

April 2019

...so that the grace...may cause thanksgiving to overflow...

(2 Corinthians 4:15)

At the moment I am training myself to thank God sincerely with all my heart. I now commit myself to just giving thanks to God in my prayer time on one day of each week. Also for concerns when several prayer requests immediately come to mind, I consider instead how I can give thanks to God for each concern. This actually requires self-discipline, as we are all really good at seeing what is missing or needed (and I think that we Germans are world champions at this). When I want to be thankful, seeing only what is lacking does not help, so I instead focus what is good and look for signs of God's goodness and grace in my daily life and in what is happening in the world. For Germans thankfulness is directly connected with the way we think. And to thank God in particular we must pay special attention to our thoughts! Is thanksgiving really important to God? Can we just get away with a short "thank you" in our prayer times in order to quickly get to our needs and requests? No! God deserves not only our praise songs and petitions but also our sincere thanks. Offering spiritual sacrifices (such as our thanks) is an important part of the priestly service to which we as "a holy priesthood" are called (1 Peter 2:5). Under the old covenant it was only a sacrifice of thanks that the people who brought it to the priest were also allowed to eat. Thankfulness brings satisfaction to the body! Remembering God's goodness, not taking it for granted, but being very thankful, has a powerful effect – especially on us personally. Paul knew that God's grace causes thanksgiving to overflow to His glory (2 Corinthians 4:15). Thanksgiving sets a cycle in motion. I am sincerely thankful and God answers with even more grace and this in turn causes more people to be thankful. For Paul thanksgiving was the most important - he mentions it more often than intercession. And intercession without thanksgiving - for him that was out of the question! "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, *with thanksgiving*, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6). We should also pray for those in authority in politics and society "with thanksgiving" (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Let us therefore this month thank God sincerely with all our hearts.

As you begin your time of prayer:

- **Begin your prayers with thanks** for God's goodness and grace in a specific area and be aware not to follow each thanksgiving with two or more requests. Stay a while only with thanksgiving – without any *ifs* or *buts*.
- **As you intercede and present your requests, think about how you can bring them before God on a platform of thankfulness.** -RS-

Answers to prayer

- Thanks for the Grand Coalition in our government, which (despite many disagreements) has now been relatively stable and has worked together constructively for one year.

- Thanks that God is using many Christians in our land to be a blessing for Israel. In April there will be a closed conference in the Munich area where Christian leaders from Syria will meet Messianic leaders from Israel for the first time on neutral ground to begin a process of spiritual reconciliation. -AS-

Prayer Conference – Germany – May 24th-26th in Bonn

As we prepare for this conference, we are clearly hearing that God needs our thanks. We should not forget the good things that God has already done for us – and our acknowledgment of this will help us to be thankful. Psalm 50 shows us the way. It begins dramatically: *[God] summons the heavens above and the earth that he may judge his people: "Gather to me my consecrated ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."* (v.4-5). But why does God want to judge his people? The required sacrifices are no doubt being offered – but one is missing: *"Sacrifice thank offerings"* (v.14). Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in 1940: "Thanklessness begins with forgetfulness, forgetfulness leads to indifference, indifference to discontentment, discontentment to doubt, and doubt leads to the curse." But God wants to bless our land – for this he needs thanks from you and from me.

Prayer:

- **Thanks that God is calling us together to a great festival of thanks. (Psalm 50:23)**
- **For wisdom and protection on all preparations.**
- **That many hear the call and come.** -RS-

"FridaysForFuture" – Demonstrations by school children

On Friday March 15th as many as one million school children in more than 120 countries walked out of school to stand together for climate protection. In Germany about 300,000 school children in 230 cities went onto the streets. The initiator and icon of this movement is Greta Thunberg, a 16 year old Swedish school-girl. In August 2018 Greta first sat outside the Swedish parliament with a placard on which was written: "School strike for climate protection". Today school children in many cities stay away from school lessons every Friday to do the same as Greta. Her demand: the agreement at the Paris Climate Summit (2015), to combat global warming, must be strictly adhered to.

What is pushing Greta and all the school children to do this? It is obvious that much appears to be motivated by anxiety ("you ought to be afraid"). An aggressive tone ("you are robbing us of our future") is also noticeable. Some statements are attributable to the autism from which Greta suffers. She only sees things as "black or white" and there are no "shades of grey".

As intercessors we want to stand behind our young people – whatever we think about these strikes. We want to bring this movement before the heart of God. He understands their real needs and the missing role models when it comes to knowing how to behave ethically in a consumer driven society. Our young people need to develop a strong

relationship with our God, since without his guidance neither their personal needs nor complex climate change issues can be explained and answers found. God is the only one who can promise them and plan to give them hope and a future (Jeremiah 19:11).

Prayer:

- **Thank you, Father, that you hear the inward cry from young people and will answer them! (Jeremiah 33:3)**
- **That school children in our land will get to know God personally and place their future into his hands and that the spirit of fear will no longer spread among them. (2 Timothy 1:7)**
- **For the generations (fathers/mothers and children) to come together (and not be divided) to answer the pressing issues of our time. (Malachi 4:6) -AS-**

Genetic testing for Down syndrome as a standard service

Since 2012 a blood test has been available to detect whether a foetus has Down syndrome for those who are willing to pay for it. In the case of a positive finding, 90% of pregnancies are terminated. By the autumn of this year the German Federal Joint Committee of Health Insurance Agencies, doctors, clinics and patient carers will decide whether this blood test should be paid for under national health insurance as a **standard early detection service** when a pregnancy carries this risk. This would have an enormous impact on the rating of values in our society, as in the future we will be able to diagnose even more genetic disorders before birth. This is a basic decision on how our society wants to manage new medical procedures to determine a disability in a baby before birth. Will disability be treated as "avoidable" and "winnowed out" or will we fear God and have the courage to stand for a new appreciation of the value of **all** life. Our national parliament could still change the laws or set guidelines for the decision of the German Federal Joint Committee. The first important open debate on this will take place in parliament in the week of April 8th-12th and is probably one of the most significant debates in our time.

Prayer:

- **Father, have mercy on us, so that we do not stand against you and the blessing of new life. (Deuteronomy 30:19)**
- **For a YES to life and for legal protection for every life with a disability. (Proverbs 3:3-7) -AS-**

Reform of UNRWA

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees has attracted attention in the past again and again because of its corrupt and anti-Semitic practices. For example they make the offer of martyrdom to children who attack Jews and put the existential right of Israel into question through the school text books which they publish with the aid money donated to them.

UNRWA was set up in 1950 specifically to help about 700,000 Arab/Palestinian refugees who were driven out of their homes during the attacks of the Arab states on the newly declared State of Israel in 1948 and the ensuing Israel War of Independence. Today UNRWA has become a political instrument that purposely keeps its own people

(many living in camps) trapped within an artificially created refugee problem. Without the agreement of the United Nations, the organisation has arbitrarily extended "refugee status" to all the offspring of the original refugees and demanded the right of return of 5.3 million "refugees" to the State of Israel. The USA stopped all payments to UNRWA in August 2018. The German government as one of the largest aid money donors to UNRWA committed itself to a reform of UNRWA in the coalition agreement. The Christian Initiative 27.Januar e.V. has now been asked by one of the parliamentarians to generate a file with facts and information on UNRWA to serve as the basis for this reform.

Prayer:

- **Thanks for the opportunity for Christians to be able to support politicians in such reforms with their expertise. (2 Corinthians 2:14)**
- **For the will in the German parliament to reform and courage to make a course correction. (Psalm 25:4) -AS-**

Loyalty to Israel put to the test when it comes to a vote

On March 14th a motion from the FDP, which required an end to the anti-Israel voting practice of Germany in the UN General Assembly, was defeated. The CDU, SPD and Leftists voted almost unanimously against the motion. The Greens abstained.

On March 22nd US President Trump announced on Purim that the USA would fully recognise the sovereignty of Israel over the Golan Heights after 52 years. This region is of decisive strategic importance for political security, and for the defence of Israel from the north.

The EU finds itself in the deepest crisis since its formation. Europe's loyalty to Israel is being put to the test for a blessing or for further shakings. The EU positioning for or against Israel therefore needs special attention in the run up to the European elections. The European Coalition for Israel (ECI) has started a campaign "Pray and Vote 2019" to call Christians in Europe to prayer and to go to the polls. Statements on issues relating to Israel from the various political groups in the European Parliament during the last session are presented on the ECI website for comparison.

Also in the run up to the elections, the Global Prayer Call is holding a conference on May 3rd-5th in San Remo. In 1920 the Allied Powers decided with the San Remo Resolution how to divide up the land of the defeated Ottoman Empire and laid the foundation for the eventual rebirth of Israel as a nation with Jerusalem as the capital city. They will be praying for the wells of blessing to be reopened once again.

Prayer:

- **For politicians in the new European Parliament and EU Institutions, who for Zion's sake, will not keep silent. (Isaiah 62:1ff)**
- **Repentance and loyalty of the European nations to the historic alliances and their commitments to Israel and Jerusalem. (Genesis 12:3)**
- **Blessings and protection for Israel, internally and from its neighbours. (Psalm 121) -KH-**

With much thankfulness,

Rosemarie Stresemann, Alexander Schlueter and Team