

Galya

For seventy long years, Russia was under communist rule. It was considered a criminal offence to own a Bible or attend a meeting where the Bible was taught. Any who were caught breaking these laws were sent to harsh labour camps in Siberia, and often were never seen nor heard from again.

After decades of suffering under the philosophies of Lenin, the cruelties of Stalin, and the economical disastrous five-year plans of Khrushchev, a new leader came to power in March 1985. Mikhail Gorbachev introduced major political reforms including freedom of religion. For the first time in many years it was possible to visit Russia to preach the gospel and distribute the Word of God.

In Rusinski, it was a cool summer morning in 1992, but this was normal since the village was only three degrees latitude south of the Arctic Circle. Galya looked out of the dirty window across the yard. It was a quiet Sunday morning, but her mind was anything but quiet.

Is there a God? Can he make Himself known? How?”

She reflected on her twelve years of work as the administrator of a school for kindergarten classes. “Is this all there is? What is the purpose of life?”

As a child, her teachers had drilled into her mind, “There is no God.” But some believed otherwise. Many of the villagers were natives, similar to the Inuit of North America. Every year they made animal sacrifices for their sins to their gods. Galya wondered about these things.

For more than ten years, the prayer of Galya’s heart had been, “O God, if You exist, please make Yourself known to me.” Very recently she had also prayed, “O God, if You are there, I want You to come to me and never leave me.” Her tangled thoughts went back over the weary roads of the past years. Her husband had left her two years ago. She had raised their daughter alone, but she, too, had been a disappointment.

Her trembling heart spoke heavenward again. “If there is any such thing as a God, then this is the day I want to know You.” She grappled with the decision that had formed itself in her mind. “If there is no proof of God by the end of today, I will end my life.”

A sincere prayer went heavenward. The iron curtain of oppression and communist philosophy couldn’t block it. All the darkness of a nation that had dismissed God for seventy years couldn’t quench it. {moscolumnbreak}

Outside, the Hante-Mante natives in their brightly colored coats walked past to check on some reindeer. Little children began to move in the streets. Down the road a couple of strangers were walking. Americans. Never before had such foreigners set foot here. To each home they brought a little gift. People looked at the cover and hesitated for just a moment as they read “The New Testament of the Holy Bible.” They remembered that not long ago it had been a crime to hold just a page of this book.

Galya went to take some clothes off a line. She had her back to the stranger when he touched her. She turned suddenly, a little startled, as she looked up at his warm smile.

He spoke in simple Russian, "Par dar ek" (Here is a gift for you).

Her mind began to spin. "A gift? In Russia? From a stranger who can actually smile in this bleak land? What is this?" She carefully took the book. Warm tears filled her eyes as she read the words, "The Holy Bible."

Gesturing with her hands, she invited him to her home. The stranger, along with his interpreter, went with her and spread out the Two Roads and Two Destinies chart (see pages 12-13), the simplified illustration of the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

They poured into her thirsty heart the story of the One who said, "I am the Door" (John 10:9). "The Lord Jesus died on the cross for our sins," they told her. "Now He tells us to come to Him and believe He died for us personally." She could hardly believe such news. She realized that God had been watching her. He had heard her prayer to the "unknown God."

"My burden is gone," she said as she trusted the Saviour. "This is the first time I have heard that sins could be forgiven." As they left, they pointed her to the verse, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

She gasped as she remembered the words of her prayer. "Never leave me? Could it really be? God has heard my cry."

To Siberia with Bibles by L. Smith and D Yade

INSERT: "Oh God, if You are there, I want you to come to me and never leave me."