

How we, in our weakness, can go new ways and through this find new grace

“... it is sown in shame, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ...” (1 Corinthians 15:43 NTFE). How do we deal with the weaknesses that we see and feel in ourselves and others? How do we deal with increasingly difficult circumstances when we feel that we do not have the strength to pray? What will happen if the political, economic, and social circumstances in Germany become even more difficult? We tend to want to overcome our weakness with all our might and we try to turn around our view of events with even more time and effort - and a good dose of condemnation against ourselves and others.

Dealing with our weakness

We tend to refuse to accept our weakness and to hide it so that we and others do not even have to see it. Because weakness and imperfection should simply not be a part of us. We deal with difficult circumstances in a similar way. Everything in us is fighting to get out of trouble as quickly as possible. And then comes shame, which prevents us from facing the truth in life. This also applies to how we relate to problems in our country. The Lord said that: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”. (2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV). He deals with weakness in a completely different way and wants to give us the key to overcome weakness at this time. There is a fertile field all around our weakness with top-soil ready for us to plant something new – with his resurrection power!

Tenderness instead of being hard-hearted with ourselves and others

To this end, we (also as a nation) should understand more deeply that Jesus tenderly loves weakness and that it is precious to him. Heaven has never needed the strength of mankind. Rather, weakness and glory mysteriously go hand in hand. We accomplish more when we turn to Jesus in our weakness than when we act in our own strength. Then our hearts are open to his resurrection power! Only when we show ourselves to be vulnerable does this enable us to have the necessary close relationship with Jesus and with each other. In prayer we cannot reach our country at its heart until our hearts have been touched anew by the beauty of his love and grace. (Psalm 149:4 AMP). We severely limit ourselves when we only see possibilities where we can use our own strengths. But what if new paths and possibilities open-up out of a humble acknowledgement of our weakness?

We should no longer rely on our own strength

God can produce much fruit from our inability. Light will breakthrough even in seemingly insurmountable dark places. Where we do not dare to believe this, where we feel that this is not possible for us, where we have tried and failed, God wants indeed to reveal his glory! Like the Apostle Paul, let us accept our inability and in our weakness sow into new soil. We do not have to use our strength to its very limit to sow into the fertile soil which is around us in this country in prayer. Maybe our country does not even need “strong” prayers. We also do not live according to the saying: “no pain - no gain,” but rather in the knowledge that the acceptance of our weakness is the key to receiving new grace and power. For a long time, we have relied on strength, now is a time to rely on weakness, trusting that it will unleash restoration and new life.

Alexander Schlüter

Economic and psychological distress in the people in Israel

Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel on October 7th was a turning point in history. Between shock, grief and consolation, Israel is looking for ways to come to terms with the catastrophe. In the hour of need, the whole population has responded with unity. Many are still looking for relatives. There is a shortage of workers everywhere, especially in agriculture, as Israel mobilised more than 350,000 IDF (Israel Defence Forces) reservists who are no longer available to work in many business and service sectors. This situation opens up many opportunities for more intensive partnership and support for Israel from Germany. In the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) the government has launched a development project for Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip. The municipalities there may now receive financial and practical support from partner communities in NRW, and so help towards local reconstruction. “As the political debate in Germany becomes more confusing, the more clearly we want to show where we stand: on the side of the people in Israel and the Jews here in Germany,” said Liminski, NRW Minister for International Affairs. As a part of a collaboration project with the University Hospital in Essen, help will be given to the many Israeli victims who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). In addition to the physical suffering, care will also be provided for mental needs. Closer friendship and cooperation should now grow between Germany and Israel in this time of crisis.

Prayer:

- **Be still and view the situation in Israel through the eyes of your heart. What particular aspect does God draw to your attention? Does a picture come into your mind?**
- **Approach God through Jesus and then ask him: What are your plans to save the people in Israel in this catastrophic situation and what do you want me to do?**
- **How can I pray?**

(For example: Jesus showed me in prayer an Israeli business-woman who was asking for help. He in turn asked me to pray regularly for her economic needs. Jesus will also show you where you can possibly get involved.)

Alexander Schlüter

War and peace

The war in Ukraine has taken a back seat after Hamas' attack on Israel. After almost two years, we are all accustomed to hearing the daily news from Ukraine and war weariness is taking hold. The danger in this war for Ukraine and Europe has by no means been averted. The Ukrainian army's counter-offensive turned into trench warfare, and Russia largely limited itself to defence. Russia has continued to re-arm and is currently attacking more intensively again.

Hundreds of thousands of soldiers have fallen in the fighting or have been wounded, and essential supplies are now becoming

increasingly difficult to obtain. Aid from abroad for Ukraine is flowing less and promised deliveries are being held back. In both the USA and the EU, decisions on the delivery of new arms and of financial aid have been blocked or postponed internally. On December 14th, the EU cleared the way to begin EU accession negotiations with Ukraine. But what should be the terms of Ukraine's EU accession when some territories remain occupied by Russia?

Military aid given to both Ukraine and to Israel challenges our own defence capabilities. Defence Minister Pistorius wants to make Germany fit for war, Chancellor Scholz just fit to defend itself. Increasing weakness is becoming apparent all over: Ukraine, Germany, Europe, and the USA. Should we be prepared and capable to make war or to make peace?

Prayer:

- **For God's grace and revelation of the Prince of Peace for Ukraine, Russia, and Europe. (Isaiah 9:1-6; 1 Peter 1:13)**
- **That the Lord shows paths to peace to those who humble themselves before Him. (1 Samuel 2:4-10; Matthew 5:9)**
- **For love for our country and the willingness to defend Germany. (Judges 6:11-24)**

Karin Heepen

The future of the German economy

Germany's economy is currently in recession and is suffering from high inflation, high energy prices, bureaucracy, the failure to digitise and a shortage of skilled workers. The number of new insolvencies is increasing. The restructuring of the energy supply system and the high energy and material prices are placing a heavy burden on the industry. The slump in orders in mechanical engineering is causing business associations to issue a warning of deindustrialisation, as companies could relocate their production abroad due to our high energy costs. There is a lack of impetus for progress and a program for transformation. A change in the economy, in businesses and in our lifestyles in the coming years is inevitable. The government's budget is currently hitting our farmers particularly hard. The cancellation of diesel subsidies for agricultural machinery is putting many more farms in existential danger. Although our farmers run their businesses well with high-quality produce, they are often not competitive enough due to requirements and pricing policies beyond their control. The result is that many farms are closing down.

Jesus knows about our difficult economic situation. But it offers the opportunity for us as a nation to reconnect with Him. We live at a time in which we want to respond to the political, economic, and social unrest and obvious weaknesses, not with anger, but with in-depth intercession. God can send us an economic miracle in Germany – which will be a blessing to all the nations!

Alexander Schlüter

The German education system

How does education actually work in the 21st century? How do you design schools and learning processes for the future? What do young people need to survive in today's world? The massive problems in the German education system are always being hotly debated. These include the shortage of teachers, the lack of good education and equal opportunities for teachers, the current fall in student performance, a high school drop-out rate and a range of subjects that are no longer up to date. The call for reform is getting louder.

But what is the overall culture of the learning process and of its content for which we really want to strive? In addition to reading, writing, mathematics, and foreign languages, how do we teach life skills such as health, business, nutrition, teamwork, and now digital education? And how can schools develop further and teachers no longer suffer burn out under the burden of dealing with a lack of consideration for their family life?

Education is a state task and yet reforming the education system is a joint task of the Federal and State Governments - and more than that, of our entire society.

Prayer:

- **Be still and view the situation through the eyes of your heart. What particular aspect of the German education system does Jesus draw to your attention? Does a picture come into your mind?**
- **Approach Jesus and then ask him: What are your plans in this matter and what do you want me to do?**

(For example: Jesus showed me in prayer a field planted with groups of small seedlings. This was a picture of Germany's future school system. Then I noticed that God had assigned a special angel to each school. The angels are just waiting to be able to step into action through our prayer.)

Alexander Schlüter

Anti-Semitism in universities and colleges of higher education

Since Hamas' barbaric terrorist attack on Israel, there has been a drastic increase in anti-Semitism in German universities and in colleges of higher education. Jews currently no longer feel safe in universities and colleges. They experience hostility, exclusion, and aggression. Anti-Israel statements come not only from the students, but also from the teaching staff. Yad Vashem Director Dani Dayan warns against a process in which pseudo-academic theories are constructed that call for the abolition of the State of Israel. In this way, a pseudo-intellectual framework is built that anchors anti-Israel and anti-Semitic ideas in students and then promotes this way of thinking as "intellectual." The "Action Plan against Anti-Semitism and Hostility to Israel," which was approved by all the Economics Ministers of the Federal States in December as part of the Conference of Ministers of Education (Universities and Colleges), is indeed an important step in the right direction for which we can be grateful. At the same time, it is important not to stop at just treating the symptoms, but rather to get to the root causes. In addition to establishing organisations and initiatives to combat anti-Semitism, there is an urgent need for a review of educational programs, in universities, colleges, and in schools, to rid them of all forms of anti-Semitism.

Prayer:

- **For courage and steadfastness in students and teachers to take a clear and public position against all anti-Semitic movements. (Numbers 24:9)**
- **For State Ministries of Education to continue to prioritise this issue and tackle it at the root. (Zechariah 2:12)**
- **For light, truth and cleansing from anti-Semitism in the educational plans of schools, colleges, and universities. (Luke 12:2,3)**

Tanja Frank

With heart-felt greetings and blessings for 2024,

Alexander Schlüter and team