



October 2016 - #007

## Dear praying friends in Europe –

*May I put a question to you: Are you a Czech, a German, a Swiss, a Brit etc.? Or are you a European? Hm. Can I help you with a biblical reference?*

*Acts 16 tells us how Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into jail in Philippi. On the next day when the magistrates wanted to get rid of them Paul answered: "...we are Roman citizens". (V.37). He claimed to be a member of the Empire community. – In Phil. 3,5 he says however: "I am... of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews."*

*So it is obviously possible from a biblical standpoint to have two identities.*

*Of course the national identity is closer to my (and Paul's) heart. But both identities are from God! For by His will I was born in my beloved nation which is part – undisputed – of this my home continent.*



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## My European Identity

This article mainly follows the "Weekly Word" of Jeff Fountain from 1.8.2016. Jeff is director of the Schuman Centre in Heerde, NL. His W.W. is summarizing thoughts of the Dutch Professor Evert Van de Poll in his book "Europe and the Gospel". It can be obtained via Schuman Resources.

Curiously, many people all over the continent recognize that they are inside Europe but they feel and think and act as if they are outside. For them, Europe begins where their country ends.

When they talk about 'Europe,' they usually mean the continent excluding their own country. 'Europeans' are the inhabitants of neighbouring countries who speak foreign languages and have other customs.

Of course, we spend our holidays in their countries; we like to discover their historic cities, their nature resorts, their restaurants and their food. But even while border controls have disappeared to a large extent within the continent, we still cross a mental border whenever we leave our national territory. Then we 'go into Europe.'

Christians are no exception to this tendency. But this is a misleading representation of reality. Whether we like it or not, Europe starts where we live. We are part of it. Of course, we are Dutch, French, German, and so on, but at the same time we are European. This is where we are called to be a light. Communicating the Gospel in Europe is not 'foreign mission' but 'home mission.'

### A contrary tendency

All over Europe people re-emphasize national identities, or regional identities (Flemish, Scots, Catalans and others).

## Please also pray for

- Syria, Aleppo. Refugees. Russia/Assad/Iran and USA/Saudi Arabia.
- Afghanistan. Responsibility of the West.

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A growing percentage of the population is increasingly anxious about further economic integration, the bureaucracy of 'Brussels,' and federalist ideas. All of that is labelled 'Europe' in a pejorative negative sense.

The majority of the population is increasingly receptive to populist ideas that capitalize on the nation, its cultural heritage, its way of life, and its tradition. Moreover populist movements often support their ideas with a claim to the 'Christian roots' of Europe.

### What is our contribution as Christians?

We should begin with the realisation that we are in Europe, for better or worse. Europe is not only 'them,' not only 'us,' but 'them and us.' Europe begins where I live, where I speak my own language, and where I attend church. So when we talk about Europe, we are dealing with 'us.'

So let us understand, accept and enjoy both our national and our European identity. Let us begin to take over responsibility, spiritually and practically for our continent.

### Prayer

- Praise to the Creator for the beauty of our nation and our continent Europe.
- Thanks about His patience and passion for us Europeans in the past and in our present day.
- Repentance for our specific European sins such as arrogance, godlessness and perversity.