



Go Forth *Missions*

Saying to those who are bound, 'Go forth,'
To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' Isa 49:9

Autumn 2002

Kharkov, Ukraine

- GODNEWS - *Ten Year Anniversary edition*

Greetings Fellow-Citizens in the Kingdom we do not yet see, but believe and wait for,
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from His Son Jesus Christ,

Speaking of the Kingdom of God, did it occur to you that in the Kingdom there are no terrorist activities, and there is never a problem with the economy? Halleluiah!

Ten Long Years, Ten short years

They told me that time would go faster when I got old. Too true. We have been here ten years already. I still recall flying into Moscow on that cold, snowy, dismal day, our daughter Christie's birthday, and Yom Kippur 1992. The strange mix of feelings, anticipation, and apprehension, believing God had a purpose for us, yet wondering if I was crazy (many people think I am, but I have my doubts). Thank God for Pastor Howard Beam and his crew, who came all the way from Kostroma to pick us up. They seemed to light up that dark airport. It is a comfort to have someone there to help, when you are a stranger in a very strange land. They gave us our introduction to missionary life, and it was priceless. Not only were they just great people, but Howard helped me to get rid of a lot of worthless notions that were slowing me down, so I could just get on with the job and do it in the most efficient manner possible. Thanks Howard and Martha.

Well ten years is a long time and a short time. For our kids it has been half of their lives or more, for me it has been the last fifth of a very eventful life. Perhaps this is the reason Annie and John are more committed than we are. But we all love these people dearly; it is one of the things that keep us going.

To be perfectly honest, I recently went through a period where I really wanted to leave and come home to the good old USA. When you start living in a new country at my age, you never really get used to it, hardly a day goes by where I don't miss home. Recently it got into my thinking that maybe we had fulfilled our calling here and it was time to go home, that maybe we would get in the way if we stuck around too long. Not true, but I was thinking that way, a combination of burnout, changes in ministry, and just plain old lust for a better, easier lifestyle. For some reason it got serious. The Lord spoke to me and got me through it. He has given me to these people, and I do not think there is any plan in His mind to change that, so here we stay by the grace of God.

Ten years is a long time if you think in terms of your own life, but Jesus said "he who seeks his life will lose it," so I better be careful I do not fall into that. On the other hand it is really only a very short time if you compare it to the eternal glory that God wants to give each and every one of us. As Jesus went on to say, "If you lose your life for my sake you will find it." Ten years is not even a drop in the bucket of eternity.

Then if we stand back and look at all the fruit that the last ten years has produced, we can only wonder what could be accomplished in ten more years, knowing that in the kingdom of God things tend to multiply! The potential is awesome, so we better go for it. "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples... You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain... John 15:8&16 Thank God!

God's affirmation makes everything worthwhile!

The Lord gave me the most wonderful confirmation and affirmation just last Sunday, showing me again why we are here. We were sharing communion after a powerful word on "Reconciliation with God." During the communion people began to sing about the blood of Jesus, it became a roar. This was not just singing a hymn, these people were pouring out all their hearts and souls. Their love and gratitude was so deep and real it touched the deepest part of my heart, because I knew that God had completely captured their hearts. As they were singing

the Lord began to remind me of whom they were. There were former thieves and prostitutes, as well as good honest people, there were former mistresses and gigolos, and faithful fathers and mothers of families, young people, carefree, and full of hope, old babushkas and dedushkas who have nothing in this world but their faith in Jesus, there were rich businessmen and the homeless, alcoholics, drug addicts, students and teachers, the respectable and the despised, many from the prisons, many who had been delivered from demons, many who had been healed, many who were incurable and terminal, but now whole by the grace of God, those who had had no hope, victims and perpetrators of terrible misdeeds, the fatherless, the divorced, the abused, , the rejected and the broken, those whose lives had been nothing but tragedy till they found Jesus, and a few of the honored and the respected as well, all with one heart, one voice, giving true worship. It was like the roar of the sea. The Lord then reminded me that *not one of them even knew Him ten years ago*. I was undone. He reminded me that had we not come, this would not be. I was broken. How could I think that we were finished, there has to be more like these waiting to be saved. Not that we had done it, I know only too well that He had done it, yet, He always works through someone. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (John 12:24 NASB) Little did we know when we came here what it would cost us, or how much we would die. But little did we know also, how glorious would be the things God would do.

One of our "Village Evangelists" stopped us just last night to tell us the great things God was doing in his life and through him as well. He is sixty-six years old, and yet he travels the countryside in beat-up old car preaching the Gospel and healing the sick. Then he said something that shook me up. He said, every day he thanks God that he sent us here because he knows that he and his family are saved as a result of our coming. To God Be The Glory!

Kharkov, Where is that?

When our little family settled in Kharkov on just a word from God, the teams we came with were gone within a month and we were left alone. We felt so small. We had no connections, we had no organization behind us, it was just us and faith that God said to come. God had not even shown us his plan yet, so it was just a little scary. I remember writing in my planner six months in advance, "If there is no fruit by this date, write to all supporters that they should no longer send support..." We look back now and see God's hand, but we could not see it then. We did have a handful of names from evangelism, but we did not even know the language enough to make follow-up calls, we felt pretty helpless. We enrolled in the university full-time to study the language. At the same time we found one of the guys who had received Christ when we started and he knew just a little English. We asked him to contact people we had met who we had led to the Lord and invite them to a home group. At the same time, to my surprise, others came seeking us out, asking when we were going to start a church? Meanwhile God began to speak to us revealing His plan, little by little. He reminded us of things He had told us before, that still applied, such as making disciples. I was a little perplexed though since I hardly knew anybody yet. Little did I know that a few of them who had started to come around were the ones God had sent.

We started a home group, we started a second, we started doing discipleship, at the same time we were going to the University as full-time students, we were running our tails off and wondering how we would keep going. In addition to that Joanie was home-schooling and showing incredible hospitality to the constant stream of people who were coming by. We often thought that it was Joanie's hospitality that was the primary factor that helped that first group bond together. Of course I was teaching and ministering to them as well. Our lives became a whirlwind as ministry opportunities opened up with individuals, groups, prisons, churches, schools and hospitals. I don't know how we lived through that first year, but at least we were not wondering if anything was going to happen. Soon the meetings in the house became overcrowded and the landlady evicted us. She thought when people repented and their sins were forgiven that the sins remained in the house. I wonder how she thought we could stand to live there? We began to look for a larger place to meet. It was tough, at first we were in a dark, freezing cold building that still had banners up praising Lenin. I was very discouraged, but God was not, and even though we were incredibly uncomfortable, God continued to move in a powerful way.

Is Love the greatest miracle?

After a miserable month we got into a small, nice warm place, but it was overflowing by the third week and we had to move again. God was gracious and led us to a good place that became our "Upper Room." God would visit in such glory and power at times it would amaze us. We filled that place pretty fast and I began to think we

were on a roll, that if we could just find bigger and bigger buildings that our growth would be incredible. God had another plan. By that time we actually had a little group of elders (not very old, but you have to start somewhere). As we counseled together it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us that we should not move, but allow God time to establish us as a spiritual family, and develop a core who would minister together. If we just went on moving and growing we would have a great crowd but we would hardly know who was who. We waited and God made us a family. Most of our leaders are from those early days. Those were exciting times as God knitted us together, and taught us all to flow with the His Spirit, and move in His power, and yet to grow in virtue and the character of Christ, and above all love.

It is one of our greatest joys to see these people love one another. They really love us too. When I see my own lack in this area it, I know it is nothing short of the grace of God. The people here could hardly be characterized as a particularly loving type, but God has formed a real fellowship of love, praise His Holy Name. Actually the people in this area are noted for violence, coldness, greed, adultery, prostitution and hardness; they are rough, harsh, rude, immoral and corrupt. That is, until God gets a hold of them, then they could be characterized as sweet, gentle, loving, creative, compassionate, and passionate about God. How does God do it? It is a wonder.

So we remained for a season in the upper room. I will never forget those days, the atmosphere would become charged with the presence of God and the joy would be explosive. It was very hard to lead meetings in those days, the joy and glory was so great I was afraid to do anything for fear of quenching what the wonderful Holy Spirit was doing. It really did not seem to matter though what we did whether worship or preach or pray, there were waves of glory. I used to always wonder, how can there be so much light in this little room, when there is so much darkness all around. We had certainly found "the treasure buried in the field". We did not keep it to ourselves though, everyone seemed to be sharing the Gospel, and many new people were coming, it was just difficult to know where to put them all.

God just kept coming; signs and wonders became the norm. There were so many healings, miracles, deliverances and so on that people came to expect them. I always wondered how long it could keep going, but thank God, it continues to this day. "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." Rom 11:29.

Growing in Grace and God adding to the church weekly...

When the time was right God moved us on to bigger buildings and numerical growth. As we grew I was afraid we would be like so many other groups I had seen and heard of in Church History that started in a burst of glory, but then things settled down to the usual dynamic that is in most churches. Though I was clueless about what to do, I only hoped God would not withdraw Himself on the one hand and wondered how we could keep going on the other. Things did change, but from glory to glory. Thank God. Our time in the upper room had been characterized by ecstatic joy, unspeakable and full of glory, and by power. There were many powerful healings and deliverances (and some failures as well), as well as just plain explosions of the power of God hitting people and doing all kinds of things, sometimes quite bizarre, usually quite wonderful, always quite interesting even if not always within our comfort zone. We know by the fruit though, and the fruit was good. The things that usually draw the most attention are the healings and the deliverances, but the thing that gives me the most satisfaction looking back on it now is all the changed lives. It was pretty exciting because you never knew quite what was going to happen when you prayed for someone, except you knew God was going to do something.

By the time our pilgrimage had brought us to a large concert hall, I think we must have been experiencing what we see in Scripture when the Priests could not minister because of the Glory. One of the Hebrew words translated glory can mean weight. The Glory of God would come rolling in like waves, and it would often feel like a weight was coming upon you and you could hardly stand, and we certainly found it hard to minister, yet we found we could, but we had to be very sensitive to what the Holy Spirit was directing so as not to quench Him. Many people would just crumble before the Lord; most would just be in rapture and awe, transfixed with His Glory. When we did minister, the anointing was so thick it was both awesome and scary at times. There was still often great joy, but it often moved into deep worship, Glory and awe. During this time, God was speaking a lot of things to a lot of people, but the main thing seemed to be the love of God. This in turn brought us to new levels of worship. And that for me is the best of all. If God can use me to take people who were completely without God, and some who were enemies of God, nearly all of them children of people who styled themselves as enemies of God, and make them into true worshippers, then I am satisfied. "*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*" John 4:23 What the Father seeks He is finding here. This above all else is what gives me satisfaction, fulfillment, and joy, when I can stand and hear those voices lifted up to God. Those who never knew Him, worshipping Him with pure hearts, burning with gratitude, giving glory and honor to Him who alone is worthy. Why here, of all places, I cannot imagine, but

I sure am glad we were called to be here when He did it. As I heard their worship, and knew that we had actually had a hand in making enemies of God into true worshippers, my heart just broke as I worshipped and wept. And not only were they worshipping, but they were partaking of Christ, making covenant, becoming partakers of His Body and His Blood, truly and fully His. Was it worth ten years, it was worth any amount of years and to God be the glory that it happened so quickly. I will never cease to give him praise for His great mercy and grace; I will never cease to worship Him for being the Savior of men.

Thanks be... To you too!

As I said, we know it is God working in us, but we know He works through people in this great covenant of love that He is creating. Were it not for you whom God worked through to faithfully support us over the years, how could we have done our part? Not only has it supplied our needs, just to enable us to be here, but it has financed the evangelism that wins souls, provides the equipment through which we can lead people into worship, provides the transportation to go to so many places, the materials to nurture the new babies in Christ, the food for the poor, medicine for those who do not get healed supernaturally, housing for the homeless, a variety of things for the street kids, daily bread for all the many workers in all the kingdom projects we are doing, and so on.

We are certainly partners together in this thing. If we were not here, you could not be a part of this harvest, and if you were not there supporting us, we could not be a part of it. Glory to God! Thank you so very much, we deeply appreciate you, and all that you have done. I believe we will share in the rewards together.

Divine appointment in a Taxi...

Before I could send this off, God set something up that really touched us today. Joanie and Annie needed a ride home from a Doctors appointment with Sarah, and no one was available to pick them up, so they took a taxi. Their conversation with the driver started with him making the usual complaints about the state of the economy and taxes and politics etc here. But as he went on he began to talk about some good things, one of which he said was the new churches starting. He proceeded to tell them about the wonderful church that used to meet in the building we were kicked out of last Christmas. He spoke about the American family, who started the church that came here with their children; how they ought to put up a monument to them (he said this, I didn't). He went on about all the good the church does and all the people it helps, how wonderful it is to get there and how the young people gather there in large numbers. He told of his colleague being healed there and the time he was standing in the back when his knees just buckled under him and the most wonderful feeling came on him. He related how there was no heat in the building, but they set up a big heater, but then that they got kicked out, and where they moved to, and then he said he lost track of them and could not find them. Joanie and Annie just sat in the back of the car and kept looking at each other. Finally they said, "We think you are talking about us." He said is your husband's name Bill? So they told him where we are now and gave him a ticket to the Alpha course. God sure has His ways of encouraging us doesn't He.

We want to encourage you as well, who are partakers with us. *We just want to say thanks*, rather than talk about needs this time, May God meet you in ways you have not yet known Him, may His Father's love become a living reality to you, may you become more aware than ever of the great gift you have received in Jesus Christ, and may a new level of love be poured into you by the Holy Spirit, wonderful one, who will be with us forever, all through Jesus Christ our Glorious Lord, Master, brother and friend. Amen and Amen. Hallelujah!!! To God be the Glory!

Love in Jesus,
Bill, Joanie, Annie, John and Tanya, Christi, and Sarah

P.S. Please check out our Web page, www.go-forth.net, that our blessed brother Keith Kramis so graciously put together for us. He has done a beautiful job. We will try to get pictures up there to coincide with each newsletter.

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