

18 September, 2022



This is not “YOUR” usual mission report. Typically missionaries go abroad and upon their return share many life stories encountered... the atrocities... depravity... and hopelessness in the world. In contrast, I thought you might want to hear for yourself (with permission) from someone who is doing all they can do to help those around them... herself and family a victim of an aggressive despot that has no sense of human worth... a dictator who knows not God.

Some background; I first met Sveta in April... where she, her husband Pasha, and daughter Katya escaped to western Ukraine. Unfortunately, Katya’s newlywed husband Zhenya was sent to the war front. Here is her story; a long but insightful story that is best left in her words.

“More than 200 days have already passed since the beginning of the war. When it started, we had no idea that it could last so long. And no one believed that Ukraine would hold on.

When Pasha was given a 3-month reprieve from the army, I had no doubt that this was more than enough. I was sure that he would not be taken to the war, because the war definitely cannot last more than three months.

A week passed, then a month... We waited for victory every day. Then there was Bucha, Irpin and other cities...ε

Then we waited for the victory at Easter. But victory was not there. Then we waited on May 9. But again she did not come... We knew our front-line soldiers were completely without ammunition. Everything that was had already ended. Therefore, they could only believe in a miracle.

“It is so painful to understand that someone just wants to kill you, your people, destroy your country... that someone hates you without reason.”

Then Mariupol, captivity, Kherson, Kharkiv, Azovstal... When we were promised a Lend Lease in May, we were happy because we were sure that if our defenders had enough weapons, we would surely win soon. They started supplying us with weapons. But this is not yet a Lend Lease. It will only work in the Fall. How about Autumn? Why do we need weapons in the Fall, when we have victory soon? If weapons will be supplied only in the Fall, does this mean that there will be a war by the Fall? Weapons began to be delivered, but it was not enough to win.

It is so painful to understand that someone just wants to kill you, your people, destroy your country... that someone hates you without reason.

It was so painful to hear politicians from different countries, some for giving weapons, others against. And at this time, our people are dying, and cities are being destroyed... Every day of the war is the loss of our people. And people who went to the front to fight were not soldiers;

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there were scientists and entrepreneurs, musicians and teachers. And, barely armed, they faced a cruel huge army... many of them we no longer have... Many of them will not return...

And so all 200 days. When they expected victory - there was none... When they expected nothing - there were brutal shelling of peaceful places. Every holiday, every official meeting of the leaders of the countries or news about aid to Ukraine is both joy and excitement, because you know that there will be provocations and shelling, but this time you don't know what to expect. When our military had some success, we rejoiced, but we did not sleep at night because there were sirens every night. They took revenge on the civilian population.

New threats that Belarus will attack us. Training near our borders... Frequent flights of enemy aircraft from the side of the border... then the threat of a nuclear strike... the shelling of the power plant... We had Chernobyl... and now, it could be even worse...

Then on the day of our independence, we believed that there would be victory... But again, no... Instead of victory, martial law was extended, and mobilization continued until November.

And you seem to die and rise again every day... You leave home and you don't know if you will return.

“...you seem to die and rise again every day... You leave home and you don't know if you will return.”

Every morning, if I was able to sleep at night, starts with checking the family chat. Thank God, everyone is alive! And if you don't hear nothing from Zhenya, you start looking in the news where there was shelling at night. Every notification on the phone -you don't know what to expect. It can be both terrible and pleasant news. And you seem to die and rise again every day... You leave home and you don't know if you will return. It is especially difficult when the girls are not at home, when the siren sounds. When the siren is in Lviv and you can't get through to Katya.

Among my acquaintances there are people in captivity, there are missing people... There are wounded and there are killed... And the longer the war goes on, the more there are. In Mariupol alone, 90,000 civilians were officially killed and died. These are more than 2 cities of Yellow Waters that simply no longer exist... Not counting other cities, not counting how many were forced to leave for Russia, how many disappeared and about whom no one knows anymore... Someone will spend his whole life waiting for his relatives and will never find out the truth...

I am not talking about those who left for Europe or the USA. How many of them will not return. It is good if they are there as a whole family. But many men stayed here. How many divorces will there be... How many husbands will not wait for their wives...

The war brought a lot of pain and wounds not only from shells...

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“...if they do not take away my husband, then they will take away husband from another wife?”

The longer the war goes on, the more soldiers die, the more wounded, the more men will be forced to go to war... And this is what doesn't give me peace... I believe and proclaim that my husband will not be taken away... But if they do not take away my husband, then they will take away husband from another wife? She also does not want her husband to be taken away!!! Just thinking about it makes me feel hot. Am I selfish? How to pray? What to believe?

There are no good answers. There are many questions in the head... This is only a small part of the worries. The struggle is happening every minute... It's like it's not happening to you... It's like living in parallel worlds, in a parallel reality. On the one hand, Kyiv now calm. You can live as before, but you can't... because you know that your son-in-law is on the front line, that people are dying and there is a war going on somewhere...

And the most difficult thing is that you don't know when it will all end. Now our military is succeeding, returning the occupied cities and villages. And you should be happy, but you can't, because you know the price... Every victory is someone's life... Someone will pay a very high price for this victory... Will the enemy stop when we drive them out of Ukraine? Will they not continue to shell our cities and villages? The more they lose in battle, the more they start shelling peaceful cities and the civilian population. They are destroying our infrastructure. They damage power plants, water supply, etc. Now there is a lot of shelling in the area where my older sister lives. Forecasts are very different. Someone says that the war will last more than one year. There are a lot of sirens now. At this time, transport and shops are closed. Children at school go to the basement. There were 3 sirens today. We lose almost 3 hours a day. Vika and I have not been able to get to the hospital for several days. Because as the siren calls, doctors are not working. But it's not really scary. It's scarier to live where people are just being killed every day. How to find a balance between faith and reality? We all believed for 200 days that victory was about to happen. How to continue to believe in victory, and at the same time be able to live in the realities of war?

But you have to live. And it's not just to live... You have to work, help others. There are many people who need our help, who have a harder time than us.

I recently listened to a sermon. There were several thoughts that inspired me. "When you are going through dark times you must remember what was said in the light."

“We will not be able to win by ourselves. We need not only a military Lend Lease, but also a spiritual one. Therefore, we strongly ask you, your friends and your churches to continue the struggle together with us. I know that everyone is already tired of the war and everyone has their own life and problems. But we really need your prayers.”

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It is very easy now to become depressed, lose faith, or lose your mind altogether. Because without God it is very difficult to see your future now. But before the war, God spoke a lot about Ukraine, about our future. And war does not annul God's promises. We must hold on to what God spoke and promised us before the war. I believe that God has a great future for Ukraine. God will help build a free and happy country. Therefore, now the devil wants to destroy God's plan through Russia. And now, when we are going through the darkness, we must remember and hold on to what was promised to us by God before the war. He did not change his word and promise. Everything that He promised - He will fulfill. And now this war is very difficult. But war does not just walk in the physical world. It goes much more in the spiritual world.

Ukraine has always been a spiritual source for Russia. At one time, many missionaries from Ukraine went to Russia. I don't know the exact statistics, but I think that more than 50% of the pastors there are from Ukraine, who left for Russia back in the 90s. I know many people who served in Russia. At the age of 19, I myself went to Siberia for 1.5 years as a missionary (it is more than 3000 km from my home). And then for 10 years, every summer we came there for 2-3 weeks with a large missionary team and served there in villages, prisons, children's camps. Unfortunately, there is no such freedom in Russia now for Christians, they have not left the idea of communism. Unfortunately, the Christians of Russia did not raise their voice for Ukraine, against the war. Therefore, a spiritual battle is going on in parallel with the physical war. And it is very important to win on two fronts.

I remember the history of the Israeli people. When they fought the Amalekites and Moses raised his hands - Israel was victorious. When he lowered it, the Amalekites prevailed. And when Moses' hands got tired, he sat down and Aaron and or supported his hands.

Victory now depends on our prayers. And we are very tired. We are exhausted, confused, some have despaired, some have experienced a great loss, seen death or experienced torture. Therefore, we really need those who will support our hands... We will not be able to win by ourselves. We need not only a military Lend Lease, but also a spiritual one. Therefore, we strongly ask you, your friends and your churches to continue the struggle together with us. I know that everyone is already tired of the war and everyone has their own life and problems. But we really need your prayers.

We need more than just victory. You can't even imagine how much everything has been destroyed in our country now. There are villages that have already been almost completely destroyed. There is no electricity, gas, water. And winter is ahead. Even in Kyiv, the light often goes out now. Therefore, we are looking for ways to prepare for winter, what to buy so as not to be without electricity and heating.

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Zhenya sent a video of the villages that had already been liberated. Almost everything was destroyed there. And in addition to the victory that we are so waiting for, so much more will have to be built and restored. But now the most important thing is to win.

I know that many miracles have already happened. We saw a lot of miracles in our lives during the war. It is very difficult for us. But we believe that despite all the horrors and problems, we will remember this time as a time of God's incredible miracles and blessings. Of course, we will remember everything we went through. But there will be miracles and blessings many more. Thank you so much for your prayers for our family. God protects Zhenya and the soldiers who are next to him, and this is truly a miracle of God. Please continue to pray for him. Now the situation at the front is changing very quickly. Therefore, we do not always know where he is now. But thank God that every day there is a connection with him. But every minute they are in dangerous situations.

Pasha and I continue to serve where we can. We believe in God's order in everything. No matter what happens now, we are one day closer to victory.

Thank you for your prayers.”