

Foreword

In the Book of Job (24:12), there's a haunting verse that reads, "The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out for help...." *Hope in Action* is about those groans, those cries, and the obligation that God lays upon us all to reach out to the hurting in our midst.

Hope in Action is a compelling and timely reminder of the terrible plight of migrant workers and refugees in Malaysia as seen through the eyes of these abandoned and hurting people themselves. The sheer injustice of it all is simply staggering and heartbreaking.

It forces us to look at a very ugly part of our society and ask the question: has our nation become a vast gulag of human misery where untold thousands are deprived of their most basic rights, denied even a modicum of justice and stripped of every ounce of their dignity, slaves to our economic ambitions, our comforts, our leisure?

And it forces us to look at a very ugly part of ourselves as well for it is largely our indifference that has consigned so many to so much pain for so long. Nothing will change until we change. It's not somebody else's problem to solve; it's ours to own and ours to do something about. *Hope in Action* is nothing less than a plea from God's heart for us to do just that.

There's no arguing, of course, that we have a massive problem with illegal migration and urgent solutions are needed. We might differ on policy approaches to the problem but surely there can be no justification for inflicting on any human being the terrible oppression and injustice that so many refugees and migrant workers now endure in our nation.

Perhaps we close our hearts to them because we have come to see them as aliens, as interlopers, as criminals, as a threat to our way of life. *Hope in Action* begs us to see through the prejudice and view them for who they really are – "the least of these my brothers" (Matthew 25:40), people who, like us, have hopes and dreams and families to support, who long for love, respect, and acceptance. In them, Jesus stands hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, a prisoner, a stranger.... God help us if we cannot, will not, hear the cries of the wounded that rise from our nation.

Every Malaysian citizen, certainly every Christian, should read this book, get educated about what's really going on in the dark shadows of our nation, pray and rise to the challenge that *Hope in Action* sets before us. Each one of us is empowered to make a difference – to lend a hand, to pray, to give, to reach out with love, compassion and kindness, to encourage, to protect and defend – and we must not hold back.

It is no secret that Malaysia is in deep crisis – politically, economically, socially – and we need God's grace upon our nation. Centuries ago, another nation in distress cried out to God and the word that came to them through the Prophet Isaiah was simply this: if they laboured against injustice and oppression, if they reached out to the migrants and refugees, the poor, the hungry, the dispossessed and marginalized people in their midst, then the glory, grace and favour of the Lord would break upon the nation.

I have no doubt that our fate is ultimately tied to how we, as a nation and as individuals, treat the suffering sea of humanity right here in our midst.

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