

Mahon Russian Dispatch #04 Tyumen (Siberia) 09.30.09 The Perseverance of a Suffering Servant...

Pictures

- 1_ When we first met Ravil and Julia, he was an earnest student in my seminary classes and Julia was attending Eleanor's week night Bible study for women.**
- 2_ Here is pictured Ravil, Julia and baby Margaret who is now with the Lord**
- 3_ This picture, taken just this week is of pastor Ravil and his son Nathan**
- 4_ Here we are planning our month together. I could not be more impressed with the program which pastor Ravil has put together for us.**

In this dispatch...

- I. Safe in Tuymen - hitting the ground running...**
- II. They Were Poor But Did Not Know it...**
- III. They Are Suffering But You Would Not Know It...**
- IV. One Of The Great Privileges Of Our Ministry Together**
- V. Prayer Requests: As you pray please claim the following passages...**

A. Our endurance

Isaiah 40:30-31 Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

B. Pastor Ravil and Julia - Faith

Romans 4:20-21 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

C. Pastor Ravil and Julia - Marriage and Family

1 Timothy 3:4-5 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?),

D. Pastor Ravil and Julia - Church

Acts 5:14 And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number,

E. Pastor Ravil and Julia - Material Needs

Philippians 4:19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

F. Our Ministry of the Word While In Tuymen

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.

Dear Prayer Warriors,

Safe in Tuymen - hitting the ground running...

We arrived safely in Tuymen (Siberia) after an all night flight, (Boarding at 10:30 p.m. and landing at 4:30 a.m.) Ravil met us at the airport and after getting our bags and driving into town we had just enough time for breakfast, a freshen up and message preparation before heading to church. It was a wonderful service and I could feel the power of your prayers sustaining me as I preached the holy, eternal, inerrant written Word of God. Afterwards there was fellowship at church and then fellowship at an Elder's home. Once back to our little efficiency apartment we were able to drop into bed. A full but blessed Lord's Day.

They Were Poor But Did Not Know it...

I can remember clearly a statement that my father, mother, their friends and relatives used to make concerning poverty. Thiers was the generation that grew up during the Great Depression. Usually it was a whimsical reminiscing brought about by a birthday, Christmas party or some children's event where they would be marveling at the things available for children in the 1950's. Then they would say something which at the time never made a lick of sense to me, "I guess we were poor, but you know, we didn't think we were poor. I guess we just didn't know any better." Well even at that tender age, I had seen the pictures in the family photo album of my dad's life in rural Kentucky and my mom's childhood in rural Mississippi during the Great Depression and I can assure you, that even as a child - if they didn't know it, I sure did!

They Are Suffering But You Would Not Know It...

I feel that way in some respects about Pastor Ravil and his young wife Julia. They have spent the last five years laboring here in Tuymen under what, for most young couples, right out of seminary, would have been a crushing experiences. Better men have left the ministry or at least carry with them the worn, downcast countenance of men who have been through deep waters and are yet to recover. Yet neither seem to realize what they have gone through. Both view sufferings for the sake of Christ as part and parcel with the call of Discipleship, Disciplemaking and the Pastorate.

- Childhood and conversion

Both came from difficult childhoods which would have hardened many. Both worked multiple jobs to put themselves through college. Both came to Christ and experienced isolation and persecution both from the secular and Russian Orthodox branches of friends, family and culture. Despite this both persevered and grew into devote Christians and active witnesses for Christ.

- Seminary experience (Ravil Pic)

Ravil entered seminary out of the army. He had come to Christ in the military and was zealous in his faith. Ravil is part Tartar and traveled from far east Russia to the city of St. Petersburg . You will remember Ravil as you have been praying for him for years. He immediately struck me as one of those young, earnest, serious, zealous young men who God was calling into the harvest fields.

- Julia (Julia Pic)

We first met his one day to be wife Julia at the St. Petersburg church where I was serving as interim pastor. On the first Sunday Eleanor offered a ladies Bible study and Julia immediately signed up. Julia was zealous for the Lord but weak in doctrine and we were both impressed at her humility as she was willing to study hard and subject her reasoning to God's holy, eternal, inerrant, written Word.

- Courtship and pre-marriage counseling and wedding...

Despite widespread promiscuity among courting couples in Russia Ravil and Julia kept their courtship to high standards. It was our privilege to do their pre-marriage counseling and I can remember Ravil and Julia recording each session so that they could go over it again and digest it fully. During this time they faithfully did their Bible study and Scripture memory. Their wedding was no different. Rather than being characterized by a big drunken party Ravil and Julia had a Christian wedding which honored the Lord, the institute of marriage and their families.

- Tuymen as a Pastor and working two jobs. Persecution by the church (and the US denomination) and new church is born.

Ravil came to Tuymen having been assured by a sister denomination that their doctrinal positions were the same. I was privy to the interviews Ravil went through and upon arriving for my first visit could not believe the outright deception that was used to get this young couple to accept the position of pastor. Trouble almost immediately began to brew. The church was tightfisted with money and Ravil found himself working two jobs as well as the pastorate. The church had been founded around an AA program started by a US businessman in Tuymen. Unfortunately discipline was not applied and the men in the program were neither uniformly sober nor were they active in the church. Similarly the women were outspoken during the service and spiritually immature. I can remember my first visit - leaders in the church (which Ravil inherited) openly questioned their salvation and that of others; the AA leader had a case of Scotch in his office; during my FDS conference men stood in the back going in and out of the AA office; it was not uncommon for women to stand up and speak out during the service - I could go on and on. Ravil labored for two years as the church grew both numerically and in doctrine. He was unwilling to divide this church, he was committed to redeeming it. Finally a group of five individuals contacted the home denomination in the US and got permission to "fire" Ravil. On the Sunday they dismissed him they asked that he immediately vacate the building. As Ravil and Julia walked out, all of the congregation left with him except for these five. Ravil and Julia had refrained from even a hint of suggestion that this occur. It was a spontaneous act of loyalty by those who had so benefited from their ministry. This is the vibrant and living church which Ravil now pastors. Each time I visit I see new members and marked spiritual growth by all.

- A Christian child birth; The loss of baby Margaret; A Christian funeral

It was in the midst of all this turmoil that the Lord gave Ravil and Julia little baby Margaret. Ravil was there for the birth of his baby girl and it became the talk of the hospital. Usually the new father comes in drunk, rowdy and has to be removed. Here was a sober, loving Christian father, encouraging his wife and taking a responsible part in the home. It was a great testimony. Within months though Margaret was ill and soon went to be with the Lord. As in their courtship and wedding, as in their childbirth, so in their funeral of their little girl. A great testimony which brought glory to God, encouragement to the church and a witness to the city of Tuymen .

- Baby Nathan; Three apartments in three months

Now God has blessed Ravil and Julia with a new baby boy – Nathan. In the last three months they have had to move three times as their landlords have canceled their contracts for one reason or another. Ravil and Julia’s faith remains strong as does their commitment to the ministry.

- After all this you would be hard pressed to meet a more loving, joyful, devoted young couple, to the Lord; to each other and to their church

Think for a moment – a young married couple, far from home in a strange city; a church in turmoil with rumors, false accusations and rampant sin, the birth and then sudden loss of your baby, while planting a new church with a new baby your are forced to move three times in three months – what would you be thinking about God and His will for your life? Praise God for the example of Pastor Ravil and Julia and for their steadfast faith, their love for their church and their total confidence in the sovereignty of God.

One Of The Great Privileges Of Our Ministry Together

I consider it one of the great privileges of my calling to minister to couples such as Ravil and Julia. This is our fourth trip to Tuymen. When Ravil took the church he sent me an email asking if he went to Siberia would “Uncle John and Aunt Eleanor” come and help. Every year since his departure we have gone to Siberia to minister for him and to him and Julia. It is your prayers and your gifts that make it possible for us to strengthen the hearts of young ministers who labor under so sacrificially and under such hardships.

I close this email as always with a deep and abiding thankfulness for your sacrificial and effectual prayers which both empower and drive this ministry ever forward in the cause of Christ.

By His mercy,
II Corinthians 4:1
Rev. John S. Mahon
Grace Community Int. -

Please allow me to close with dispatch with a hymn from my prayer notebook that has been especially meaningful to me...

(Psalms 104:33-34 "I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. Let my meditation be pleasing to Him; As for me, I shall be glad in the LORD.")

And Can It Be

And can it be that I should gain An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, whom Him to death pursued?
Amazing love how can it be That Thou my God, shouldst die for me?

*He left His Father's throne above, So free, so infinite His grace!
Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race!
Tis mercy all, immense and free, For, O my God, it found out me.*

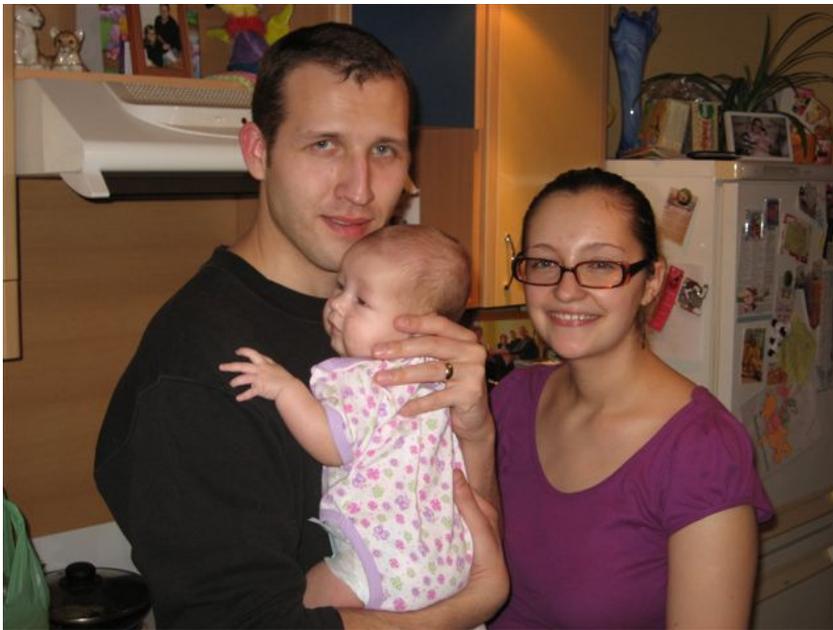
Long my imprisoned spirit lay Fast bound in sin and nature's night.
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray; I awoke the dungeon flamed with light!
My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

*No condemnation now I dread: Jesus and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne, and claim the crown through Christ my own.*

Charles Wesley *Born:* December 28, 1707, Epworth, Lincolnshire , England . *Died:* March 29, 1788, London , England . Charles Wesley wrote over 6,000 hymns. Like most hymnists, his works were frequently altered. In the preface to the 1779 *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*, his brother [John](#) wrote: "I beg leave to mention a thought which has been long upon my mind, and which I should long ago have inserted in the public papers, had I not been unwilling to stir up a nest of hornets. Many gentlemen have done my brother and me (though without naming us) the honor to reprint many of our hymns. Now they are perfectly welcome to do so, provided they print them just as they are. But I desire they would not attempt to mend them, for they are really not able. None of them is able to mend either the sense or the verse. Therefore, I must beg of them these two favors: either to let them stand just as they are, to take things for better or worse, or to add the true reading in the margin, or at the bottom of the page, that we may no longer be accountable either for the nonsense or for the doggerel of other men."



Picture One



Picture Two



Picture Three



Picture Four