

Originally from Germany, Christa Behr currently resides in Jerusalem. She takes Austrians and Germans to the concentration camps in Austria and Germany along with Holocaust survivors. Paul Calvert caught up with her to hear her heart for the Jewish people and the need for repentance on behalf of Austria, Germany and the Church.

Paul: How do the survivors react when they see the camps again?

Christa: I recently had the privilege of taking two survivors back to the camps, Auschwitz and Belzec, where their family had suffered and where murdered. They were willing to go with us as German Christians together. They shared what their experience was like and they shared their hearts. It's very important because hearing their story we as people from Germany and Austria relate not only to a number like 6 million Jews people who have been killed, now they relate to one story and what it meant for them and their family and how a person suffered and suffers still from this terrible crime, which happened to them.

Paul: Does it bring back many painful memories?

Christa: Yes, they do share about their time in this block or what happened on that morning and it's so bad and terrible that you really think how could it happen? Is this really possible that this could happen in a so-called civilised society not that long ago? It gives you a lot of questions, like how could it be that a so-called Christian nations like Germany and Austria were able to initiate and prepare such terrible killing for a whole people group the Jews and Gypsies?

Paul: It must be very emotional for the survivors and for you taking them to the camps?

Christa: It is and it's actually good if it's emotional because it's not only a question of information, it's good if we can weep there, if we can feel and experience the pain it brought to God and all the Jewish people and to understand what we really did. If someone says I can't go there because I have to weep so much, then I say you are the right person, go there and weep because this is something we have to weep over. All what happened 60 - 70 years ago.

Paul: What sort of stories do they have from the Holocaust?

Christa: I have a good friend from Tel Aviv, she survived Auschwitz and also the concentration camp in Ravensbrück and a death march with her little sister. They were so hungry that they almost died. They saw terrible things; they saw that a baby was smashed with the head by an SS man on a cement post. All these things come back if they dream at night. Your memory from your youth is much stronger as you get older so all these pictures come back and it's very hard to cope with it. Also there is an effect on the second and third generation on the children and the grand children. Often their children suffer also because they never meet a big part of their family. They experienced, that there is a whole area in the life of their parents they cannot share because it's very painful. Very often they stay quiet and don't want the children really to know what they have gone through, because it's humiliating to share what they have experienced.

Paul: Do many Holocaust survivors not share anything of what they have gone through?

Christa: Many people say that only after 50 years or after a very long time they were able to talk about it and some of them didn't even allow their children to go to school on Holocaust Memorial Day so that the children would not know what happened to them. Lately many people do feel a responsibility to share what happened to them, so that all human beings would know about it and be able to prevent this from happening again. So now Holocaust survivors are willing to talk about what happened.

Paul: Have you heard of any other stories or atrocity that happened in the camps?

Christa: Many stories. It's so hard to even relate to it. They wanted to kill them with work, with all kinds of measures - they saw terrible things.

Paul: Have any of the people you take lost loved ones in the camps you visit?

Christa: I have only had the privilege of taking two Holocaust survivors back to the camps until now, but this year Ester's sister is also coming. One lost her mother, also we heard a lot of other stories from people who have gone through the Holocaust and it's traumatic. If you lose your Mother or your Father through sickness, even then it's traumatic, but if you lose them in this way and you never could say goodbye and you know that there was never a funeral, that is even more traumatic. People were just tricked and cheated until the last moment and they told them that they have to take a shower, but gas came out of the shower. There is also the question, is this possible to forgive? Firstly I think we have to turn as Germans and Austrians to the Lord and ask for forgiveness and also ask for forgiveness from the people we did this terrible thing to. We should not to expect any answer, just to know we have to humble ourselves.

Paul: So did many Holocaust victims go to the gas chambers not knowing they were going to die that moment?

Christa: Yes that was the whole thing. They cheated them; they tricked them until the last moment. They made it look like they were going to a working camp and they said because of the lice and so on you have to take a shower and then you have to undress and then instead of water, gas came out. The gas is heavy and goes down so people climbed on top of each other because they wanted to catch some air. In one gas chamber in Auschwitz there were around 2,000 people who died within 20 minutes. On some days there were up to 25,000 people killed in one day, which is a little city!

Paul: Are there many Holocaust survivors living today?

Christa: Yes there are a lot of Holocaust survivors left in Israel, but not only Israel, in other places too. There was a report out last year that Holocaust survivors living in Israel are very poor and now there are Christians who have collected money to help the people. Also the State is now aware of the poverty of the Holocaust survivors and it wouldn't be right if they have suffered so much, that they should finish their life in poverty and worrying about their daily needs.

Paul: Is it easy for Holocaust survivors to relate to Germans?

Christa: It's hard for Holocaust survivors to relate to Germans, but even more so for their children. I totally understand that because they see us on the background of our people and sadly big parts of Christianity haven't even taken seriously their personal repentance and their identification repentance. That means that we also identify with the guilt of our people like Daniel did in the Bible with his people. Daniel asked for forgiveness for his guilt and for the guilt of his nation and God was very pleased with it. He prepared Daniel for the future and I also believe if we don't take the past seriously, we are not really prepared for the future because those things we see today as we look to Iran could happen every day again. That is a nation that wants to destroy the nation of Israel and the nations don't take it seriously. They didn't in Hitler's day, even though he wrote everything he wanted to do, and also these people write books saying what they want to do and no one takes it seriously enough.

Paul: I imagine the Jews who went through the Holocaust lost everything; they walked out of the concentration camps with absolutely nothing?

Belchez concentration camp, so many painful memories

Christa: They didn't have anything and for many the suffering didn't stop after the war. Israel it was under British Mandate and there were ships coming to the land of Palestine and they were sent back in that time, even though England played a very positive role in bringing Jews to Palestine through the British Mandate, but during the war they also hindered ships from coming into the Land. That was also very tragic for the Jewish people, so they were really left alone from almost all the nations. Only a few nations stood with them. In Europe, Denmark was willing to take in some people and Bulgaria protected the Jews and besides that almost all the nations were working together with Hitler and even one ship, the Saint Louis, which came to America and Canada was turned away and the ship came back to Hamburg and the people were killed in Auschwitz.

Paul: What sort of questions do they come back with; do many survivors blame God for what happened to them?

Christa: I would say that many became much more religious afterwards, although many people had a big question after the Holocaust. How could this happen? God protected us, we came through the Red Sea and He protected His people all through the Old Testament, so now why did this disaster happen? That's not an easy question and I understand that many people are struggling and I don't really have an answer to this question, I just can say for sure it wasn't God's will that a so called Christian country would be available for this darkness, for this murder, to kill the Jewish people. Even in the New Testament it is written that salvation is coming from the Jews, Jesus said it. All our roots are in Israel, we are actually grafted into the Olive tree and the Olive tree is Israel. So it's hard to understand that even Luther who even knew the letter to the Romans by heart, that he didn't have light about this relationship between the Church and Israel. And it's now high time that we teach the Church that our roots are in Israel and that we are grafted into this Olive tree and that we are belonging together and that we have to stand in the gap also in this time.

Paul: Why did you personally go to the concentration camps?

Christa: I had visited Israel and I just felt when I was in Bergen-Belsen and later in Auschwitz that it gave me such a shock that I thought maybe I don't understand. The little I understood, it shocked me, and I was frozen because I couldn't even relate to what I saw. Only days later when I thought about Auschwitz I started to weep. If we see what really happened, then we also see that not enough happened after the war to take out the evil roots of the nationalistic social thoughts and I think that Anti Semitism can grow again in Germany and in Austria because the Church didn't do a good job, we didn't really deal with the past. We need to give counselling to those people who have been involved and ask for forgiveness. The Church should have called for prayer and fasting back then, to speak up. It's a very poor testimony about the Church and we have to work on it so that this would not repeat itself again.

Paul: So why do you think Hitler did what he did, was he brought up with the seeds of Anti Semitism?

Christa: Maybe he was brought up with the seeds of Anti Semitism but we have to understand that Hitler was deeply involved in the Occult. He belonged to a society in Munich which was the Thuller Society and there was a Medium, a lady, her name was called Madame Slawavski and she brought the Swastika, the sign of the Nazis back from Tibet and in Vienna where Hitler lived for a while he read the books from a man called Lance Liebenfels and he said that

salvation comes from the Arian race. So Hitler used Anti Semitism in the Church, but his Anti Semitism came out of a very Occult background.

Paul: Do German people as a whole still feel guilty for what happened during the Holocaust?

Christa: I believe that many people feel guilty subconsciously, and somehow they can't deal with it. They try to suppress it or to push it away, but more and more believers understand that this wouldn't help just to push it away, that its much better to face it, to confess it before the Lord, what our Fathers and Grandfathers did and then also bring the fruit of repentance. Jesus said bring the fruit of repentance. That our repentance will really bring something forth that it'll really bring blessings to Israel.

Paul: What's your prayer for the Holocaust survivors around the world?

Christa: My prayer is that they would find comfort and the deepest comfort can only come from God. Isaiah 40 "Comfort, comfort my people". I do believe as Christians we know that our Messiah suffered a lot and its totally wrong to blame the Jewish people for it, because its for our salvation that He suffered, and in His suffering I think there is a great comfort, because He was not suffering because God didn't love Him, He suffered because God loved Him and I believe that God loves the Jewish people very much and even though they have suffered they are not rejected, they are loved by God.

I pray that a comfort that I cannot even describe would come to them and that they would really see hope for the future and that all their suffering would bring fruit because if we don't learn from this great terrible suffering then we are guilty because we cannot say we didn't know. Now we have to say we do know what could happen, but I really wish Ezekiel 37 the valley of dry bones would come alive again and that the prophetic word, we would see it, that the flesh would grow over them and the Spirit that they would come together and we would see resurrection life in Israel