



The Prague Christian Fellowship POST

Monthly Newsletter of the Sbor Křesťanské společnosti PCF

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John Mullen, PCF Pastor

Promises of God, Part III

The last two months I have been writing about the Promises of God. Although I intend this to be a self-contained article it might be helpful to look over the prior two. This piece will focus on the specific promise given to us via 2 Peter 1:4. **God has promised we will share in his divine nature.**

And by that same mighty power, he has given us all of his rich and wonderful promises. He has promised that ... you will share in his divine nature. (NLT)

Let's begin with the passage from Ephesians 4:24 - *You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness--righteous, holy,*

and true. We know that Jesus IS the image/likeness of God (*The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God* - 2 Corinthians 4:4). But we also know that *God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself* - Genesis 1:27 (by the way this is re-stated AFTER the fall in Genesis 9:6).

Imagine what we *really* look like if we are "patterned" after God. Certainly, imagining an omnipotent God can be a bit of a challenge. However, Paul says *Christ is the image of God.* Imagine what Christ *really* looks like. Sometimes it is easier to define the opposite. We would not describe Christ as a se-

rial-killer, a super-hero, a scrooge, a simpleton, a star in Hollywood, a self-appointed dictator, a sinner or a slave (extreme examples are used here to emphasize a point).

However, you may have grown up in a Christian culture that endorsed the biblical admonition to be "a slave for Christ" (Romans 6:18, 19 & 22, Ephesians 6:6, Philippians 1:1, 1 Peter 2:16). Paul says, *"I speak this way, using the illustration of slaves and masters, because it is easy to understand"* (Romans 6:19). However, it appears that the Church has interpreted Paul's illustrations literally and led God's people into a slave mentality (not that the old covenant of law offered

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Dan Drápal

Is Tithing Important?

Sixteen years ago – shortly after the "Velvet revolution" – I met Kelly Kosky, an American missionary from Transkei, South Africa. Kelly started hundreds of churches there. We were having lunch in a restaurant in Kansas City together with Mike Bickle and Kelly was relating how he teaches the Zulu villagers to tithe. He formulated a very simple principle which accompanied me later in my apostolic ministry. (I adapted it a little bit, but basically it was Kelly's idea.)

Twenty breadwinners can comfortably support a local church with a full-time pastor. And it is irrelevant if the church is in Japan, Canada, Zimbabwe, Portugal or Haiti.

How is that possible? The trick is tithing. Ten employed people who tithe give enough money to pay a pastor. Of course, the pastor has to pay taxes and insurance, so it takes roughly four additional tithing people to cover these expenses. And six other tithing people cover the regular expenses of a church –

rent, phones, and other similar expenditures.

This system works on condition that the pastor has the same standard of living like his flock and that the church behaves sensibly in its expenses. But the most important condition is, of course, faithful tithing.

Our congregation is specific. John, our pastor, might have a higher standard of living than an average Czech, but not a higher standard of living than an average Prague/Úvaly citizen (Kelsie currently draws no salary). The congregation is specific in its giving, too. Theoretically we have more native Czech members than expats and foreigners. But if you look around on any particular Sunday, you see more foreigners than Czechs. The truth is that many of the expats or foreigners are not "expat" breadwinners. Many of them have low paying Czech (and not inflated foreign) salaries. Some of them are missionaries themselves. The Czechs, on the other hand, are mostly above average regarding salaries. However, it seems to me

that they think that the church is more or less "western" and that westerners are generally richer than the Czechs; therefore, these Czech members believe they can afford to give their tithe elsewhere. I strongly regret this because after 11 years John and Kelsie still rely of gifts from America and the dollar has fallen almost 60%. Our church is actually lacking in several areas. And I am convinced that if all of us would tithe faithfully, not only would the congregation not be lacking, but we would have a healthy surplus, which would allow us to support others.

Dan Drápal

What's Inside?

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Family Profile

Jon La Plante

I was born and raised in St. Louis, MO, right in the middle of the American interior. Like most boys who were raised in middle America in the 1980's, I spent most of my late childhood and early teen years laboring under the vague, yet pervasive, impression that sometime in my early 20's a tragic case of 'wrong place, wrong time' would claim the lives of my entire family and the woman I loved (I assumed it would probably be either the Russian mafia or Columbian drug lords that wronged me), resulting in my becoming a cold-blooded, butt-kicking and druglord-killing machine. I would be resting peacefully in my grave before my 30th birthday, after visiting my Rambo-style wrath upon various and sundry mafia kingpins and cocaine-pushing overlords.

I'm happy to say that God had a different picture in mind than what Hollywood and Marvel comics had painted. In retrospect I can't rightly say why, but I had a series of false starts before I got serious about my relationship with Jesus Christ. I accepted salvation when I was 8 years old and soon after was baptized. Just a year or two later I started bullying kids around at school, and developed an attitude that would serve me well into my angsty-teenage years. I started figuring things out when I was a junior in high school, and by the time I became a senior had been asked to be president of my church youth group and was leading a Bible study. Then I went off to college in Memphis, met *THE* girl, got engaged, and promptly moved in with her.

By Gods' grace I didn't marry my then-fiancé, but that breakup was a bitter, bitter experience. It's no surprise, looking back, that God used that incident and the following time to solidify my relationship with Him. Once I got the fire, I looked for a way to share it with the world. I'd been involved in a campus ministry, and decided to give youth ministry a try. After a year as a



youth minister, I got involved in camping and retreat ministries. I met a series of fired-up musicians and ministers and shortly after, we formed a "ministry experience" called the "Groove Daddies" Ministry Team. Soon we were traveling around the mid-south (and eventually the country) playing music, leading worship, and sharing the gospel.

As much fun as we had with the "Groove Daddies", I eventually started having doubts about the long term viability of being a full-time musician and minister. About 6 years after we'd begun (and after a number of line-up changes as members would get married and couldn't afford the lifestyle of a traveling musician/minister anymore), the "Groove Daddies" split up, and I spent the remaining years of the 1990's pursuing my interest in technology. I got a job in 1997 as a web developer, and shared my time between developing professionally and an entrepreneurial venture I was involved in. I loved software, and quickly jumped from web development into desktop development, and ultimately into enterprise-grade programming.

I never managed to keep my entrepreneurial interests separate from my job, and I wrote a series of process improvement proposals, which lead to a management role in the team I worked in. I found I enjoyed telling people what to do just as much as I'd enjoyed writing software; in a few years I was managing the company. We decided to outsource our development into eastern Europe, and I began traveling to Ukraine, Rus-

sian, and Czech Republic. From my first visit to Prague, I loved the deep history, architecture, and atmosphere of the city, and three years later, God blessed me with the opportunity to come live and work here.

In March 2006 I received an email from Monster.com, telling me that they'd found my CV in their system and asking if I was still looking for work. They had a management position available in Prague, and wanted to know if I was interested in interviewing for it. I agreed, was offered the position, and 6 weeks later had sold my house, most of my possessions, and was on a plane to Prague, ready to start my new job as Manager of Infrastructure. I had only been at Monster for a few months when my boss, and good friend, died of a stroke. Two days later I was asked to take his position and, after lots of prayer, found myself carrying the responsibilities of the Vice President of Technology.

In August 2007 I was made redundant during a restructuring exercise, which turned out to be quite a blessing – God used that to give me an opportunity to again chase my entrepreneurial interests, and I am now involved in a technology venture and a property investment company.

God answered another prayer during that time, too. I'd met a number of people in Prague that I am close to, but didn't know any Christians. I'd been praying at that time that He'd bring some strong Christian fellowship into my life, and that I'd find a church home where I felt both kinship and His spirit. I was in my 3rd church since coming to Prague, spending about 3 months in each before realizing that it wasn't what I was looking for. Two weeks later, I found myself at PCF, and have been attending ever since. I never cease to be amazed at how faithful God is in His love for us, and his answered prayers!

God bless you - see you at church!

(Continued from page 1.... Promises)

much more, but rather, the new covenant of grace offered much, much more).

Paul says very directly in Romans 8:15-17a - *So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family--calling him "Father, dear Father." For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we will share his treasures--for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too.*

The New Covenant led us out from more than just slavery. Paul says it not only changed our status, but it also changed our identity (Colossians 3:10-11, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:24). When Paul says *new creation, new nature* or *new person* he is describing the same thing Peter described in 2 Peter 1:4. He goes on to say... *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation* (Galatians 6:15-16). The reason it "counts" is *Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us* (Colossians 3:11b). Scripture says *the person who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him* (1 Corinthians 6:17). If all this is true, the common Christian reference of "sinners saved by grace" is only applicable to our past!

If we are adopted into God's family, if Christ lives in us, and if we have now become one spirit with Christ, do you think we are transformed into saints or remain sinners? Sinners are controlled by a sin nature. *But you are not con-*

trolled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.) Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God (Romans 8:9-10).

Thanks be to God for his finished work that not only changed our status and identity, but also changed our relationship.

Is Christ "in us" a sinner? Not a chance! Contrary to sinners, saints live righteously. When they sin, it is inconsistent with who Christ has made them to be. Even though scripture is clear, most Christian cultures are based upon this foundation of sinners and slaves. In those cultures the highest value is obedience. However, the contradiction is that sinners sin. The solution is control. It explains a lot of what is wrong in the church. Obedience to God is good. It is the basis for our friendship with God. However, isn't it better for my children to anticipate what is needed around the house and do it without asking, rather than to merely just do what they are told?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if the children were so in-tune with the parents and so much loved them that they wanted to step-out and live in a way that pleased their parents? You might say a higher value under the covenant of grace would be *believing in your heart that you are made right with God* (Romans 10:10). Belief seems to supersede obedience in the New Covenant (behavior reflects what we believe - the reverse is not necessarily true). It was by faith that Abraham was made right before God (Romans 4:2-3). We are saved by faith, not works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Belief can take us way beyond just following rules.

The cross of Christ went beyond changing our identity. If we share in God's nature, we are no longer enemies of God. *You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions, yet now he has brought you back as his friends. He has done this through his death on the cross in his own human body* (Colossians 1:21-22). Paul sums it up so wonderfully - *So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God--all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God* (Romans 5:11). Thanks be to God for his finished work that not only changed our status and identity, but also changed our relationship.

Have you received the promise of sharing in God's nature, and been set free from a sinner/slave/separated mentality that expects sin from yourself and demands obedience of others? If you want to receive the promises of God, you have to let go of your false identity and believe what God says about you. *There must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes* (Eph. 4:23). ■



Upcoming Birthdays

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

Lulit Demissew	February 1
Vince Reed	February 2
Barret Kropf	February 2
Kateřina Dreier	February 2
Martin Kouklik	February 3
Marina Proutkina	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
Kryřtof Sedláček	February 21
Chris McLaughlin	February 22
Sue Furness	February 23
Amy Mann	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

PCF Finances	
December 2007	
+63,062	Total Income
8,890	Internet & Comm.
5,000	Office Rent & Elec.
8,500	Church Rent
4,845	Supplies & Equip.
570	Copying & Publishing
28,350	Salaries/Employ Tax
0	Evangelism & Teach
25,000	Church Giving
6,421	Fees & Advertising
0	Miscellaneous
87,575	Total Expenses
-24,513	Net Income

All amounts shown are in Czech Crowns.



Night Watch 29.02.08



international
House of Prayer Prague



21:00
to
06:00



Fundraiser- March Madness

Saturday, March 08, 2008 at 10:00 AM

PCF and CISP (the Christian School of Prague) are doing a joint fund-raiser for With Love for Kids, a Christian non-profit organization that helps orphans in Minsk, Belarus. It will include something for everyone: food, drinks, bake sale, bazaar with clothes & books and home items, activities for children and a live auction. Please come, or better yet, donate some items for event. For more info call Kelsie Mullen 722 902 083.

New PCF Bank Info:

Sbor Křesťanské společnosti PCF, eBanka
Account No. 181730394/2400
Variable symbol: 10261

Contact Evzen Pekarek for assistance at
PekarekEvzen@seznam.cz

Should you have a testimony to share please email us. The deadline is February 20, 2008.