I do not need to spell them out in graphic detail. In the words of the apostle Paul, “all of Uganda was groaning” (Rom. 8:22). There was literally nothing that was not somehow subjected to at times immeasurable suffering. I myself was born well before the Second World War in the

Netherlands and experienced being trampled underfoot by a war machine that produced famine, destruction and death. But even this could not be compared to what I encountered at my first arrival in Uganda in the early 1980's. We were told that "All roads lead to Bushenyi!" But the irony of it all was that there were no "roads" of any kind to speak of anywhere in the country. All of society seemed to be "one sorrowful never ending dead-end street!" No wonder that this turned into an intolerable burden to the men and women who gave birth to the NRA and that set them in powerful motion!

The Psalmist tells us, "When God turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream" (Ps. 126:1). The Uganda of 2012 could have been no more than a "preposterous dream" in the nightmare of the 1970's and the early 1980's. I certainly wondered at that time how such "dream" ever could come true. BUT IT DID! Therefore, once again in the words of the Psalm, there is every reason for "our mouths to be filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. In fact, they even say among the surrounding nations, 'The Lord has done great things for them.' Indeed, the Lord has done great things for us, for which we are glad" (Ps. 126:2-3)." He does and must receive ALL the glory!

But all this came with a "price!" According to Psalm 126:5, "the reaping in joy is preceded by the sowing in tears." As I stated, these tears were not inflicted on others, but joyfully shouldered by the NRA for an awesome cause in an awesome way with an awesome result. It reminds us of our Lord Jesus Christ who reflects this pattern to perfection. "For the joy that was set before him he embraced the cross, despising the shame, and has set down at the right hand of God" (Heb. 12:2). In short, the tears that were shouldered were tears of self-denying sacrifice. I will always salute the authentic "historicals," as documented a.o. in *Sowing the Mustard Seed*," authored by your President, and in *Uganda's Revolution: 1979-1986: How I Saw It*, written by General Kutesa. They were quite willing to make their wives widows and their children orphans out of a profound love for their country and their countrymen and were equally committed to a high standard of integrity. General Aronda, General Tumwine, as well as many others among you, who survived the People's War against a Corrupt Government, you must have witnessed in great pain how a number of courageous men indeed did make their wives widows and their children orphans.

They clearly both HAD a CAUSE, and DIED for a CAUSE, that was awe-inspiring and comprehensive, as it was based on Two Immovable Pillars. Their avowed goal was (1) to eradicate a stifling totalitarianism that like a spider sucked the life out of society, with as its corollary the exercise and celebration of "freedom," political and otherwise, and (2) to banish a divisive sectarianism, in which the factions acted like locusts that devoured each other, with as its corollary the harmony and enjoyment of "unity." Fastened on these twin pillars, society resembles a beehive, and detests a spider like or locust like existence. After all, it honors the

timeless motto, "One for All, and All for One." The bee is an awesome creature. It freely and cheerfully serves the outside world, which subsequently, promptly, and gladly yields its nectar in return. At the same time, it just as cheerfully and fully sacrifices itself in the defense of its domain.

As General Tumwine shared with me recently, a society that emerges from the Twin Pillars of the NRA reflects God's design of the physical body which is marked by "autonomy" in "interdependence." The unity of the body can only be properly served if every part has total freedom to perform its specific function to the full. For the body to stifle or block any part, such as the heart, is to self-destruct. Vice versa, for any part, once again, such as the heart, to go it alone without interaction, say, with the arteries, is to self-destruct as well. In an imaginary "party" attended by all the body parts, the whole body would rave over each part, each part would rave about the whole body, and each part would rave about every other part as well. We encounter here the genius of the complementarity of truth in which true freedom always serves unity and true unity always serves freedom.

However, here we face a problem. Both freedom and unity by definition do and must limit each other. If they refuse to be restrained by each other, "structural depravity" is the immediate result. In other words, lack of self-restraining discipline in either instance warps the structures of society, such as marriage, the family, the business, the state or the religious institution, throws it out of kilter, and threatens, if not puts a stop to their proper functioning. HOWEVER, for the proper balance to be struck, a spirit of mutual self-denial and self-sacrifice is indispensable and must prevail, which spirit is rooted in the bond of profound love and marked by incorruptible integrity. This was CLEARLY what the NRA stood for and why it was successful. It sowed in self-sacrificial tears and therefore reaped and is still reaping in joy. Incidentally, this complementarity never did, never does, and never will fit in the bare intellect of man, which has single occupancy only. Put freedom in it and unity is bound to take the back seat. Vice versa, put unity in it and freedom is bound to lapse. But both fit snugly in the heart of man. God put "eternity" in it (Eccl. 3:10). Hence it has double occupancy. In short, therefore, the "historicals," whether deceased or living, were men and women "with a heart" and showed this in sacrifice. That is why they won the heart of the populace and that is why they won the day.

But what about the future? The sad story is that "unrestrained freedom" easily degrades into "self-serving and immoral license." According to the apostle Paul, true freedom always stays the course of "self-denying service" (Gal. 5:13). But the equally sad story is that "unrestrained unity" just as easily turns oppressive, whether subtly or not. True unity that is predicated upon eager power sharing produces a joyful, energetic, and productive society, marked by cooperation and contribution. Let us face it. The stomach is without a doubt ecstatic to have the heart powerfully pump the blood through the body, and the heart to have the stomach

powerfully digest the food on behalf of the body. In a word, shared power produces well-being. But the undue and illegitimate usurpation of power disenfranchises the necessary agents of dynamic progress, and results in ever diminishing returns. Imagine the heart seeking to take on the “services” of the stomach and vice versa! But this is not all. Such usurpation is bound to prompt frustration to turn into a violent backlash. The so-called “Arab Spring,” witnessed recently in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Syria, is like handwriting on the wall. Frankly, the degradation that marks both unrestrained and self-serving “freedom” and imposed and oppressive “unity” constitutes a form of hatred for one’s fellow man and feeds the innate inclination to corruption that is common to all mankind.

The Psalmist, once again, provides us with a potent antidote, when he cries out, “Turn AGAIN our captivity, o Lord, as the streams in the South” (Ps. 126:4). The “captivity of immoral license and corrupt oppression” is clearly a permanent threat. It is a self-inflicted “prison” that must be knocked down, in fact, smashed, again ... and again. But the remarkable thing is that the geographical South, mentioned in the Psalm, is nothing but a barren desert! It is incapable of producing any water whatsoever, let alone “Streams!” So what the Psalmist is after is that the HEAVENS better open up and copiously rain DOWN these streams. In other words, these streams must come from “ABOVE.” This is also what Jesus is after, when he cries out, “Anyone who is thirsty, come unto ME and drink, and rivers of living water will flow from his innermost being. This he spoke of the Holy Spirit who had not yet been poured out from above” (John 7:37-39). Once again, the history of Israel’s kings and society stands out as a beacon, as defined in 2 Chronicles 6:37-38 and 7:14. (1) Thirst: When my people repent and humble themselves in their captivity. (2) Come: When my people in faith turn to me with all their heart and with all their soul in their captivity. (3) Drink: When my people pray, seek my face and turn from their wicked ways. (4) Flow: I WILL hear from heaven, WILL forgive their sin and WILL heal their land. Ultimately, therefore, it comes down to the heart of man, to YOUR heart and to MINE, that must “thirst,” “come,” “drink,” and “flow!” In the language of this section of your country: “Omuntu bw’alumwa ennyonta, ajje, anywe, era akulukute.”

In other words, you and I must have the reality of “repentance,” “faith,” “prayer” and the “outpouring” of our hearts, especially on this Day of Prayer. This Day MAY not, CAN not, SHOULD not, and MUST not just be a “formal occasion” to which we have been invited, which we are attending, and from which we will return to “business as usual.” I heard your First Lady address a Convention in Lira to that effect. I heard the Emeritus Bishop from North Kigezi make the same appeal even last December in the State House Thanksgiving. But I wonder what the TANGIBLE result was of either address. It MUST TOUCH, no STIR, our hearts, our souls, DEEPLY, and be reflected in our daily lives, in fact, transform them. So we better pray at this very moment, “Lord, have MERCY upon us, all of us, as we are gathered together this morning!” “Lord cause your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved,” a prayer that is “desperately”

repeated three times in Psalm 80:3, 7, 19. Without such HEARTFELT prayer, rooted in an intolerable burden, if not in a sense of desperation, one can only fear that “hearers” of God’s Word “gargle it” and end up, consciously or not, “spitting it out,” rather than absorbing it “in fear and trembling” (Is. 66:2), and radiantly reflect its content for everybody to see!

Concretely, WHEN and IF God does have mercy and causes his face to shine upon us, there will be among other things the CONTINUING “flow” of sacrificial “tears” in sowing. The original pattern of “sowing in tears” that brought healing to your country – by all means, look at you and around you – MUST stay in place for the harvest to come in again ... and again. Every year the farmer goes through the same “tearful” AND “life-producing” motions, when he plows the often resisting ground, frequently in fiercely adverse weather conditions, in “weariness” and “the sweat of his brow.” The Lord Jesus comes to accentuate this as well in simple and profound words. “Unless a seed dies, it does not produce fruit. But if it dies, it produces much fruit” (John 12:24). This is a universal pattern that you and I can only ignore at our own deadly peril.

Once again I turn you to the centrality of the “human heart.” Ultimately it is the “heart” that makes the “man.” If the heart is corrupt in its service of self, the man is corrupt, and it will show. If the heart is pure in its service of its God and its fellow man, the man is pure. Historically the NRA constituted a beacon of light and acted like a leaven in your country. It is my prayer that the UPDF will follow in the footsteps of the NRA in an open display of self-denying, sacrificial, commitment to the nation as a whole and of self-denying and incorruptible self-discipline. I read General Kutesa’s admirable article, entitled *The UPDF Military Doctrine*, detailing the structural Ideology of the Defense of Uganda, published in the Vol. 24 No. 1 January, 2011 edition of the *Monthly People’s Army Magazine*. But this “Theoretical Ideology” must be complemented by “The Personal and Practical Ideology of the Individual Defender of Uganda,” and told him I was at his beck and call to assist him in detailing this. But for a starter Present Day Defenders must be prepared “to sow in tears” that is, “to give it their all,” and so function as a leaven in and model for the country in all the structures of society. The tangible result? Husbands and wives will sow in tears. Parents and children will sow in tears, especially the youth that has not experienced the tragedy of the first 25 years of Uganda’s independence and is tempted to claim immoral freedom for itself that produces HIV/Aids and is disinclined to strive for unity in self-denial. Religious leaders and their people will sow in tears. Business people and their employees will sow in tears. Government and citizens will sow in tears. ALL of us will sow in tears, in sacrificial service, in the bond of self-denying love, shunning license in one’s freedom, shunning oppression in unity, in short, shunning even the appearance of any corruption. This and this only will bring continuing and permanent healing to the land, the sanctity of marriage, the sanctity of the family, the sanctity of the religious institutions, the sanctity of business and the sanctity of government.

Allow me to call a spade a spade in two instances. First, General Kutesa states in his book that the first order of business of the Uganda Constituent Assembly of 1995, of which he was a member, was to settle the issue of “remuneration.” That the issue was legitimate is beyond dispute. But to a man who literally gave his life for his country and for all practical purposes should have been dead, it seemed appalling to make this the first order of business. To him it appeared an unacceptable type of self-service at a time that called for continuing sacrifice in the service of his beloved country. I hope and pray that we all understand this sentiment and honor the implications that it has, also for today, and this not only in the halls of government, but also in the marriage, the family, the business world, or the church: “You are NOT here for ME. Neither am I. But I am here for YOU!” It would also strike a blow against corruption which is the nearly inevitable illegitimate offspring of the service of self!

Second, there is no doubt that the country faces a monumental test when the oil begins to flow. A recent think tank of economists and other scholars in the USA that studied the economic prospects of Uganda in its “upcoming oil age,” where both Dr. Ezra Suruma and I were present, came to the conclusion that in countries, where governments kept a tightfisted control of the revenue, corruption was usually rampant and the general populace stayed impoverished. Oil ended up as a curse. Prosperity did not even trickle down, except into the bank accounts of the elite. On the other hand, in countries where the government shared the revenue with the populace in one way or another, and so helped capitalize it (Norway, Alaska), the outcome was a winner both ways. A capitalized, vigorous and entrepreneurial population strengthened the tax base substantially and increased the tax revenue, which allowed the government to be increasingly able to pursue its mandates and its goals. Clearly oil CAN turn into a blessing. For a healthy and thriving government a healthy and thriving populace is indispensable. Also in this arena to emphasize “unity,” for instance merely in terms of a shared “infra-structure,” at the neglect or expense of “freedom,” for instance in a failure to jump start individual entrepreneurialism, is counter-productive. Without empowering the populace fully to utilize the “infra-structure,” the latter simply defeats the purpose. In every one-and-many sphere, such as the marriage, the family, the business, the church as well as the state, both the one (the institution) and the many (the members) are co-essential. Remove the unit, and you remove its constituents. Remove the constituents, and you remove the unit, whether in the marriage, the family, the business, the church or the state. The IDEAL revenue sharing formula, therefore, would be a 50/50 proposition. The only thing left is to identify a doable instrument to make 50% of the oil revenue available to the general public in a way that meets the purpose of empowerment. And this should not be impossible!

However, since it is ultimately “the human heart” that makes the decisive difference depending whether it seeks to deny itself in love and integrity or to serve itself in hostility and corruption, the question must be asked. “How can we ensure that the heart is pure?” Well, allow me to

share with you the solution that the Bible gives. All of mankind stands in need of a “heart transplant.” Scripture testifies and history demonstrates that “the heart is deceitful above all things” (Jer. 17:9). In fact it resembles a “cobra” (Ps. 58:4). This is not a pretty picture. But it is Biblical Truth, which we can only ignore at our deadly peril. Even common sense tells us that to get rid of “such animal” on our inside, it must be killed. Well, the Cross of Christ is the only instrument potent enough to accomplish this task (Rom. 6:6) and His Resurrection is the only source from which the new heart emerges (Rom. 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:3). In a word, for ourselves and our society to be sanitized, we must flee to Christ as the only and only possible donor of a pure heart. When we become “friends of the cross” (Phil. 3:18) and are united to the crucified and resurrected Savior, HIS heart becomes OURS. The rest simply follows, for THIS heart will thirst (in repentance), will come (in faith), will drink (in prayer) and will flow (in godliness), that is, turn into the pipeline through which the rivers of living water from above surge through us and from us with all that this entails in terms of “sowing in tears” of sacrificial service and “reaping in joy” and thanksgiving to God.

Tears and harvest, the two are inextricably intertwined. The Bible says it. Your history proves it. Wise people desire it. In the words of the poet,

“Though he go, though he go, and be weeping,
While bearing handfuls of precious seed;
He shall come, he shall come with bright singing,
While doubtlessly bearing his plentiful sheaves.

This brims with an unshakable confidence. The end WILL follow the means. “Sooner or later after burying the seed beneath the black earth, sowers will be certain to see the waving crops inviting them to a golden harvest.” Let the “The Man of Sorrows” be the Permanent and Perfect Paradigm. He now has the harvest of “all authority in heaven and on earth.” But he is also the Permanent and Perfect Source. “I can do all things, but only through him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13). With Him we can and will persevere. “Sowing” will not even be jeopardized or prevented by tears. It will continue in the midst of them. After all, as one of the readings at this Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast told us, “We know (1) that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love Him,” namely “to be transformed into the image of Christ, (2) that “nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, no tribulation, no distress, no persecution, no famine, no nakedness, no peril and no sword,” and (3) that “in all these things we are super-conquerors through him who loved us” (Rom. 8:28, 35, 37). The “sower” drops a tear and a seed, a tear and a seed, a tear and a seed, until the harvest arrives.

We know what “Today’s Harvest” looks like. Once again, look at yourself and look around you in wonder. Frankly, it is awesomewhat God has granted Uganda in terms of the quality of life: peace and security, AND in terms of accomplishments: in the areas of infrastructure, education,

economic development, etc., IN SPITE OF all that still remains to be achieved and the vacuums that still need to be filled. It would have looked like an impossible, if not a preposterous dream twenty five years ago.

But what Uganda's Future Harvest will be in detail is, of course, hard to predict. No one could have described 2012 in 1962. But it WILL come, provided we are graced with the pattern of the Psalm in the footsteps of Jesus and in the power of Jesus as a gift from above and displays its features: a burden that is intolerable, a sense of desperation that sets in perpetual motion, a toil that is sacrificial, a prayer that is fervent, an expectation that is indomitable, a celebration that is passionate, and a heart that glorifies GOD by pouring forth its thanksgiving to Him from whom all blessings flow.

By way of personal observation, the political realities in Uganda are symbolized by some as a "Raised Thumb," indicating Movement Ideology, and by others as "Two Fingers," displaying Multi-Party System. I would submit in all humility that we stand in desperate need of "Three Raised Fingers," displaying the heart of Jesus in dependence upon and being reflective of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the God of Scripture the reality of "autonomy" in "interdependence," "freedom in unity" and "unity in freedom" is displayed in its originally fullest, rooted in unfathomable love and marked by unfathomable holiness. If and when we possess the heart of Jesus and from this heart seek to embrace and emulate this awesome conduct of love and integrity at any sacrificial price, "The Thumb" will never turn into an instrument of "stifling oppression." Nor will "The Two Fingers" become the emblem of "sectarian division."

In the light of an ever threatening "captivity" it is only fitting that we conclude this message, at the occasion of a Breakfast OF Prayer WITH Prayer in the spirit of Psalm 126. "Almighty God, ever turn again our 'captivity' as 'Streams in the South,' as 'Rivers of Living Water from Above.' Be Merciful to Uganda and Grace this nation in all its structures, areas and facets with the greatest possible blessing, namely that it will be the embodiment of tireless sacrificial conduct in self-denying love and incorruptible integrity through Jesus Christ our Lord and in the power of the Holy Spirit." Frankly, if any country is not, it seals its own doom sooner or later. But if it is, it will prosper so that even the surrounding nations will say, "God is doing great things in them and through them." Embodying this conduct and this conduct alone constitutes and guarantees genuine and lasting prosperity. In short,

"Those who go and go, sow and sow, in tears and tears,
Will without a doubt end up reaping an abundant harvest,
And be shouting in thankful, God-glorifying 'cheers'!"