



The Prague Christian Fellowship POST

Monthly Newsletter of the Sbor Křesťanské společnosti PCF

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John Wallace, PCF Apostolic Team

For the Grace of God

[Editor's note: This is a condensation of the Sunday message delivered on 1/14/07. Even if you heard the preaching, this article will solidify the important message delivered to our community by John.]

How would you like to be sent by the Lord to a group of people who were known to be constant liars, so evil as to be called "animals", and totally selfish? Those were the people of Crete. The apostle Paul left Titus, his traveling companion, in this culture to form and oversee the newborn church there. Paul says, writing later to Titus, *One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.'* This statement is true (Titus 1:12-13). A tough assignment, right? Yet the world we live in, whether it's your hometown or Prague, is much like the Cretan society: full of people who lie, do evil, and live for themselves. So the words which Paul writes to Titus and the Scripture that the Holy Spirit wrote to the church there applies to us as well.

Paul went on in Titus, chapter one, to

... speak of people who *profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him . . .* (1:16). Paul is talking about people who say they know God --- in our day maybe they say they are "Christians" --- but the way they live out-shouts their own testimony. The words of the book of Titus speak to us and say, essentially, "if you are not going to live like a Christian, stop calling yourself one." Living in the middle of a pagan and unbelieving world, I believe our God would have us start actually living like Christians, like people who know their Lord and live out His life in contrast to the lives around us.

Paul writes by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to exhort the church to godly living in Titus 2:11-15:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Sav-

ior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

I. Our Christian life is based upon, flows out of, and gives testimony to the grace of God.

I know in this church you have been taught on, and encouraged to live in the grace of God. I define the grace of God as power for living. Grace is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8-9). It is the only way that we come into His kingdom: grace work-

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What's Inside?

- ◆ Family Profile: Matěj, Markéta & Anna Ceplovi
- ◆ PCF Birthdays
- ◆ Financial Updates

Richard Emereoha, PCF Member

A Piece From Prison

Brethren, from my personal experiences, it is confirmed that there are serious consequences when one runs from God. It is a fact and a word of wisdom that "experience is the best teacher."

I was detained in custody at exactly 1:15, the third of June, 2003. Ever since then, my life has never been the same. At that time, immediately, the peace of God filled my heart, instead of fear and trembling, I began to pray and praise God for his plans and purposes for my life and family.

I was an orphan. I lost the two important people that played a role in my existence at age seven. As a result of these losses, I felt like an amateur swimmer thrown into the high sea, with the options, "sink or swim." That was the description that suited my life.

That is not any excuse for lawlessness but it is characteristic of the African continent.

There was no social security or health insurance which is true in almost all western countries. It means that the survival of, or extinction of, the young and elderly relatives lies solely as the responsibility of sons and daughters of the family. If a family unit does not have financial resources, these relatives could become ill and die or end up begging in the streets.

Thus, I grew up under the care of my six older sisters and a brother. The most interesting part of it all was that these older sisters and brother were also teenagers who needed parental care and training themselves. A blind person leading a blind person makes no sense at all. They surely affected my life, in their lack of wisdom, by saying such words as "you are a good for nothing boy." "You will never amount to anything good." Of course, they did not know the impact of those unseasoned utterances, but they wounded me and have af-

fectured my decisions and actions to this day. As a result, I developed a habit of optimism and ambition. Normally, I hate failures and poverty and I don't like words like "no." That irritates me naturally.

Since there was no career guidance, and no one to help, all of us were groping in the same darkness. When I finished secondary school, I hurriedly took the only available job at that time which was in law enforcement. Even though I gave my life to Christ at 19, the deeply engraved ambitious habits never left me. I was doing a job that I didn't enjoy. I furthered my education, progressed in the job to a middle rank grade, but was not satisfied with the pay and the job itself. Around this time I married in the Lord and had children, but their futures became a burden to me as I remembered my hard life and upbringing. My salary and that of my wife couldn't sustain the family. I could not talk of my dream or making my children's the

Family Profile

Matij, Markéta & Anna Ceplovi



Upcoming Birthdays

The following PCF members past and present will be having birthdays this month.

When writing this testimony I am reminded again how far we have come with our family to join this congregation. Both myself, Matej, and my wife, Marketa, are from unbelieving families and we both independently met Jesus in a congregation of ČCE in Prague-Branik in 1991. We were growing up as Christians in the small groups there, and Matej was for some time a leader of one small group.



members there until our return to Prague in September of last year. Aside from the extraordinary teaching and fellowship of the church, the biggest impact on our development was the Living Waters program. We attended a couple of times as participants and during the last couple of years we were junior members of the leadership team. In May 2004 we were at the European Living Water's conference where we received a dream (we believe from God) about the Living Water's ministry being established in the Czech Republic.

Although we knew each other rather casually before, it took us almost a year of hesitation before we began dating in Spring 1994. After two years of dating we got married in June 1996 and just a few weeks later we moved to San Francisco for two semesters, where Matej studied for his law degree. When we returned to Prague, Matej worked in a law firm and Marketa was finishing her masters at Charles University. After graduation she was accepted to a PhD program at MIT in Boston, starting Summer 2000.

After Marketa left to start her program, some of Matej's personal issues caught up with him and he needed to seek counseling help. His last few months in Prague before leaving to Boston represents one of the biggest turning points in his life. Originally, we had no idea why Marketa should apply to the MIT program. In time we discovered that God knew! During the year 2000 it was more and more apparent that Matej did not want to be a lawyer for the rest of his life, and he ended up using the stay in Boston as an opportunity to switch careers.

When Matej came to Boston (January 2001), Marketa introduced him to the Cambridge Vineyard, and we were

Meanwhile, in January 2005, our first daughter Anna was born. Originally, we were enjoying the experience of raising a small baby while being full-time PhD students. Unfortunately, neither of us managed to finish our program while caring for Anna. Markéta only interrupted her program for one semester, and she is endeavoring to complete her final semester for her PhD. Matej decided that he would not continue in his law degree. While in Boston he decided that his calling in life is not in the legal profession or related areas. So he switched his career completely. He began to prepare for the switch and studying computer issues (ironically, computers were mostly distractions in his past work experience and the biggest temptation in his personal issues, but now are part of his calling). Over the summer in 2006 Matej got a certification as Linux administrator, and after returning to Prague in the fall of 2006, he got a job at Red Hat (a well known International software firm).

We joined PCF in December of 2006 and are glad to be a part of this fellowship. We look forward to what God has in store for us in Prague and His continued leading in our lives. ■

Lulit Demissew	February 1
Vince Reed	February 2
Barret Kropf	February 2
Martin Kouklik	February 3
John Kantke	February 4
Phil Evans	February 4
Marvin Lang	February 5
Stephen Old	February 6
Natasha Green	February 13
Bogdan Pilch	February 13
Michael Stadler	February 14
David Snell	February 16
Tamara Nickle	February 20
Chris McLaughlin	February 22
Sue Furness	February 23
Michelle Šebestová	February 24
Lisa Niederheitmann	February 26
Tamara McLaughlin	February 26
Michael Overwater	February 27
Mirek Šedivý	February 28
Ariel Robbins	February 29



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lives better than mine. That was because I did not understand the law of patience and endurance. The words of the Bible come to mind. Psalm 11:3, *If the foundation is destroyed what can the righteous do?*

I came to Europe with the motive to study and to make money in order to change the life of my family so that their lives could be better than mine. But to my surprise, what I had in mind was not what I met in the streets of the countries that I visited in Europe. I saw hardship, selfishness, moral decadence and hatred compared with the cultures, traditions and fellowship of believers that I left behind. My first three years were a hell on earth. I somehow refused and determined in my heart not to follow the trend of events in my new world. In the world I came from anyone, you meet on a far journey automatically becomes your friend and brother, without ill-will or harmful thoughts. I love and embrace the African Christian culture that encourages an open mind and being available to help others. One thing amazed me in this new world I am in now. When I offered that open hand to many fellow travelers, I constantly received a "back slap" of ingratitude as a "thank you." They would say, "how dare you not lend out your money!" Then you either got in a fight when you asked for your money back or you simply forgot about the loan, or both.

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ing through faith. Grace is the foundation of our lives in God. Romans 5:2 speaks of *this grace in which we stand*. Grace is like our environment. Just like a fish must have water to “breathe” and exist, so we as followers of Jesus must have grace to live as God would have us live. And another wonderful thing about grace is that it is available all the time. Hebrews 4:16 says two important things about grace:

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- 1) God’s throne (His place of rule and of judgment) is characterized by grace;
- 2) We can go to Him in that place of grace and ask for grace every time we need it!

Fantastic! *The grace of God brings salvation to all men* (Tit. 2:11) and it’s available to every person . . . even constant liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. So everything else this passage says and all I’m going to say is connected to and flows out of this wonderful, unlimited grace that God makes available to us.

II. This grace of God is to train us.

For the grace of God has appeared . . . instructing us (2:12). The King James Version and the New International Version have the word “teaching” instead of “instructing.” Neither word does the original Greek justice. The original word was *paideuo*. It does not mean instructing or teaching in the intellectual sense, but more properly, “training up a child.” This word was chosen to explain that the way God’s grace deals with us is to train us as a parent would train their child. Training doesn’t just impart knowledge but also wisdom and experience (and, many times, discipline): what to do and what not to do. Training gives perspective. It shows us, over the process of time, what to embrace and what to avoid in order to receive the most out of life.

That’s what God, our Father, wants for you and me --- to allow His grace to train us, to keep us in the process of growing up to be like Him and His Son Jesus. This training process is to allow

us to get the most out this life He has given us. God knows about life, and He knows best how life should work. So He instructs, teaches, but most of all, trains us by His grace. Consequently there are certain things we are to embrace and certain things we are to avoid. Paul states next what we are to avoid.... “*ungodliness and worldly desires.*”

III. This grace of God trains us to “deny” two types of living.

“For the grace of God has appeared . . . instructing us to deny...” (2:12). What does it mean to deny? To deny something means to stop it, to stop the flow of something from happening. It’s like turning off the water faucet when the water is running. What God’s grace trains us to do is to stop certain things from flowing into and out of our lives. This grace, this power for living, gives us the ability to “turn off the faucet.” Therefore, there is no room in my Christian life to say, “Well, I just can’t live the way God wants me to live. I get overwhelmed. I’m too weak.” It IS true that we are too weak to live God’s life; but He is strong in us (grace) to live it! I can’t live the Christian life but the Christ in me can!

God’s grace trains us to deny, to shut off, two categories or “styles” of living. The first is “ungodliness.” The English word “ungodliness” comes from the condensing of three words units: un = not; god = God; liness = likeness. In other words, what we are to shut off from our lives is anything that is not like God. Shut off anything that doesn’t look like, sound like, smell like God. God gives us plenty of help to know what He is like. The word of God is full of pictures and statements and stories about what God is like. The best “picture” of God is, of course, Jesus. John 1:18 says that Jesus, the Son, has “explained” the unseen Father. We have also been given the Holy Spirit to help us understand the things of God (1 Cor. 2:10-13). So, anything that doesn’t look like God is to be shut off, turned off like a water faucet by the powerful hand of grace in our lives.

The second category or style of life to be denied is “worldly desires.” The passions, the lusts, the desires of this world are to be shut off. “World” is used three ways in the New Testament: 1) to describe all the inhabitants of the world

(John 3:16); 2) the physical earth (Acts 17:24); and 3) the system of the world which, controlled by Satan (1 John 5:19), opposes God. John the apostle is very clear when he writes (1 John 2:15-17):

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

We cannot love the world and love God at the same time. The “world” or worldly desires are characterized by three things in this passage: 1) the lust of the flesh (trying to use any resource other than God to get what I want); 2) the lust of the eyes (I see . . . I want); and 3) the boastful pride of life (I make myself the center of the universe). Anything that falls into one or more of these categories makes it on our “turn-off-the-faucet-list.”

How, practically, does this work? What if the tram doesn’t come when we thought it was going to? What if someone keeps doing something that irritates us? What if your future mate hasn’t “shown up” yet? Are we impatient? Do our responses to these situations turn out to be unkindness?... bitterness?... unforgiveness? Sorry, I don’t think this is God-like. Turn off the faucet by the grace of God. When we are tempted to do things the world’s way: by deceit, by manipulation, by power plays, by slandering others --- turn off the faucet by the power of God’s grace!

God has given us this powerful grace for living the kind of life He knows is best for us. He expects us to use this grace to deny, or shut off, the things that aren’t of Him - things that are of the world. We can do it! We can live like Christians! And God never asks us to deny something in our lives without offering a better alternative, a God-given replacement. This theme lies in the rest of the passage in Titus 2. May God release this grace more and more in your life! ■

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It was difficult to say “no” to certain things. This no doubt was due to my nearby acquaintances and friends who had nothing to contribute to my life, but rather desired to betray me, take away from me, and then turn back and betray again. I had been thinking and meditating on how to deal ruthlessly with such people. That, coupled with error in my own life, were dragging me out of God’s presence. My human effort couldn’t find a solution or change the situation.

My detention made a turning point in my life’s history. The arrest came and I started praising God for his plans and purposes. I refused to worry, taking consolation in the word of God that says *all things work good to those who love God*. I let God have His place and glory with prayers and praises and received strength to let go of other people and their wrongs toward me. I intentionally took responsibility for what happened illegally in my business and did not blame or accuse anyone else. As we know, humans easily lie to protect themselves and will gladly ignore the truth to save their skins. Many lies and accusations were then dumped on me. I knew that those lies had no basis of truth. However, in order to make a big case in the Czech Republic, law enforcement and the “justice” system are all too happy to make lies synonymous with truth. This is where I got more than I bargained for. I expected truth to prevail and my verdict was disappointing to say the least. However, I rejoice in God who always sustains me. My pastor, my family, and members of PCF have never stopped praying and supporting me.

I therefore praise God who knows how to deal with His people. Secrets have been revealed; the light has traveled over darkness; the Lord Jesus has taken His position in my actions and thinking. My utmost desires are for the things of God. The walls of partition between me and God have been broken. Though I am not free physically, spiritually I am free and whole.

Right now, I think of my family more deeply and seriously than before. By the help of God’s Spirit, I began to understand the words “family relationships” more than ever before. Because I was not brought up that way, I realize my mistakes of not caring for my family as God intended. Now, I know that money is not the only material that builds the family, but more importantly, love, trust, and a strong foundation rooted in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus. Though money serves as a means of solving problems, it is not a means of building a strong lasting family. Business is no longer first

but my last priority and is only a complementing factor. I have learned how to remain a full-time worshipper and follower of our Lord Jesus, whether in prison or out of prison.

While in restrictions and barricades, I strive daily to pray, to seek available means of reaching others for Christ. God is always making a way for friendship evangelism here. I always order Bibles from other ministries. I make sure by his grace that I distribute literature prayerfully to inmates who I preach to. Also, ministries that visit prisons are acquainted with me. They always allow me to preach in their meetings, and when exhortations are given, God’s presence is manifested in a great way. All are happily blessed. The prison authorities rec-

ognize my presence. They know who I am, what I can do and what I cannot do.

Despite my sufferings, disappointments, racial attacks and discriminations based on my color as the only African in this prison, the Lord has never allow me to lack anything. My daily needs are regularly met. God even uses ex-inmates, who were blessed by my way of living for Christ – in His service, to help me. Pastor John and Sister Kelsie have never left me without encouragement from my PCF family. May our Lord reward you richly!

I must thank you again because you have been standing by me even when negative forces set in. It is my promise that the love and care lavished and invested on me will never be in vain. It will surely be added to your crowns on that day of the Lord.

Brethren and fellow readers of this testimony, thank God with me! Also, pray that we all shall meet on that day of the Lord. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of God* (Hebrews 11:31).

The Psalmist cried out, *Where could I run from your presence? Remember that the Lord has set apart, him that is Godly, for himself. The Lord will hear when he calls unto Him. Stand in awe and sin not* (Psalm 139:7, 4:3-5).

God works in mysterious ways. It is my experiential understanding that every believer’s life lies in the hand of God, no matter how far we have wandered away from the fold. He still seeks us out.

I am glad that my God did not give up on me. He has begun this work and I know that he is able to finish and keep that which I’ve committed to His hands. Pray along with me for more of His mercies. Blessings to all. Praise God. ■

PCF Finances	
November 2006	
+46,406.6	Total Income
4,679.0	Internet & Comm.
7,214.1	Office Rent & Elec.
8,500.0	Church Rent
311.5	Supplies & Equip.
3,938.0	Copying & Publishing
29,611.0	Salaries/Employ Tax
0.0	Evangelism & Teach
0.0	Church Giving
11,77.5	Fees & Advertising
0.0	Miscellaneous
55,431.1	Total Expenses
-9,024.5	Net Income

All amounts shown are in Czech Crowns.

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**PCF’s
 10 YEAR
 PARTY
 Celebrating
 God’s
 faithfulness
 to provide
 for John
 and Kelsie
 to serve at
 PCF for ten
 years.**

Should you have a testimony to share please email us. The deadline is February 20, 2006.