



*Lifeline*

*...a prayer letter from John and Jackie*



June 30, 2005

Dear friends,

Greetings from Ukraine in the Wonderful Name of Jesus!

***In His Presence...***

We have just finished nine days of events surrounding the annual Congress of the Churches of Praise. Four of those days were with the missionaries leading the work in countries other than Ukraine (Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). The Congress itself was five days, with 1200 pastors, church planters and local church leaders present.

The presence of the Lord seemed very strong all these days. The praise and worship was explosive and intense, with several worship teams working together. I opened the Congress with a short message, and felt strongly to have an altar call for repentance. Yes, it was a ministers' conference, but 40-50 people came to the altar for salvation, people who had not given their lives to Christ. They were not the ministers, but people invited to come along, or who just walked in somehow.

Gregory and I gave our good friend Ken Beaudry much of the preaching time. His ministry is not only preaching. He frequently speaks a short word and then just waits... The Holy Spirit begins to come on people in many ways. At times Ken calls up the worship team, or sings a prophecy or sings in tongues, and God's presence falls heavily on people. Some laugh, some collapse, some cry, some just sit quietly, but all seemed to be "caught up with God".

There is a song that says, "...and we are changed in the presence of a Holy God." Somehow, that was the experience of many during these meetings. Some testified to being healed. Many tired ministers were refreshed. Some who felt like quitting received a fresh fire and fresh courage from God.

The theme was Isaiah 43:19: "Look! I am doing something new! Now it will spring forth! Will you not be aware of it? I will make a road in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." Everyone claimed this great promise of God - for themselves, and for their places of ministry. Several of us also preached during the Congress, including the missionaries working in the other countries.

We ordained perhaps thirty people in senior positions of leadership, and perhaps a hundred and fifty as church planting missionaries. These were people who had proved themselves faithful in their ministries, and now it was time to recognize them, affirm them, and lay hands on them for God's blessing.

The Congress was completed by a Sunday celebration in an

outdoor soccer stadium, which lasted from 5 p.m. until 10 p.m. Everyone was invited to this event, including all the Churches of Praise in Krivoy Rog as well as the hundreds of visiting village ministers. Perhaps three thousand people or more were in attendance.

Churches of Praise in Krivoy Rog cancelled their Sunday morning services, and everyone, including the hundreds of visiting village ministers, went into neighborhoods and streets to evangelize and invite people to the stadium meeting. We haven't heard reports of the street ministry, but 106 people came to the altar for salvation at the stadium.

I opened the celebration with a short message, reading Isaiah 61:1-3, which Jesus read at the beginning of His ministry:

*"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me,  
Because the LORD has anointed Me  
To preach good tidings to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives,  
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,  
And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn,  
To console those who mourn in Zion,  
To give them beauty for ashes,  
The oil of joy for mourning,  
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;  
That they may be called trees of righteousness,  
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified."*

I said that Jesus is present with us to do the very same thing today, and then read Psalms 150, which ends with "Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord!!" And that is what we did for two hours, led by five of the strongest worship teams from Churches of Praise - the best singers and musicians I have ever heard anywhere. The stadium exploded with praise and worship. It was a grand celebration indeed!

Ken's message at the stadium was "Reaching Your City for God". He showed God's heart for cities all through the Bible. He gave testimonies of great breakthroughs in his hometown of Elk River, Minnesota, and of his experiences in Argentina where whole cities are being influenced by revival.

After more worship and testimonies, an invitation for healing was given. Hundreds of people came for healing prayer on the soccer field. As they were prayed for, there was a grand display of fireworks! Pastor Gregory had hired professionals to shoot

off fireworks at 9:15 p.m., but he did not know it would happen at the very moment when God's presence was overwhelming people on the field as hands were laid on them for healing! The evening ended with another uproar of explosive praise and exuberant worship!

Our attention was drawn to many friends during the Congress, people whom we have watched grow in the Lord. There are so many with amazing transformations. Jackie reports on just three of them:

***Clava, senior pastor and leader of church planters...***

Clava is sixty years old, a former communist boss and now one of our heroes. A year ago I prayed for her. She had recently been in the hospital with a bad heart, and she had a history of chronic and severe heart problems. She looked tired and discouraged, and we saw dimming spiritual life in her church. I was very concerned for her. In my prayer, I asked God to give her a brand new heart — physical and spiritual. Since last year when I prayed for her, Clava's son Roma, a pastor and church planter, went back to drugs, became very depressed, and then took his own life. She had also been raising the children of her daughter who was in prison. That daughter had come back to God in prison, and became the pastor of the Church of Praise in her prison. Just before Roma died, Clava's daughter was released from prison. Clava, in spite of her own problems, went to oversee church planting in the region where her son had been working, and to help his widow, and to help her daughter.

When I first saw her in the Congress last week, I could hardly believe she was the same woman. It truly appeared that her youth was renewed. She glowed with youthful fervor. She looked gorgeous!

God had turned around the potential devastation of Roma's death into a story of victory! He gave new power to this sickly grandmother and woman of God. Twenty-five new churches have opened in the region where Roma took his life, and a strong team is in place, all led by Clava. Roma's widow and Clava's daughter are also part of the work there, going on strong with the Lord.

***Grandmother apostles...***

One of our favorite sights in the Congress was seeing pastor Clava and pastor Galina (not Gregory's wife, but another hero of ours in the villages) slowly and gently lead a line of village leaders into an amazingly anointed dance. As Clava and Galina came down the aisle hand in hand worshipping the Lord, they took the hands of their village ministers — as if saying, "Follow us as we are following the Spirit". I was overwhelmed as I saw these village people of various ethnic backgrounds, still "rough around the edges", being gracefully led in expressive worship by these two grandmother-apostle-pioneers.

***The former bandit now leads church planters!***

One day, as I walked into the auditorium, I glanced at the platform, and noticed that the worship team consisted of pastors

from various Churches of Praise. I noticed pastor Kola's shining face as he vigorously led the worship, and it swept me into the presence of God. Kola, now an overseeing pastor and church planter, was the bandit who came into Gregory and Galina's apartment a few years ago to rob them. Perhaps you remember our story of his conversion. Now he is taking people back for God whom the devil had stolen! He has become a man of great compassion and kindness.

***Oxana, God's transformed beauty...***

When we first came here twelve years ago, Oxana and her husband had recently been saved from a life of drugs. They led worship in the first daughter church. Now Oxana pastors that church. While in active ministry, her husband went back to drugs. He became unfaithful to her, repeatedly robbed from her and his own children, and stole equipment from the church. They had to separate. Oxana remained steadfast and grew into a pastor. She has established a self-supporting church, which also plants other churches, and she assists Gregory in caring for the whole association of Churches of Praise. During the congress we watched her two beautiful children worshipping the Lord with tender spirits. In addition to her other responsibilities, she is one of the best soloists we've ever heard, has written over eighty songs, and she leads worship like few others. I think that one of her songs, "Ukraine for Christ", will sweep the nation. God has made her beautiful in every way.

***So, don't you quit!!***

Can the Lord totally transform broken lives? Hundreds of testimonies like these say yes, yes, yes. These lives demonstrate why we are "*not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God for (complete) salvation to everyone who believes...!*" Romans 1:16

Even through you may have gone through tragedy or great loss, cling to the Lord and serve Him with all your heart. Like so many lives here proclaim, let this Psalm also be your testimony:

*"He lifted me out of the slimy pit,  
Out of the mud and mire;  
He set my feet on a rock  
And gave me a firm place to stand.  
He put a new song in my mouth,  
A hymn of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear  
And put their trust in the LORD".*  
Psalms 40:2-3

***Thank you...***

We are so very thankful for your friendship, your prayer, and your support of our ministry and the Churches of Praise. Doors for the gospel continue to open, and opportunities are abundant for sowing your seeds of prayer and giving. Thank you for helping us to serve this harvest. We are trusting God to pour back to you the harvest of His presence and His provision.

With love,  
***John and Jackie***