

Dispatch Seven

Mahon: Russian Prayer Dispatch #7 - 02.23.07 The Authority and Supremacy of the Word of God held high in Russia...

Pictures:

1. An Afghani Refugee, a price on his head, continues to study that he might clearly present the Gospel, both in proclamation and in content.
2. A former MIG Pilot now pastors a church and studies for the ministry.
3. Middle Right - a Congolese Refugee, a price on his head, continues to study that he might clearly present the Gospel, both in proclamation and in content. At the board, Jehnya, Ravil's close friend, has left his engineering job to pursue the ministry of the Gospel.
4. Needless to say I feel the burden to labor hard in my studies that I might be found worthy of the privilege of teaching the Word of God to students such as these.

I. Word's Have Meaning

II. Word's Have Meaning: The Testimonies of my students

III. Word's Have Meaning: The Testimony of Pastor Ravil and his church in Tuymen

IV. Word's Have Meaning: In the face of Evangelical Pragmatism

V. Prayer Requests

A. As you think on these matters pray for the Congolese, Afghani and the pastor's wife that God would both bless them and reward them for their faith.

B. Pray for us, pray that we will see clearly the consequences, not the earthly consequences but the spiritual consequences, of compromise as it pertains to the Word of God. Please claim: 2 Corinthians 4:1-2
"Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

C. Pray that we will not be pragmatic, but rather we will be true to the Word of God. Not "compromise today and be faithful another day" but that we would be true to the Word of God. That we would say as the Apostles, "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him." (Acts 5:29-32)

1. True in our faith: Romans 4:20 - 22
2. True in our lives: Galatians 2:20 - 22
3. True in our message: Romans 10:8

4. True in our call: I Corinthians 1:22 - 31
5. That in times of trial we would respond in faith

D. Last but not least, for a church to adopt Ravil's church in Siberia
Now I am praying for a true church, a conservative Bible believing church to
adopt this congregation. Please pray with me.

Dear Prayer Warriors,

Word's have meaning to God - from the beginning of the giving of the written
Word of God, God's Words, all of them, have had and do have meaning...

Exodus 24:3 Then Moses came and recounted to the people ALL THE WORDS
of the
LORD and ALL THE ORDINANCES; and all the people answered with one voice,
and
said, "ALL THE WORDS WHICH THE LORD HAS SPOKEN we will do!"

Deuteronomy 31:12 "Assemble the people, the men and the women and
children and the alien who is in your town, in order that they may hear and learn
and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe ALL THE WORDS of
this law."

Words have meaning. In my classes this month is an Afghani and Congolese.
Both are grown men, both are married with families, both have been assigned
to Russia by the UN as refugees. Both are seeking asylum in other countries
as they wait in diplomatic limbo. Both are strong evangelical Christians.
Both have been threatened with death by those in their native lands for a
clear presentation of the Gospel, being ashamed of neither it's content nor
it's public proclamation. Both have been told by the Russian authorities
that if they will convert to Russian Orthodox Church that they will go to
top of list. Just words, just say the words, you don't have to mean them,
say the words, bow a few times, go through the ceremony, get it over with
and get on with your life. Just words...

In another city in which I minister lives a pastor with his wonderful and
devoted wife. Her parents, in darker days, fled to America. He decided to
stay and minister in his native land. Now his wife would like to visit her
parents but the system is against her. Then came the subtle offers and
hints. Convert to the Russian Orthodox church, be a good Russian girl and
we will move you to the top of the list to get your visa to visit your
family in America. Just say the words, don't think about them, it is what
is in your heart that counts, words don't have meaning, just say the words,
such a little thing.

A high ranking staff of a ministry in which I once served has converted to
Catholicism to better reach Catholics. To do this he has to swear allegiance
to the doctrines of the Catholic church including those dealing with the

Virgin Mary, the Pope, Priestly Confession and the literal transformation of the bread and wine to the body and blood of Christ. I am sure he told himself, these are just words, they don't mean anything. Just say the words.

Yes, such a small thing, just words, say the words, they don't mean anything. Why languish in a refugee camp, why be separated from family, why let a church confession stand between you and the people, just say the words, they don't mean anything.

But words do have meaning, words are important to God.

I am thinking of this because tonight I will give a report to the Presbytery here in St. Petersburg on Ravil and Julia's ministry and the Reformed Church of Tuymen, Russia. Then on Sunday I will preach in the morning service here in St. Petersburg on Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

When I preach on this passage I will exhort the church that it is as important to not be ashamed of the content of the Gospel as it is of the proclamation of the Gospel. To reduce the content of the Gospel to the level of comfort whereby you are willing to proclaim the Gospel is no Gospel at all.

When I report to the Presbytery I will present the history of the church and a report on Pastor Ravil's ministry.

When Pastor Ravil arrived at this church last year it was being lead part time by a zealous but spiritually immature retired American businessman. He was traveling back and forth getting this church started. He belonged to a liberal branch of the Presbyterian church and Ravil found several things out of order. Women were serving as Elders in the church and teaching and preaching at Sunday morning services. Other leaders in the church had been appointed with the understanding that they had repented from alcoholism but no accountability was in place and these men were openly drinking and abusing alcohol yet nothing was being done. Other Elders, Deacons and leaders in the church had family troubles and even separated from their spouses - some were living openly in adultery, yet nothing was being done. True doctrine had been laid aside in the church and replaced by a message of personal reform in the context of community.

When Ravil began to bring the church back into line with the Word of God trouble ensued. Unfortunately most of those with these problems were unwilling to submit to the Bible. The upshot was that the liberal Presbyterian church and businessman said if Ravil insisted on making these things an issue that they would cease their funding and he would have to leave. Leave he did and all but ten members of the church left with him. This was a hard decision by Pastor Ravil and he did not take it lightly.

The wife of one of the leading men in the new church told me, "We did not leave our church, God gave us back our church."

It is such a little thing. Just say the words. Continue doing what you are doing, but just nod and wink at the sin. Say the right words, keep the money and look at the big picture. Tell them you are going to cooperate but continue to do your thing on the side. Give verbal acquiescence to unbiblical practices in the church, to alcoholism and adultery on the basis of "love and forgiveness" but pursue your own agenda under the radar screen. They are only words, say the right words and you keep your apartment, you keep your car, you keep your salary, just words, say the right words.

But Ravil did not do this. In his sermon he preached a pure gospel and the inerrancy and authority of the Word of God. He clearly taught the inerrancy of the Word, the authority of the Word over all aspects of faith and practice in the church - over the rule of the church, over moral conduct such as drunkenness and adultery, that God's Word held supreme in all decisions.

Not only did all of the healthy Christians stand with him, some of the others repented. The American liberals pulled out, God stepped in. It is of course hard. Ravil now has to work a part time secular job but the church is vibrant and excited. And what did they want me to speak on - "The Authority and Supremacy of the Word of God". This is the very congregation that experienced first hand the loss of money as a result of this doctrine. Yet rather than having learned their worldly lesson - "we wont make that mistake again", rather they learned their spiritual lesson - "from now on we will always choose the Word or God over anything the world, the flesh or the devil has to offer!"

Don't make such a big deal over the Bible, why can't we all get along, or as the former director of the same ministry where the high ranking staff converted to Catholicism so aptly put it in his "dear staff letter", "As far as I am concerned, most doctrinal disputes are really personality problems." All this smacks of pragmatism. It is a movement which I have come to term, Evangelical Pragmatism. To the Evangelical Pragmatist - the Word of God is understood and interpreted by what works. As a result, to the evangelical pragmatist The Word of God ceases to have clear meaning. Words and whole passages get in the way of ministry. "We don't know what this word/passage means, but it can't mean what it says, because if it does and we obey it then no one will come to our church, so it is just a mystery to us, we don't know what it means." Yes, to the evangelical pragmatists, the Word of God ceases to have clear meaning. Perhaps this was clear, this worked in the days of Paul, perhaps in the future after some great revival this will be clear again to the church, it will once again work, but today, we have to be pragmatic, if we take the Bible at face value, think of the consequences.

Yes, think of the consequences, this is important. Not the earthly

consequences as we see them but the spiritual consequences of being untrue to God's Holy Word.

Think of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego - they thought of the consequences and said "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." (Daniel 3:16-18)

Think of The Apostles - they thought of the consequences and said "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him." (Acts 5:29-32)

Think of the Afghani and Congolese men - they thought of the consequences and said, "We are Christians, we will not convert, we will not kiss icons nor pray to them, we will not have priests intercede for us, we will read the Bible for ourselves, we will trust in Christ alone for our salvation and the Word of God as God's holy written revelation. Though we languish in this camp till our death, we will not convert."

Think of the wife of my Belarusian minister and friend - she thought of the consequences and said, "We are Christians, I will not convert, I will not kiss icons nor pray to them, I will not have priests intercede for me, I will read the Bible for myself, I will not betray my husbands' spiritual leadership of the family, I will trust in Christ alone for my salvation and the Word of God as God's holy written revelation. Though I never see my parents again, I will not convert."

Think of Ravil as he considered as a Pastor whether his sermons and convictions were for sale. Think of the cost: his income, his apartment, his car, his church. No - Pastor Ravil was firmly fixed on the Gospel of Christ. He was ashamed neither of it's content nor of it's presentation. Fixed upon this he clearly preached the Word of God - let the content be what it may, let the consequences fall as they may, he was fixed on Jesus and the holy, inerrant, written Word of God. To Pastor Ravil words do indeed have meaning, especially the holy Word of God.

As you think on these matters Pray for us, pray that we will see clearly the consequences, not the earthly consequences but the spiritual consequences, of compromise as it pertains to the Word of God. Pray that we will not be pragmatic, but rather we will be true to the Word of God. Not "compromise today and be faithful another day" but that we would be true to the Word of God.

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I close this short dispatch with a hymn from my prayer notebook. It is from the Psalter of 1912 "How I Love Thy Word O' Lord" (the tune can be found on the internet at cyberhymnal.org)

How I Love Thy Law, O Lord

How I love Thy law O Lord,
Daily joy its truths afford;
In its constant light I go,
Wise to conqueror every foe.

Thy commandments in my heart
Truest wisdom can impart;
To mine eyes Thy precepts show
Wisdom more than sages know.

While my heart Thy word obeys,
I am kept from evil ways;
From Thy law, with Thee to guide, I
have never turned aside.

(Refrain)

Sweeter are Thy words to me Than all other good can be;
Safe I walk, Thy truth my light, Hating falsehood loving right.

We stand firm in the uncompromising truth of the Word of God
By the grace of God
And
By the empowering prayers of you our prayer warriors

By His mercy,

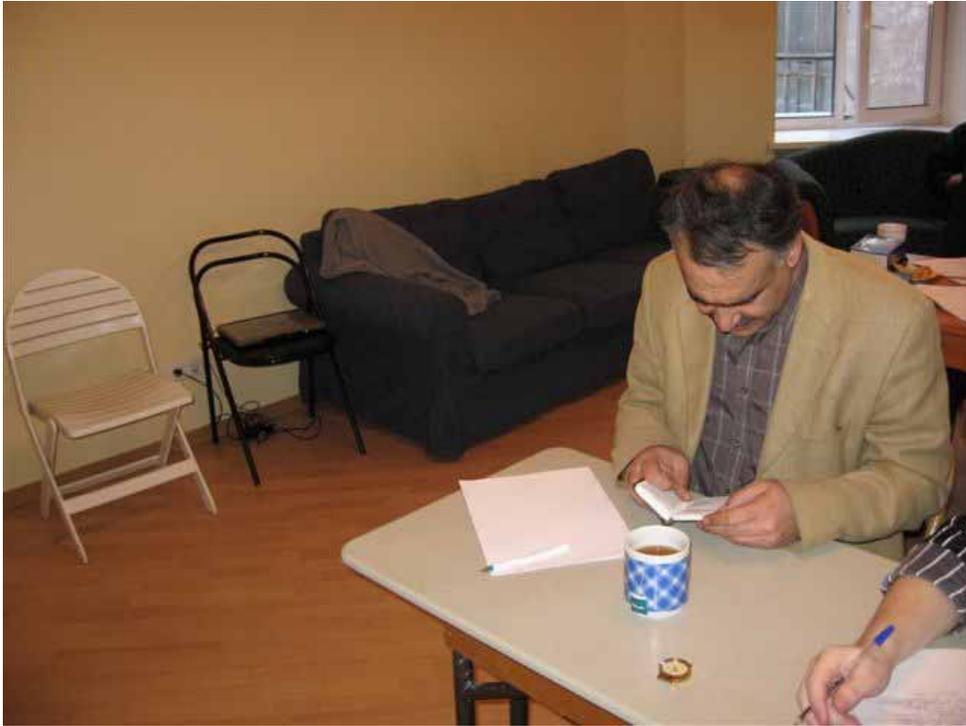
II Corinthians 4:1

Rev. John S. Mahon

Grace Community Int.

Tuymen, Russia (central Siberia)

Tonight it is -28 and clear skies but our hearts are warmed by the Word of God



Picture One



Picture Two



Picture Three



Picture Four