



June 2017 · #024

Dear praying friends in Europe,

The stories of Joseph, Daniel, Esther and Nehemiah teach us of the influence of faithful individuals even in pagan governmental circles. In contrast to those ancient empires, more than a few believers are in the governments of our modern European countries, some among the top leaders.

That is no guarantee they share the same political views. But it does mean that they can share a bigger ultimate goal, that of seeing God's kingdom. As Christians we can disagree over Brexit, over the immigration question, over the euro, over the EU, but what we have in common is greater than what separates us.

In the current climate of polarisation, we need to pray and work for positive and peaceful outcomes. It's our Europe, our future and our responsibility.



Jeff Fountain

2017 – Four decisive elections

Germany's elections are now less than three months away. After a roller coaster year, starting with the Brexit, followed by the elections in the Netherlands and France, what might the elections on September 24 mean for Europe?

To the relief of many, the political landscape seems has settled considerably, if only temporarily. Dutch and French voters, made wary by Brexit-confusion and Trump-chaos, chose to exclude populist parties. The French have chosen for a pro-EU president keen to consolidate the French-German axis on which the European project was originally built.

Theresa May and Angela Merkel share a common background as daughters of clergymen, but do not however share political fortunes. Thrust briefly onto the world stage after Brexit, May now seems doomed to exit backstage. Meanwhile, Merkel's chances of a 4. re-election are looking better than ever.

The two women also have very different understandings about the relationship of their countries to Europe. Merkel is deeply aware that her country's identity and welfare is totally intertwined with the identity and welfare of Europe.

Merkel is widely respected as Europe's most important leader, providing stability during the euro crisis, upholding Crimea-related sanctions

and showing moral backbone during the refugee crisis. Yet the chancellor's political prospects were challenged when the former President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, returned to Berlin with hopes to replace her. The 'Schulz-effect' after his return put him neck and neck for some weeks in some polls.

However Merkel's prospects revived as summer approached with the dramatic and unexpected win by her party in the populous state of North Rhine-Westphalia, a Social Democratic stronghold for all but five years since 1966. Latest polls show a coalition led by the CDU may only require *one* party where as a Schulz-led coalition would require three parties.

The alternative is a reluctant continuation of the current 'grand coalition' of the CDU and the SPD, parties with very different views on how the country should be run. Meanwhile, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) right-wing populist party, which seemed to be on the rise at the start of the year boosted by immigration fears, is now divided and disorientated with immigration issues no longer headline news.

Whatever the foreseeable outcome, Germany, in the heart of the continent, will remain committed to the EU, the eurozone, and the French-German alliance providing some welcome stability and continuity in a Europe facing uncertain times.

Please pray

- That German political parties campaign in a way that promotes mutual respect, national unity and seeks the common good for Germany and Europe.
- That Brexit negotiations promote mutual respect and understanding, and ensure positive future relationships between Britain and the EU.