

September 2015

## Refugees – a God-given opportunity but a challenge for Germany

We have all heard the predictions that some 800,000 refugees are expected this year in Germany. This is twice the number as in 1992, when more than 400,000 people were fleeing from the civil war in the former Yugoslavia into Germany.

If you have been following the reports on television and in the newspapers, you will know that the police and local governments, officials, administrative services and citizens in this country are facing tremendous challenges. There is now very little time to prepare for their arrival. From one day to the next accommodation for a large number of refugees has to be made available – including in localities with no previous experience with refugees.

But contrary to the prevailing state of affairs 25 years ago, when the government and the people were overwhelmingly averse to welcoming refugees, something has definitely changed now in this country. Suddenly we are seeing people in many places spontaneously deciding to help refugees in any way they can. They are no longer waiting for the government to act, but are taking things into their own hands, organising meals, clothing and even opening their homes. The media are reporting increasingly about the readiness to help and the creative ways of providing assistance that can be clearly seen.

But there are others who are holding back in fear and those who actively resist the acceptance refugees and do not have a second thought that without such help people can face death.

In a recent issue of “Spiegel” magazine, the contrast is depicted by having two cover pictures with the titles: “Germany–the light side” and “Germany–the dark side”, and the subtitle: “It depends on us, how we will live.” See: <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/index-2015-36.html> . Yes, it depends on each one of us!

For many years in the Call of the Watchmen we have been praying the promise of God found in Isaiah 60:1-2: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.”

*Arise, shine!* – this means: “Germany, be light!” – be a country that is open to the light of God.

And we now see a country that is wrestling with the choice between light and darkness. We see people in this land who are really opening up to the light. They probably have no idea that they are following God’s pathway. But according to the statement of Jesus, they are encountering him in the weak, the persecuted, the stranger. And in their readiness to serve others, these people are serving God. (Matthew 25:38-40)

The introduction in the September prayer letter talked about “The ‘crisis’ of God’s light”. Interestingly, the referenced passage in John 3:17-20 continues on in verse 21: “But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

Here Jesus does not say: “whoever *talks* about the truth”, but “whoever *lives* by the truth”. And as these people live by the truth they move in the direction of God’s light. In God’s light we can see that their actions are in fact motivated by God’s Spirit.

### What spirit is motivating us?

This year we have often taken up the subject of refugees in our prayer letter. In June we prayed specifically for deliverance from the deeply rooted “German angst”, so that refugees will not be regarded simply as a threat to our country. “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear ...” (1 John 4:18)

Can we not take this positive trend in our nation towards the light as an answer to prayer? God’s Spirit of love is visibly at work in our land.

In the Prophetic Page (February 2015), one prayer strategy for this year was indeed very prophetic:

- Cast off all fear and shame to stand for the truth, wherever the Lord requires it of you. Be clear and full of love in all you say and do.

Let us all now examine our hearts for refugees.

### God's guidelines for blessings and curses

We know that God will bless a land when it stands on the side of Israel. But this is only one of the ways in which a land can be blessed by God.

At this time Isaiah 58:6-12 is an important and challenging word for our nation. Here we find a very clear promise of blessing (from verse 9):

"Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: here am I.

"If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry [**Luther: find a place in your heart for the hungry**] and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

"The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings."

By sharing what we have, our country will not become poorer, but rather it will enter its destiny to help other nations and "satisfy the needs of the oppressed".

The challenge is to "find a place in our hearts".

### Grace has to be shared

This year we celebrate 25 years of reunification. God has been continuously bestowing so much grace on our land! We are a respected nation, so respected and loved that now many people want to come to our country. How are we handling all this grace? Are we learning to share as it says in 1 Peter 4:9-10 ?

"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

### What about the dangers?

There are of course many dangers in the challenges we face, both personally and for our country. We know that, when God wants to accomplish something good, the enemy always has plans to create hostility, to destroy and to kill. He wants to bring chaos, he wants to sow the seed of hate. He wants to create division in our land.

Therefore we must pray attentively at many levels.

Our government is challenged to find solutions – not only in Germany but beyond our national borders! Europe must prove itself to be a community that stands together in solidarity – developing new and better strategies and procedures than those in the EU Dublin Regulation for handling of refugees in the European Union. Laws which stand in the way of solutions must be amended. By September 24 at the latest, decisions on handling the refugee crisis will be taken at a summit meeting of the Chancellor with the leaders of the German states. As watchmen we are challenged to follow all developments attentively in prayer. An update on the refugee situation will be included in the next prayer letter.

### Prayer:

- **Pray for forgiveness for all hate, racism and hostility towards refugees.**
- **Proclaim Isaiah 58:6-12 over our land!**
- **Stand in prayer against the destructive purposes of the enemy (Luke 10:19) – against fear, hate, lies and intent to kill.**
- **Invite the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, to come into our hearts and pray for faith and courageous belief in all that God can do in our land.**
- **Pray for guardian angels to protect our country and its people during this time of challenge.**
- **Pray for wisdom for all the politicians – also throughout Europe – to find solutions for all the problems in dealing with the refugee crisis.**
- **Pray for wise advisors for leaders. (Daniel 1:18-21)**
- **Bless all those who are helping with a positive spirit in love and all those in the local authorities who are working to provide solutions – often until they are totally exhausted.**
- **Pray for workers for the harvest field – the refugees need salvation! (Matthew 9:38)**

*God's blessings from  
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