

V.O.C. – October 2018

October 28, 2018: Our needs and God! [Prov. 30: 7-8]

Dear Listeners,

At the end of the book of Proverbs on which we have been meditating this month, we find a *prayer*. In chapter 30, Solomon includes the *prayer of Agur*. We don't know much about him, yet from the first few verses we know him as a small man with a deep respect for God! "LORD, give me neither poverty nor riches," he prays, "just give me what I need." Why did Agur pray the way he did? Well, he adds the *reasons* for his prayer in the words, "otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' *or* "I become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of God." Agur is concerned, not in the first place about his food and money but about the *LORD*, his God! He knows what man is like; he knows the spirit of man, man's life, man's attitude. Yes, Agur knows the *dangers* that threaten the life of man in his relationship to the LORD. When things go well, they have what they need; they forget their God just like that. They think they can do it on their own, by themselves.

Is that not indeed, dear listeners, the development we have seen in the western world? Isn't that one of the causes behind the *spiritual decline* of the past decades and the reason why *faith* and *church* have disappeared from public life? In times of prosperity and abundance, times of technological development and human progress, you think you've got all the processes *under control*. We tend to think that as long as we keep the money rolling, we can sustain the markets, secure our income, and guarantee continued prosperity. No, that's not just the *collective* thinking; it also is a danger for the *individual's* way of life. Now as the Lord Jesus shows in the New Testament, in the story of the rich young man [Mt. 19], *riches* are not necessarily a barrier for people to belong to God, to be saved and serve God; rich people can be saved for sure, by the grace of God. At the same time, we should not underestimate the *danger* of wealth and prosperity! Before you know it you live for yourself, lose your Saviour, and trust in your money instead of in God! That's an important lesson to learn and a danger to avoid!

That's why Agur prays, dear listeners, "LORD, don't give me too much. It's dangerous for your soul, your life. Materialism, Mammon, and money-oriented lives are a risk, for covetousness is the root of all evil!" Then what do you do when you are rich, well-to-do? Do you have to throw it away? No. The problem is *not* in the *money*; it's in the *man*! We should not set our *hearts* on the money, build our *hope* on our possessions! At the same time, let's realize as well that '*poverty*' also can be a danger. Someone who's *poor* can be *foolish* too, just the same. When you're always looking at what others have, jealous because they have more; when you're angry with God because He doesn't look after you as well as after others. That happens too, Agur knows, and thus they *dishonour* the *name of God*! Yes, that happens also when people observe the imbalance between richer and poorer nations in the world; when they see the misery in the world. Could He not do this differently? Better? Then you could be tempted to steal, Agur says, and sink deeper into the mire; meanwhile the *name* of the LORD is *dishonoured*! Hence, Agur prays, and we should pray with him, "LORD, don't give us riches or poverty; just give us what we need!" Our life depends on you!

Yes, dear listeners, that's the positive aspect in Agur's prayer: "LORD, give us what we need!" What that is? Well, it's exactly the same the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray in the *fourth petition*, "Give us this day our daily bread." Nothing more, nothing less. Why does he pray for

that? He wants to be able to serve the LORD, his God, and do what God wants him to do. He wants God's honour and glory! Agur confesses and realizes that God provides and He wants His people to ask for it. Then it could well be that He gives more to the one than to the other. Our tasks differ, as do our talents, our abilities. What I *need* to perform in these tasks, with these abilities, differs too. The LORD knows best, I trust. I don't have to be jealous about that, for I couldn't bear the stress, the responsibilities others have either. As long as we all together expect our *needs*, our *gifts* and *blessings* from Him, to use them in His service, for the neighbour's well-being, and to give honour and glory to God! Yes, that especially Agur is concerned about: God's honour! He doesn't want to deny, disown his God, due to riches, neither does he want to *dishonour* Him due to poverty.

Why does he want this, dear listeners? Well, he expressed that first: because his God is so awesome, the Creator, the Provider, and the Upholder of the universe, and of the world around him; while Agur himself is such a small, ignorant, and unwise man! Hence he prays, "LORD, give me what I need," so that I can *honour* you as the Maker of heaven and earth and as the giver of all good! That's why Agur also adds to his petition, "Keep falsehood and lies far from me! That may not seem too closely related to this petition for what he *needs*, but still it's a primary principle! Give me *honesty* and *integrity*, he prays. These virtues are related in the first place to his work and income, to his labour and possessions. We sure know as well, how closely indeed *integrity* and *honesty* are related to the world of labour and commerce, to economy and finances.

This too, dear listener is part and parcel of the *new* life of a *believer*, of a believing labourer or a believing business man who has been changed by the Spirit of God, into the image of Jesus Christ. Then you live for God and you look up to God and you know Him as the God who is *true* and *sincere*; faithfulness and truth are all His ways! You live for Him and you need Him; you look up to Him and you trust in Him! Then you also desire to reflect Him in your labours. You desire to show *His image* again. That's why Agur encourages us in the verses 5, 6, to live close to the LORD and to listen to His Word! Are you looking for support, for security, and for blessings? Then you need to know *Him*, to be with Him and walk with Him! Today, dear listeners, we know that even better than Agur could know, for *we* know the *Lord Jesus Christ*. He has manifested the wisdom of God, the love of God, and the care of God more clearly than anyone! He showed us how God gave us everything we need for our salvation!

The apostle Paul, dear listeners, said it this way in Romans 8:32, "He who gave His only Son, will He not *also* give us *all things* with Him?" What a wonderful reassurance that is in a world with so much uncertainty, insecurity. Hence under all circumstances it's best to listen to the Word of God, also as it is proclaimed in the church and heard here on The Voice of the Church! Then you hear the *glad tidings* of God's love and faithfulness. *He* knows what we need, and *He* is the God who governs all things! He is an awesome God! Then you praise Him as the awesome God and pray for all you need!