

Following his release from prison, Pastor Schneider spent two months with his wife and a few family members and friends in Baden-Baden and in Eschbach. He and Margarete returned home for Harvest Thanksgiving (German: Erntedankfest) on October 3, 1937. Pastor Schneider was able to celebrate this occasion with his Dickenschied congregation, but local police arrested him as he journeyed to Womrath for an evening worship service.

Schneider was incarcerated in Buchenwald, near Weimar, on November 27, 1937, just a few months after the camp opened. In the labor commandos, Pastor Schneider watched out for his fellow inmates. After being sentenced to solitary confinement, he preached the good news of the Gospel from the window of his prison cell. He was moved to the cell when he refused to remove his beret in honour of Hitler on the Führer's birthday, April 20, 1938 and to salute the swastika flag. He explained his behaviour by saying 'I cannot salute this criminal symbol'. He also refused, as he had done earlier, the Hitler salute, saying that 'you can only receive salvation (Heil) from the Lord and not from a human being'. From his cell, Schneider accused his captors and encouraged his fellow inmates. On one occasion on Easter Sunday, when thousands of prisoners were assembled for mustering, despite being severely handicapped by previous torture he climbed to the cell window and shouted: 'Comrades, listen to me. This is Pastor Schneider. People are tortured and murdered here. So the Lord says, 'I am the resurrection and the life!'. His speech was interrupted by his tormentors. As others had pleaded years earlier, the man who mopped the floors in the solitary confinement building begged Schneider, 'Please stop provoking the SS against you... They will beat you to death if you continue preaching from your cell window'.

Death

On July 18, 1939, Schneider was murdered with a lethal injection of strophanthin in the camp infirmary. Camp officials notified Margarete Schneider of her husband's death and she made the long journey from Dickenschied to retrieve his body in a sealed coffin.

Despite Gestapo surveillance, hundreds of people and around two hundred fellow pastors attended Pastor Schneider's funeral, including many members of the Confessing Church. One of the pastors preached at the grave side, "May God grant that the witness of your shepherd, our brother, remain with you and continue to impact on future generations and that it remain vital and bear fruit in the entire Christian Church".

THANK YOU LORD FOR 2015

ROYSON RAJAN

As the year 2015 ends, my soul sings "Thank you Lord. Your mercy endures forever". This year has been full of happenings from good times to times when we were disheartened by ways of Satan to destroy the unity and love between God's people. However, as we near the end of this year, the light of God has yet again shined upon his people and the ways of our Lord have been manifested. It has been a year of grace where we could boldly enter His presence through Jesus, our Savior.

The psalmist in Psalm 107 reminds us to have a thankful heart. Some would say appreciation for our blessings. But thankfulness is more than appreciation. Thankfulness is an expression of gratitude not just for the blessing, but towards the one who gave it. We have not done great things by our own abilities but it's through him that we have been strengthened and have been prepared to face the situations victoriously. He has always been good to us. He is merciful and has forgiven us from our sins. He has restored our soul and has brought us out from the kingdom of darkness.

As we grow one year older in our Spiritual life, let us attain maturity through fellowship. Let us have an intimate fellowship with our Lord [1 John 1:3, 1 Peter 3:8,9 and Col 2:6,7]. Let us resolve not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers [Psalms 1:1]. Let us walk in God's light [1 John 1:7]. Let us stand on the Rock [Psalm 40:2] and continue to sit in fellowship with our brothers and sisters [Hebrews 10:25]. Let us have fellowship in sharing the gospel [Philippians 1:3, 4, vs5]. Let us have fellowship in Spirit [Philippians 2:4]. Let us have fellowship in sadness and in pain [Philippians 3:10] and let us continue to have fellowship by supporting the needs of our Lord's ministry [Philippians 4:5]

Let us end 2015 with thanksgiving and begin 2016.

Dear Readers,

Please note that the newsletter Ablaze will be published quarterly from now onwards. In case of any query, please contact us on the contact details given below.

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ABLAZE

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There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens (Ecclesiastes 3: 1)

We come to the end of another eventful year. It happens to be the time the world remembers the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although time stretches before and after us like sand in a desert, these divisions of months and years are milestones that enable us to look back on the events in our life. This year the world went through catastrophic earthquakes, floods, terrorist attacks, deaths and innumerable births. In spite of all that passed, here we are – almost at the end of the year. There is much we have to give thanks for – For life and good health, blessings of family and friends and most of all, the joy of the Lord in our lives. The Bible says that it is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord (Psalm 92: 1). Let us take some time to reflect on the year that has passed and thank God for His goodness in our lives.

Ablaze is back after a break. During this time, we were praying and reflecting on making the newsletter better and more of a blessing to our readers. In the meantime, two new people have joined our editorial team. From this issue onwards, we will run a series called 'Heroes of Faith'. Each piece in this series will introduce one Christian who lived for the Lord and contributed to the growth of His kingdom. This series is taken from discussions among the youths of our church during Sunday youth meetings. We hope that you will enjoy reading the articles in this issue. All of the articles deal with the subject of thanksgiving and contentment. We pray that the messages in this issue may bring you joy and peace and bring you closer to the presence of God.

If you have any suggestions for us or would like to send an article for publication, please do write to us. We would love to hear from you.

We wish you a Happy New Year - 2016.

Trust in the Lord and do good;

dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.

Take delight in the Lord,

and he will give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37: 3, 4)

Editorial Team,
(Winny Mathews, Bejini Sajan, Annie Royson)



WHAT SHOULD WE BE GRATEFUL FOR?

PASTOR PAUL NARAYAN

"He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him" (Luke 17: 16)

Thanksgiving is the response we give to God for all the blessings, goodness we receive from him. If a person we know does a favour for us, we thank her/him. Similarly we are bound to thank God for the innumerable good things that we receive from Him.

There are many blessings that God has kept for man. The Word of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are three of these. Along this there are many more gifts. Let us look at a few of them.

1. Salvation is a gift of God (Ephesians 2: 8). It cannot be bought by a price. God has given it freely as a gift. God gave us salvation by giving us his Son (Colossians 1: 13) and saved us from the power of darkness. For this we must be grateful.

We read in Romans 1: 21 that “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened”. It is not enough to know God. We must realize the full power of who God is and give him glory.

What are the other things we must be grateful for?

2. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (II Cor 9: 15). We need to thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
3. Children and long life are gifts from God. Ecclesiastes 3: 13 says, “That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God”. When we experience comfort and goodness, it is the gift of God. Many people have money and fame. But they do not have peace and goodness in their life. We can experience happiness in this wilderness because our God exists. We must be grateful for this gift of God.
4. Prosperity is the gift of God. “When God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God”
5. (Ecclesiastes 5:19). When we experience contentment, we must thank God. “When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you”
6. (Deuteronomy 8: 10). They gave thanks for the deliverance God gave. We must thank God for the deliverance, blessings, healing that God has given us.

So many reasons to give thanks!

GIVE THANKS - A LOVE LIKE NO OTHER

BEJINI SAJAN

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations. For your steadfast love is great above the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!

Psalms 108:3-5

Once again, we arrive at the season where the year comes to an end and we reflect on all the things that has happened this year. We all try and reflect on our ups and downs, on all new and old things, on our hopes and ambitions, our resolutions and decisions, on the prayers answered and on the blessings received. How many of us are happy? How many of us are thankful? How many of us have experienced the unending faithfulness of God? Do we know of His amazing love for us?

All of us have asked God for so many things through prayers. We have all sent out our petitions to the skies above and each of us have received the blessings we wanted. Have we gone back and thanked him for the countless blessings received? We all know the story of the 10 lepers who were healed by Christ Jesus. After Jesus healed them only one out of the ten came back to Jesus, fell at His feet with great contentment and happiness and acknowledged and thanked Jesus for the blessings and healing he received from Him. His love for his creation is so beautiful. There is more to this love than just asking and receiving. Our God is an awesome God. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. His love has been unconditional. How have we responded to this unconditional love? This is the love that came down from heaven for you and me.

John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”. This love came down to save us, to protect us, to guide us and lead us. His great favor on our lives and the lives of our loved ones has been amazing and matchless. This relationship with the humanity has led Christ to sacrifice his life for us. God chose to rescue the undeserving through His son's sacrifice. “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all”. Christ died for us while we were sinners. We deserved to be condemned, but God saved us. His love rescued us! Jesus bore the sin of the guilty and died in our place. Does it stop there?, NO. For in Christ we are counted righteous before God, and adopted as children of God. What amazing love displayed by Christ Jesus! How could a righteous God seek to save a wretched sinner like

you and me? But, that is precisely what the gospel is about. I am thankful for this gospel, for it tells me of this undeserving love, grace and rescue!

Dear Reader, How much are we to thank God for this love that He has sent for us?

Are we thankful to see glimpses of God's incomprehensible love in everything big and small, in happiness and sorrows? It makes me pause and wonder at God's amazing love for us in Christ. His sacrifice on that cross should remind us of God's great kindness towards us, so that we may proclaim, “Behold, what great love the Father has lavished on us”, and sing, “How marvelous! How wonderful! Is my Savior's love for me!”



HEROES OF FAITH

COMPILED BY JERIN JAMES



PAUL ROBERT SCHNEIDER

Paul Schneider was born in Pferdsfeld, Germany in 1897, the second of three sons born to Gustav-Adolf Schneider and Elisabeth Schnorr. He had a strong love for his mother and a great respect for his father, who was a Pastor and an ardent patriot. Following military service in World War I, Schneider began his theological studies and was ordained in Hocheheim in 1925. The following year, he married Margarete Dieterich, the daughter of a pastor. In 1927, the couple had their first son, followed by a daughter and four more sons.

When President Paul von Hindenburg named Adolf Hitler Chancellor in 1933, Schneider was the pastor of the Hocheheim congregation, having succeeded his father who died in 1926. Initially, Pastor Schneider believed that the new Chancellor, with the help of divine guidance, would lead Germany into a bright future. It did not take long for him to perceive the true character of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. Schneider

did not stand by idly as Nazi leaders ridiculed the morality of the Church. In writing and in preaching, he protested against the vitriol directed against the Church by Nazi officials. Pastor Schneider received no backing from his consistory of the old-Prussian Ecclesiastical Province of the Rhineland, then seated in Koblenz. On the contrary, in order to placate Nazi officials who complained about Pastor Schneider, the consistory transferred him to a remote region of Germany.

Early in 1934, Schneider and his family moved to Dickenschied, where he became pastor to the Dickenschied and Womrath congregations. That same year, Pastor Schneider became a member of the Confessing Church, a Protestant organization that opposed Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. On one occasion at the funeral of a Hitler youth boy a Nazi official said in his speech that the deceased would now be member of the heavenly storm of Horst Wessel (Horst Wessel was a Nazi activist and songwriter). Pastor Schneider responded that he would not know if a heavenly storm of Horst Wessel existed but the Lord would bless the boy and take him into his realm. After this, the Nazi leader came forward and repeated his words. Pastor Schneider then responded sharply that he would not allow God's word to be adulterated during a Christian ceremony. As a result he was arrested for one week in June 1934.

In March 1935, Nazi officials took Pastor Schneider into “protective custody” (Schutzhaft), a Nazi euphemism for “arrest” without any judicial warrant. They held him for a few days because he insisted on reading from the pulpit the synodal criticism of the government's policy toward the Church.

Local Nazi officials summoned Schneider for interrogations twelve times during the winter of 1935/1936. He continued to speak his mind and follow the dictates of his conscience. Some of his friends pleaded with him to avoid confrontation with the Nazis. He responded that he did not seek martyrdom, but that he had to follow his Lord. His primary responsibility was to prepare his family for eternal life – not to insure their material well-being.

In spring 1937, with the support of members of his presbytery, Pastor Schneider began the process of excommunicating parishioners who, because of their allegiance to the Nazi Party, engaged in conduct which violated congregational discipline. Complaints to Nazi officials by the censured led to the arrest of Pastor Schneider. Following two months in the Koblenz prison, officials released him with the warning not to return to the Rhineland, where his home and parish were located. Pastor Schneider knew that, if he returned to his flock, it would mean imprisonment in a concentration camp. Yet, the night before his release, he read in his Bible the story concerning the crisis confronted by Deborah. When Deborah summoned the twelve tribes together to confront the common enemy, only Naphtali and Zebulun responded. Pastor Schneider saw in this Old Testament story [Judges 5:18] a parallel to the crisis which the Church confronted in Nazi Germany, and he concluded that even if his was a minority voice, he must act in harmony with his conscience, and protest.