



Go Forth Missions

Saying to those who are bound, 'Go forth,' To those who are in darkness, be free.' Isa

Summer 2003

Kharkov, Ukraine

“Have You Heard the God News”

Beloved of the Lord,

Grace *and* **Peace to you** in our Lord Jesus Christ, the wellspring of life and peace.

Recently we have been able to keep up on world news more than we did the first few years here, when we were in an information vacuum, which by the way, was not nearly as bad as us over-informed Americans might think. It is apparent that there is not much good news reported. In fact if we went by the news it would appear that things are so bad that it is hard to see why everyone has not already repented - out of fear. “Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; ...Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” Luke 21:25, 26

But as the world busies itself with hurrying down the road to destruction, we have peace it is not generated by events, or is it affected by them, it is not dependant on the economy, or is it lessened by terrorist activities. Our security is in eternal places with the eternal one.

Peace in Israel?

An interesting example of God's peace for God's people is connected to recent events in Israel. We recently started sending people to minister in Israel as the Lord told us we would do. We have two brothers there right now in fact, Igor Ivanoff our worship leader, part of our Pastoral team, and a businessman from our church, who was the only other one who could get a visa. What is interesting is this- the last time they were there, for about three weeks, there was not one terrorist act during the whole time they were there, which is what they prayed for. When they left Israel it started up again. This time just before they flew to Israel, a truce started. I am interested to see if it continues till the end of their trip or longer. I am not yet drawing conclusions from this, but I do think it is interesting. Our two brothers and their families are feeling that it is definitely the God of Peace at work, doing what man can not do. This is something we have noticed many times, where the children of God are, even in the midst of catastrophe and danger there seems to be special care and peace surrounding them. So whatever the news says, we will be fine if we believe, for....

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea...

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved, He uttered his voice, the earth melted.

7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Psa 46:1-7

Bad can be good sometimes...

These are times for believers to seek him while he may be found.

The Good news is that all the bad news makes people open up to eternal things. "A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb, But to a hungry soul every bitter thing *is* sweet." Prov 27:7 People here remain incredibly open to God, due to the fact that there is so much trouble in their lives and the fact that they were kept back from God for so long. Like a couple of our neighbors who were

card-carrying party members, elite in the old system here. The wife was in bed for a few days, and in great pain. Unfortunately, they could not treat her. Joanie said to her husband, "I will come and pray for her." He got a strange look, but did not say no. It turns out he has a double degree, one of them was in "Marxism, and Darwinism", which you could translate "Atheism". Joanie prayed for the woman and she was up and around. We checked back after a few days and she was still fine. Over the couple years we have known them we have always noticed that the man has a visible reaction every time we talk about God, now we know why. But God's mercy does not stop at the door of the Atheist, if they open the door He will come in. And when Jesus comes in healing comes with him. We are hoping salvation is not far behind for this couple.

Not that we enjoy living in the midst of trouble. We miss the good life in America and get exasperated at how difficult things can be here. But if trouble will get people saved, then let it be. Our destiny is in the Kingdom of God, so what if we lose some things here. As a matter of fact we have lost a lot lately in terms of things, but we have already gained a heavenly treasure that cannot be lost, stolen, or lose its value in the stock market, Amen!. Halleluiah!!

The Baddest Bandit

We just had another mass baptism yesterday, and as always it brought things into focus. Baptisms are one of the wonderful times when we can see the fruit of our labors. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16) When you stand there watching these people all going down into the water and coming up "Saved" for certain, names written in heaven, and a big smile on their face, well, there ain't nothin' like it. It just makes you feel good all over.

We always make it a big event, we go to a public beach, have a big picnic, play games, swim, and just hang out together, but the highlights are the baptism itself and all the cool stories you hear about peoples lives. God seems to specialize in scraping the bottom of society into His Kingdom, at least in our work He does.

My favorite this time was a rough, very cool acting guy whose once handsome face was covered with long scars. He had been a boxer who, I am told, became one of the most notorious bandits in our city. Then he fell into drugs. When he was near death, he cried to God and made a promise. When God did in fact rescue him, he came looking for Armen, one of our pastoral team, who himself had been a boxer, a bandit and a criminal in the Soviet days, but now serves Jesus with the same zeal he served sin. He asked, "Armen, what should I do, I made a promise to God." Armen shared the Gospel with him, led him to Christ and began to disciple him. God knows what His plans are for this man, but one thing we know, He has "delivered *him* from the power of darkness, and hath translated *him* into the kingdom of his dear Son:" (Col 1:13) Every baptism has its particular flavor. This one stood out in my mind as the one characterized by scarred and wounded people.

The broken making others whole...

It is just a treat at these times to wander around and watch all the home group leaders taking care of their new converts, hovering over them like chickens with new chicks. All of them have this funny proud look as they care for their new ones. Some of course want to show off a little. One girl who I must have prayed for at least a hundred times, for the usual problems of someone coming out of a family background of witchcraft and magic, wanted to show off the new believers from her home village who had just gotten baptized that day. I had wondered who they were because I could not recall leading them to Christ myself. I realized it was because they came to Christ in the village ministry. One of the things I love, that I have learned over the

years, is that it really does not matter about how great a person's struggles are, and where they are in the process of working out their own salvation, they can still help a lot of others find the way just by getting up and doing something for the Kingdom of God. I truly believe when the whole church, the Body of Christ on earth gets up and just starts doing what Jesus said, regardless of their own personal condition and circumstances, it will turn the whole world upside down (again). The world will continue fussing around trying to fix itself right up to the end, but we know the ONLY solution, the Gospel of Christ.

Another home group leader was bubbling to me about how wonderful it was to have new believers to care for. Another, one of the Intercessors, came bragging about her spiritual grandchildren, who were brought to be baptized by Valya and Egor the couple who are starting a ministry within our church dedicated to setting the alcoholics and drug addicts free. Part of the mandate God gave us from Luke 4:18 and Isaiah 61. "To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound." She was so proud of the fact that Valya who she had nurtured and supported with prayer and counsel almost daily for years, was now co-leading this new ministry with her husband, and having more fruit than herself. Valya on the other hand was going on about how she could not have made it without Tanya.

Tackling the NO. 1 Problem in this country ...

Joanie wrote down Egor and Valya's testimony:

We are so proud and happy to announce a new ministry that has sprung up in our church. One of the most joyful and fulfilling experiences in my life is to see your children grown up and doing the works of Jesus. Many of the 'children' who have grown up in our church are now moving out into ministry where the Lord is leading them. "...THIS is wonderful in our eyes..." "It is refreshing to see people who previously were so broken and destroyed rising up from the 'dung hill' and reaching toward the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus!!!!

Valya and Egor are some of those people. As so often here, this started from miraculous beginnings!! Ukrainians are people of faith, which then takes them into miracles, and often ministries follow. It seems to me this is God's way. Everything about Jesus, His birth, life, ministry and death and resurrection was miraculous- we follow Him, He is our model!

Valya experienced a miracle. Yuri Kobetz prayed for her after a complicated operation having to do with female problems. She was incapable of sitting up, standing or lifting anything and was told would be in that position for a number of months. After prayer though she was instantaneously healed! While she was suffering from her medical problems, her husband, a long time alcoholic, was in the hospital about ready to lose his hand. Valya was at her wit's end after 40 years of living with her alcoholic husband, so she cried out to God. She realized that if God could heal me, surely he could heal my husband! Thus began her and her husband's trek of faith and miracles (with the help of Tanya the intercessor).

Valya, is full of faith. She sees potential and beauty in everyone, even the dirtiest, smelly drunk. She said of herself that she went through extreme trials with bitterness and lack of forgiveness toward her husband, then learned to love him, with God's love, regardless of his behavior. She herself is an architect and Egor was a pilot. They were respected people in the old system, but all the same alcoholism ate up their lives like an evil cancer.

Egor received a lot of care from Yuri who himself used to drink 'buckets of vodka'. Egor says, "Only alcoholics understand other alcoholics". Although many alcoholics and drug addicts have been miraculously and instantly delivered in our work here as Yuri was, many others struggle, so we knew we needed a program as well as the miracles. We believe in doing as much as we can through the supernatural power of God, *and* as much as we can through any other Godly means we can find. Egor and Valya went through a great program it and then came

back to start it in our church. This program works first with the wives and mothers (which in this culture are not just co-dependant they could be termed co-supportive), then deal with the alcoholic. The program is based on the Bible and the power of faith through prayer and God's love. It is incredibly successful. An Italian Alcoholism Specialist told Bill that the Soviet Alcoholism has resisted all programs. But the power of God is working!

Valya and Egor have been using church office space to hold their meetings and prayer meetings, but already it is too small. Since Bill and the elders laid hands on them are already too busy to work their jobs, so they too will need funding. I feel they are well worth investing in, they are totally dedicated to helping alcoholics even inviting them to spend the night in their apartment to receive care and lots of prayer. They are both on fire and going for it in the Lord.

The villages, lost in a sea of Alcoholism

Valya and Egor were our special guests in my village ministry where alcoholism is at its most extreme. We minister (or try to) to drunks there that are literally dying from siroccos of the liver and consequently their bellies get extended like a pregnant lady at 8 months. We have drunks that are so bad swarms of flies hover around them. One Grandma who has gotten saved with us cares for her paralyzed bed-ridden husband now for 4 years who literally paralyzed himself by drinking poison.

Into this setting enter Egor and Valya; we did an open-air meeting right there in front of their apartments (many of which have neither heat, electricity nor running water). People listened to Egor tell his testimony and Valya share. I did an altar call and 5 or 6 ladies, half of which were alcoholics accepted the Lord. The men would not come out to listen. The geese gathered across the alley and the kids sat and played in my car (a big deal to sit in a real car), a young kid sat on his bike and listened the whole time- curious. A couple motorcyclists buzzed through our meeting which obliged the old folks to scold them. Personally I have only met one non-drinking man in this entire village, he is a Baptist. To the typical Soviet man, how much vodka you can gulp down and retain your composure is a sign of true male strength. If you would like to help in any way with this project I am sure the Lord will richly bless you.

Coming to the USA

I just wish I had time to tell you of so many more great things the Lord is doing, like this one. A brother who had been witnessing for some time to a neighbor lady felt led to call and tell her to repent using a very rough Russian expression. He struggled with it but finally did what he thought the Lord said. He called and said, "When are you going to stop acting as stupid as a whipped goat, and repent." There was a long silence on the line, then the woman said, "Last night I had a dream and you came up to me and said, "when are you going to stop acting as stupid as a whipped goat, and repent." She wept and repented at that very moment. I like God's supernatural sense of humor, I do not think any of us could have thought of this one.

A final **important note**. It has been a very long time since I have actively itinerated in the USA and visited new churches, or many of the ones who helped us get started. Some friends were gently encouraging me that it was time to get to the States and face to face with folks what God is doing. It seems to be the right time, so if any of you would like to ask your Pastor or your home group leader if they would like us to come and share that would be great.

We deeply appreciate your prayers and your financial support without which we could not do near what we are doing.

**Grace, mercy and love to you in Our Lord Jesus Christ,
Bill, Joanie, and Family**