



I Was There
Stories From the Frontline
By
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Dangerous Road

One day my friend Sergei Kosyak called me and said that Krasnogorivka had been heavily shelled for several days in a row. People hid in basements and cellars. A car with bread and other products wouldn't arrive in the city for several days. People are panicking, there is no food, no bread.

"Can you now go to Krasnogorovka with bread?" asked Sergei. "People have been without bread for several days now, and you and your team could help them in their time of great need.

The road to Krasnogorovka people call "the road of death " as to drive through it was a question of death and live. "My van is junk," I answered. "It doesn't go faster than forty km. (25 miles) per hour, no matter how much I step on the gas. I don't know what is the matter with it, but I'm just now going to take the van in for repair."

- My friend replied, "It's a pity. I have contacted everybody I can think of, but no one can go there. You were my last hope."

- "OK then," I said, "let's pray". Although I knew the decision was already made.

I must go. Let the road take three to four times longer, but I have to go.

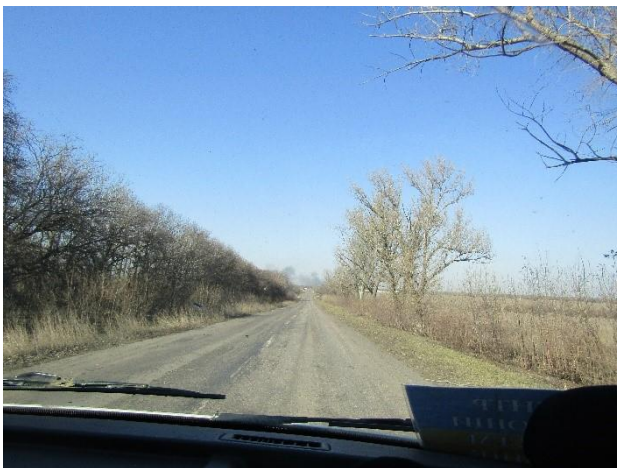
We loaded our van with bread, Christian literature, and other items collected by members of the local church, and I prayed: "God! We are going to fulfill Your will to bring food to the afflicted. Everything is under your control. Make it so that we can bring this bread to the residents of Krasnohorivka, who are in great need of it now, with our van."



With this prayer came some kind of confidence that it was really necessary to go, and that God would arrange everything. With confidence came peace from the Lord, which is unmistakable. And that was a good sign. I love prayers immensely when you know for sure after praying that the Lord has heard you. This is not a voice from heaven, nor a clear answer. This is the confidence that the Lord Himself will be with you and arrange everything as He pleases.



And now I'm going. I'm not going by myself, but the Lord leads me with His presence. Average speed of the van is from 20 km. (12 mph) going up the mountain to I up to 50 km (31 mph) going down the mountain. I would like to get to Kurakhove before dark, so that early in the morning together with my Kurakhove team: including my brother Vyacheslav and his wife Lyuba. Then we will all go to Krasnogradivka.



There is another problem that I don't want to think about. But it won't resolve by itself. The fact is that the section of the road from Marinka to Krasnogradivka is being fired upon by snipers according to the information we have received, and now this road has become even more dangerous. Every time I had to pass this section of the road, I tried to squeeze out the maximum speed from my old minibus: 110 km./68 mile per hour. Our military friends say that at this speed, the sniper has a minimal chance of accurately hitting us. Therefore, at an average speed of 40 km./25 mph, we become a very good target for a sniper.

We just had to pray again before coming to this dangerous stretch of the road and trust the Lord:

- Lord Jesus Christ! We must go. People are waiting for bread. For them, this bread is a testament to God's love of the Father, who loves them and never leaves them in trouble. We trust in Your hands, Lord!

And now, we are approaching this section of the road. The amazing thing is that there is no one in our van is afraid. There is still confidence that the Lord is with us. All I understand is that He is near and will not leave us.

I carefully look at the speedometer. My reaction is heard by the whole team:

- No, that can't be...

On the speedometer, the arrow froze at around 110 km./68 mph. At this safe speed, we fly all the way through the sniper fire without being hit. That time the sniper didn't reach us. We could not hear the sound of the bullets as the old van was so noisy.

In this area, there was constant sniper fire. Many people had suffered there, both soldiers and civilians.

There is no time to think about what happened. When we stopped, people were running towards us. They rejoiced at fresh bread and thank God for taking care of them.

We were then sent to drive to where people are hiding from the shelling. We again distributed bread, blessed everyone in the name of Jesus Christ, pray that God will keep them and protect them. People don't stay long. There may be a shelling at any moment, and they want to return to their hiding places as soon as possible. We can't talk to everyone. But looking into people's eyes, you can read endless stories of suffering, grief and fear. I remember all those eyes when I come home. I cannot fall asleep for a long time, seeing all these eyes in front of me, eyes full of unspeakable human suffering. How much the Lord wants to embrace and comfort all these people who, against their will, fell into this trouble. And how glad the Lord is when He can do this through us, His servants.



We gave away all the bread and everything we had, although we went to only in a few places. Surely, some were left without bread this time. This thought will not give us peace until we return here again with bread and other products that we will buy for the next trip.



On Facebook, after one of our first trips to the war zone, I wrote words that, it seemed to me, that fully reflect our state of mind, soul and body:

“I returned from the front line only with my body, but my soul remained where people need God, and where our help is needed.”



We are once again returning back from Krasnohorivka to Kurakhove. We need to drive through the same area where snipers wait to fire on us. By God's grace, we flew at the maximum safe speed, again at 110 km/ 68mph. What will happen now? In any case, we need to go. The most terrible section of the road is ahead of us. I press on the gas with all my strength and with a trembling heart I glance at the speedometer. The arrow creeps up rapidly and freezes at around 110 km./68 mph once again. Once again, God showed us His miracle.

“Thank God,” - gratitude swells out from my heart.

It seems that the Lord has done a miracle with our van. We drove the entire dangerous section of the road at the speed limit for us. Now we drive into a settlement where the snipers can no longer reach us. I reach an intersection and slow down in front of a sign. Then I step on the gas to drive at a speed limit of 50-60 km./31-37 mph. But the van doesn't listen to me. All I can squeeze out of it is 40 km./25 mph.

With this maximum speed, I drove the rest of the road to Kurakhove, and the next day another 250 km/155 miles home to Pereschepine.

It is still a mystery to me why things happened the way they did. Our van had a serious mechanical problem and it didn't go away. But I am quite sure that there, on the road of death, God showed us His miracle, of which we were witnesses, and now we can tell many people about.

The miracles of God do not stop, and His mercy to us never stops. Praise God that He draws us near and that we can be where He shows us the miracles of His love!

Bread of life

There is something mysterious in the ministry when we distribute bread to people on the front-line towns and villages. A feeling of unusual joy and at the same time the presence of the Lord Himself accompanies us throughout the whole day of the service. Wherever we stop, and no matter how many different people come up to us, we - our whole team somehow realizes deep in our hearts that we are doing God's work, and that the Lord is right here with us.

At first, I never spoke to anyone on our team about these experiences. In the team for many years of ministry (now about seven years of service) there were quite a lot of different people and ministers. But almost without exception, everyone told me about this special experience. This was first reported to me by our friend Ronald Keith Daniel, a missionary from South Africa who now lives and works in Ukraine. He has been traveling with us on missions to frontline towns and villages since 2015. It was him who first formulated his observations during his ministry:

‘Gennadiy, I am absolutely sure that the Lord Jesus is present in this service of bread. His presence is so obvious that my heart overflows with joy. Do you remember Jesus Christ said in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life." He is really here now, both giving spiritual and physical bread. He wants to give of Himself here, in this place, to these war-torn people.’

Then many more ministers who were with us in the service helping those in need, who shared similar thoughts with me.

It really happens this way when we come to serve people who live in constant fear of never-ending shelling, and who can only be comforted by the Lord with His unchanging love. Together with bread, we give people Christian literature, or the magazine "Faith and Life", or "The Path", with which we were generously blessed by the mission "Light in the East".

I have spoken about this many times and will not stop saying that it is difficult to find such a thirst for spiritual food as it is now in the frontline Donbass region than anywhere else in Ukraine. How sad it is to say this, but the impetus for this desire for spiritual truth happened with the war with its troubles and grief.

I remember once again we came with bread and Christian magazines to the frontline. We stopped on one of the streets of Maryinka, which looks with its vegetable gardens directly onto the territory of the occupied Donetsk. We signaled, and people already know what this signal means: Christians have come to them with food and necessary items.

On this day, the chaotic shooting from both sides did not stop. Just at the time when we drove up, the shelling intensified and it became more and more dangerous to be there. We knew that people had been sitting in their cellars here for a long time and had definitely not seen bread for several days. For this reason, we decide to stay here and serve the people.

After we signaled, people began to leave their shelters and approach us. Bread, fresh bread, is here, it is so close.



I will never forget how the first, an elderly man stepped quickly towards us. Looking at him, I thought:

Poor old man. He probably hasn't eaten for several days. When I greeted him and handed him a loaf of bread, he, without even looking at it, looked fixedly at us with eyes full of hope and asked: "Did you bring the magazine "Faith and Life"? The one that you brought us last time I read it in one breath from beginning to end. This is what we really need to know right now. It was good reading."



Then the elderly man paused, as if feeling sorry for his rush to us with a demand for a new magazine. He then spoke again in a quieter voice: "You promised last time that you would bring more Christian literature."

I handed him a Christian magazine, and I saw in front of me the happiest person who has received something that made him happy - a word of instruction in faith. It is amazing that it is there, in the midst of war, grief and suffering, that a person begins to understand the true values of life. In Matt. 4:4 it is written: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."



When I got home after finishing this mission, I looked at my Christian library. I have a good library and I am very proud of it. Looking at all my books, I remembered the joyful eyes of a man from the front line of Marinka, who, despite the war and all its horrors, was truly happy when he received the desired Christian magazine. He was happy that by reading this magazine, he could find answers to many questions that had accumulated in his head.

I thought:

"When was the last time I rejoiced just like this old man with his Bible and the wisest Christian books that are in my library?"

"When was the last time reading the Word of God was more important to me than anything else?"

Do we really need war and suffering so that we can learn to appreciate something without which it is impossible to live and be happy? - BREAD OF LIFE.

Every time we leave the war zone, we leave our old people not alone. Through our short prayers of blessing and through the Christian literature we give them, the Holy Spirit continues to work in the hearts of people who need the Lord, who need salvation.

Many times, the people we delivered bread to in the war zone told us that we were the direct answer to their prayers.

Once, after heavy shelling of the residential sector of the frontline Krasnogorivka, we arrived on a mission to the Vostochny micro district. There was not a single intact house in this area, not a single family that had not been touched by the grief of war.



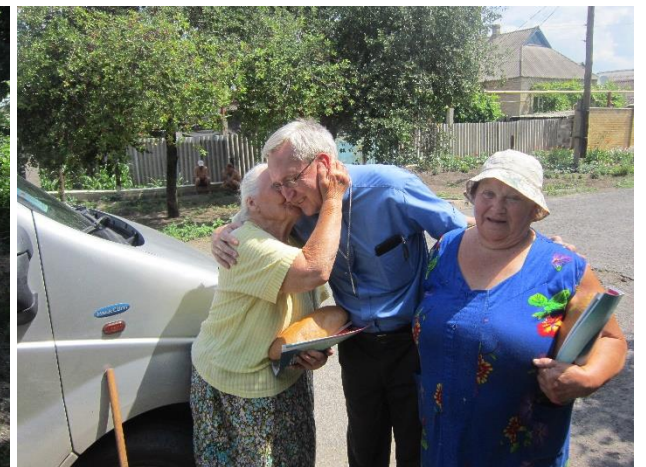
We, as always, distributed bread, Christian literature, prayed for the inhabitants of the region and tried to console these unfortunate people with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We had already distributed the bulk of the bread, though there were not many people near us. Only two or three came up, but sometimes more. A woman came up to us who was very excited, waving her arms, trying to tell us something. She was so excited that all she could say was:

“Goosebumps, goosebumps...”

We guessed that by gesturing with her hands, she wanted to tell us that her body was covered with goose bumps. I hugged her and tried to comfort the woman. It took some time for her to come to her senses and be able to tell us her story:

‘At night the town was heavily bombed and it was very scary. Only by morning did everything calm down, and I was able to sleep a little. I woke up and realized that I really wanted to eat and I began to look for something to eat. The refrigerator was completely empty. The shelves were empty, and my wallet was empty. Such anguish filled my heart. I knelt right next to my bed and began to pray: “Lord! I want to eat so much. If you exist, send me some bread to eat!”



“And so, at this very time, when I was on my knees in prayer, someone insistently began to knock on my door. I quickly went to the door and opening it I saw a joyful neighbor.”

“Nina,” she said, “there are believers in the yard. They brought bread. Hurry up before they leave.” When Nina said these words, her voice trembled, and tears flowed down her cheeks:

“You came here because the Lord sent you. You are the answer to my prayer.”

Nina and I prayed together. She thanked God for the answer to her prayer and for His love for her. We thanked the Lord for giving us the opportunity to be an instrument in His will of God.

What we boast about

- And what are the fruits of your ministry in the Donbass?
- Can you tell how many people became members of one of the local churches?

The first time I was asked these questions, I just couldn't find the right answer.

Maybe because we did not set such goals for ourselves from the very beginning, it is difficult for us to present exhaustive statistics. Without a doubt, there are people who still come up to us when we meet to thank us for the fact that we have sown in them the seed of faith and hope in God. Thanks to our ministry, some people became members of local churches, many personally converted to faith in God. But I do not at all regret that we did not keep statistics to confirm the expediency of our ministry in frontline towns and villages. I know that for some people, my answer seems rather pompous, but I'm ready to repeat it again and again:

- We do this service because the Lord called us and He guided us to this ministry. We will continue this ministry as long as we are accompanied by the presence of God and the joy of the Holy Spirit of doing His will.



We did not receive any special training on the now fashionable fundraising, nor did we write about any projects in a request for funding for our ministry, or anything like that. We prayed and we were found by people who offered us their spiritual and material help. Almost every time, at the end of our next mission to the front line, I would sadly state:

“I have no finances for the next trip, and I can't figure out where to get them.”

The response of the team was always sincere and unchanged:

“Well, let's pray and see what the Lord will show.”

People on the frontline were waiting for us and often phoned us to come as soon as possible. Soldiers were waiting for us. We do not know how they found our phone numbers, and called us with a request to come and bring them certain necessary things. We prayed and waited.

After a short time, we took trips again and again. We went twice a month for three days for each of these trips. There was a time when we could only go once a month. But each trip was an answer to our prayers and the prayers of many brothers and sisters who knew and supported our ministry. The Lord is always testing our faith. At the very last moment, when despair reached

its climax, someone called us on the phone or wrote to us through the Internet that they wanted to donate a certain amount of money for our ministry. The most interesting thing was that we were given exactly the amount that we needed for the next trip and for which we prayed.

Some of our sponsors asked for a strict account of the finances involved, including sales checks, fuel checks and financial receipts from people. Some donors trusted us completely to keep records of the money spent and we just provided them with a photo report.



For individual sponsors we constantly keep reports with documentation and report to them. In general, I keep accounting for all our expenses just in case, although I don't even know for which donors.

Once I decided to sum up for the year all the material resources provided to us. Most likely, I saw this idea somewhere on Facebook as someone "reported" about how much assistance was provided to those in need and those who suffered in the war in Donbass. Perhaps this idea came about after some more thought about accountability and a desire to protect ourselves from any accusations of misuse of financial assistance.

I did a great job and summed up all the results for the year. The numbers that I saw at the end scared me. Like King David, who took the census of the people, I was horrified. My first reaction, looking at all the figures about the work done for the year, was approximately the following:

- Wow!

Cannot be...

Have we been able to do all this?

What good people we are!

Who else can boast of such results?

If anyone ever tries to reproach us or exalts us, then we ...

At this unfolding thought, something stopped me and, as it were, poured cold water over me.

"What am I doing?" I asked myself.

I felt as if God had become disgusted with me. I saw myself as so significant and I had done so much. But all this significance of mine, became like some kind of vile slime, and enveloped me. It

became hard for me to breathe. The more I thought about the degree of my significance, about how other people would react when they learned of how I saw myself. What would my envious enemies say to this? As the presence of God moved further away, it seemed that if I began seeing myself as so prideful, then this vile slime would swallow me completely.

But now, as if a scream escaped from within me:

“What am I doing? Lord, forgive me! For my greatest gain in this life is the joy of Your presence and guidance. I promise that only in this I will boast and for this I will live.”

It seems to me that this prayer was so desperately sincere that I was more than sure that the Lord heard me, believed and forgave me.

“Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” 1 Cor. 1:31.

"In the Lord shall my soul glory." Ps. 33:3.

I cannot say that I have won the final victory in this matter. After all, sometimes you want to make devastating arguments, especially for those who love to brag about themselves so much, or, as they say now that they are doing, “PR”. But what comes to mind is the feeling of a vile slime of self-importance in place of the presence of God and the joy of His leading. No, it's not worth it. After all, if at least once in your life you have tasted the joy of God's leading, you will never look for this joy in something else.

Since the beginning of the war, on the frontline in Donbas, for years we often came and served the same people. Did they become members of a local churches after so many sermons they heard from us? I think that some became members, but a large part didn't.

For some reason we do not understand, some of them have never been and never will be in the church. I will say the following:

- For me, one of the most important arguments is the fact that when we arrived with bread physically and spiritually, the old people rushed from their cramped apartments and houses to us, and we often heard them say to each other: “Our pastor has arrived, our pastor has arrived...”



Thanks to the elderly people I understood one very important thing; even if these people who suffered so much in their lives from this protracted war do not come to the Church, the Church can come to them. They accept us as a Church, they respect us as a Church, they are waiting for us as a Church. Yes, it is not as familiar and comfortable for us as in the company of 99 domestic

sheep. But the Lord teaches us to leave our comfort zone and go where at least one sheep needs its pastor. And while they are waiting for us and needing us, we will go there.

The power of prayer

Every time we go on another mission to Donbass, I ask my local church to bless us for this trip. I also give information to friends on Facebook with a request to support us prayerfully in the upcoming service to soldiers and civilians on the frontline zone.

I always knew even before, that prayer is very important in any matter. The blessing of friends and the church is the best foundation of any ministry. Now, after all the events that happened to us on the frontline, I have come to the firm conviction that without prayer support and blessing it is impossible to start any matter: be it small or large.

When we go on a humanitarian mission to a war zone, we discuss in advance with candidates for a place in our team, the high probability that we may not return home alive. Therefore, the first and most important question that I always ask everyone is:

- Are you ready for the fact that you may not return home?

And if we see that a person is not ready to answer this question in the affirmative, we will advise him to postpone the trip. I will say, not without pride, that in all the years of our trips to the front, not a single person answered that he was not ready. And this is impressive. But to be truthful, each of us goes to the front with the hope of serving the Lord and returning home safe and sound.

There were times when we came under very heavy shelling. More than once, mines exploded a few meters from the place where we drove in our heroic van, yet we remained alive. Once we stopped to give a lift to our soldier, and this saved our lives; a mine exploded in front of our minivan, and if not for this "accidental" stop, we would have ended up right in the epicenter of the explosion. All such cases can be written in a separate book, and we are sure that behind all these "accidents" there are someone's prayers, and the Lord Himself saves our lives for His glory.

It was a sunny summer day, so sunny that looking at the blue sky and the jubilant nature, the mind refused to believe that there was a war going on here. You want to live and enjoy life, but reality is quite different. Here, you are very close and can hear how a large-caliber machine gun responds to continuous automatic bursts. Then, very unexpectedly for this time of the day, heavy gunfire begins. Usually, this cannonade starts at dusk and ends closer to the morning, but this time there was something different (it is quite possible that one of the separatists had a "staff shift") and we suddenly found ourselves in the shelling zone. Approaching one of our checkpoints, we distinctly heard missiles explosions in the very area where we were. It became very scary. Although we had already come under fire more than once, it is impossible to get used to it. All your confidence that you are ready to die gradually fades, then fades completely. There is a passionate desire to survive and the mind works only in this direction.

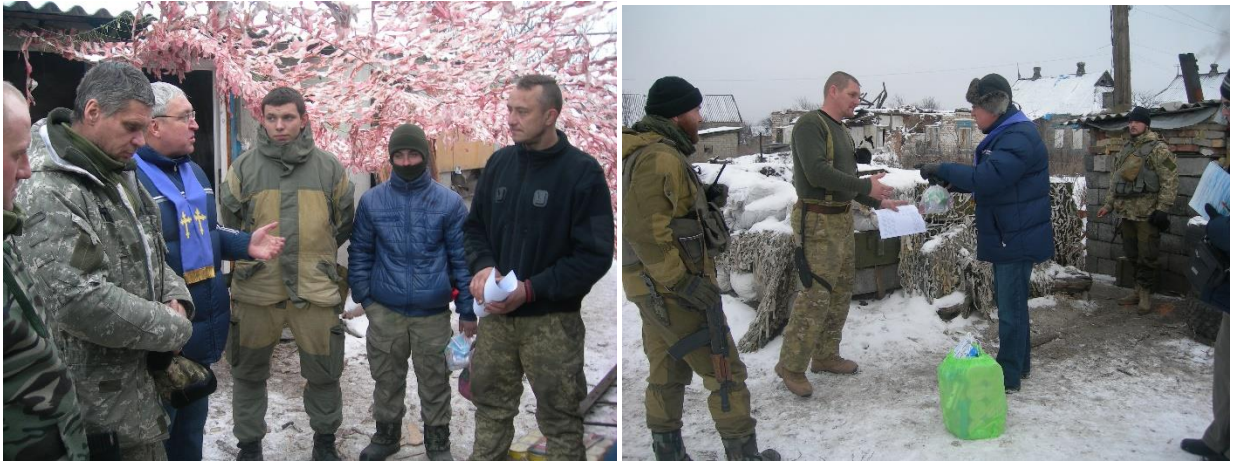


With the first close explosions, we stopped so that, as it seemed to us, we would not go into a more dangerous, active fighting zone. How terribly the missiles howl! There is something satanic about this lethal weapon. The impression is that all the forces of hell howl when these ominous bombs fly.



Now, it seems, our affairs have gone completely bad. I can hear the missiles flying and from experience I determine that one is flying straight at us. Even if it is not a direct hit, and the shell explodes some meters from us, there is no chance to stay alive. What if I start the van quickly and drive, but where? A few meters forward, or maybe back? We don't have time for guessing. There are only a few seconds left. Maybe 10 or 20. The countdown has already begun.





I see my whole life before me. Prior to this, I did not believe that people in extreme situations experience this phenomenon. But now it's happening to me. All life, even its most forgotten episodes, miraculously run through my mind. In these remaining seconds, I mentally turn in prayer to my God:

“God! I don't want to die now. There is so much more I can do for You.”

And I hear the Lord begin to answer. (I remind you that everything happens in these last 10-20 seconds of my life.)

“No, you won't die,” I hear God's voice and it rings through my mind. It resonates with me. Distinctly. Confidently.

I continue to ask my questions of the Lord, and it is amazing that I have enough time for all this.

“I will not die? How can this happen? After all, this missile flies right at us and we have no chance of staying alive.”

“No, you won't die!” repeated the voice of God.

“Why will we not die, Lord? Maybe I won't die because I would leave my family, church and couldn't go to serve the needy people and soldiers at the front?”

“No,” says the Lord.

“Maybe because I have dedicated my life to serving You and You still have plans for my life?” I continued.

“No,” says the Lord.

“But Lord! Why, then, am I not going to die now, with this bomb flying right at us?” I put my head on the steering wheel and froze in anticipation of an answer:

“You won't die because a lot of people are praying for you!”

Then I asked the Lord a question that immediately made me ashamed, but I remember exactly that I asked it and in the most stupid way:

“God, maybe it won't happen because I'm so cool?”



Can you imagine? I asked the Lord a question in just such a stupid way. Probably, by the word “cool” I meant my best features and some superiority over others, more sinful people. I can’t say for sure. But the Lord answered this question too:

“No, you're not "cool" at all.”

“But Lord! Why, then, am I not going to die with this bomb flying right at us?”

I put my head on the steering wheel and froze in anticipation of an answer:

When I remember this response from the Lord, tears well up in my eyes. Every word, every letter is engraved in my heart:

“You won't die because a lot of people are praying for you!”

At the very moment when I heard these words from the Lord, the missile fell somewhere in the bushes 4-5 meters from us and did not explode. Instead, we saw flares flashing and hovering in the sky one by one. In all likelihood, a massive shell that did not explode due to the missile defense system at the checkpoint. It became a salute to our salvation.

Our Lord hears our prayers. Even if we do not fully understand the nature of prayer, the Lord still expects us to turn to Him. He hears our sincere prayers and, in answering them, works miracles in the lives of those who believe in Him. There are not enough prayers. Someone said that the only thing we'll regret in heaven is that we didn't pray enough.

Thanks to everyone who never stops praying!

Praise be to our Lord that He answers our prayers!

Faith That Will Echo into Eternity.

Once we had a rather large company of ministers for a trip to the war zone towns of Marinka and Krasnogorovka. On this mission, were my friends from Kharkov and three foreigners, friends of Pastor Alexander.

We always pray before the trip, and I give a short instruction for those who are going on such an unusual mission for the first time.

I remember that on that day, I ended my instruction with words that I myself was afraid of, but which were so alive, that our minibus was filled with the power and presence of God's glory. The final words of instruction were as follows:

- Remember, friends! What we do will echo into eternity!

Perhaps we do not always think about the fact that everything we do in our earthly life makes sense only in the context of eternity. The Bible tells us, "For we brought nothing into the world; it is clear that we can't take anything out of it." (1 Tim. 6:7.)

Much of what we do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Nobody will ever remember this. It won't affect anyone, but this is something that has value in eternal life. These are the values that God allows to be established on this earth: the Gospel and our good works. The one and the other are so closely intertwined that one by one they lose their meaning on their own.



We go to the war zone and bring with us help in the form of food and essentials. But to feed people and to not tell, about Who inspires us, or rather, giving thanks to Whom and why we do it, would be wrong. Probably, it would also be blasphemy to come preaching the Gospel to people who have not eaten for several days and not bring them food that we all have at home. When we hand out grocery bags to people with blessings, each of them has a question (even if they do not ask us directly); why are we doing this for them? And our answer is as simple as the Gospel itself:

"God loves you, and we love you. He proved His love two thousand years ago and continues to prove it now by sending us to you!"

Once we brought food aid to the outskirts of Marinka, a large number of people gathered there. We try usually, to not have more than 50-60 people at one time for our meetings. Landmines were exploding somewhere nearby, and we were trying to determine how safe our meeting was.

People also experienced a certain fear, but everyone stood in anticipation of receiving the coveted food packages.

Usually I give a short sermon, but this time, looking at these frightened and war-torn people, I could not say anything. People looked at me. I looked at the people. I wanted to hug each of them, with regret. To everyone I wanted to say kind and necessary words, but the tears, and a lump forming in my throat, did not allow me to speak; at last, all I could say was:

“The Lord Jesus loves you!”



I saw almost everyone cry at these words. They wept quietly. Some nodded in silent agreement and approval of my short sermon. We just stood there, and all of us cried. Never before in my life, did I experience such an unusual service. I felt that now, in this silence the Lord Himself was doing something with our hearts.

The pause was interrupted by the woman closest to us:

“We believe you! If you are here right now, risking your lives; if you are not stopped by explosions that do not stop thundering; if you came here at a difficult time for us to help and support us, we believe you. We believe that you really love us, and God, who sent you love us.”



I deeply believe that God's love can touch a wounded lost heart through our faithfulness. And when this happens, faith is born... Faith that will resonate in eternity.

Quite a few things happened as our service occurred. At first glance, they seemed spontaneous. But then, analyzing the details, we were convinced that there was nothing accidental in this.

The handwriting of our Lord is clearly visible in everything! And we can only rejoice that we were ready to respond to His call.

Once we held a service in one of the districts of Krasnohorivka. This area was badly damaged by shelling. As usual, we distributed food packages, hygiene products, Christian magazines, preached the Gospel and prayed for the gathered people.

We brought help according to the lists prepared for us by our local volunteers. When the service was almost over, a young woman who was not on the list for help came up and said,

“I live in a neighboring two-story building. I wasn't on your list for help. But I do not want to ask you for things for myself. My neighbor, grandfather Vasily, recently had a stroke. He lives completely alone and has no one to help him. I come and take care of him. Maybe you happen to have one grocery bag left for this poor old man? He also needs diapers. I saw that you gave them to some people.”



Our whole team had a deep respect for this young woman, and I said that we would help her.

We always take 2-3 extra grocery bags, as we know from previous experience that there may be various unforeseen circumstances. In general, people are okay with the fact that we bring food and hygiene products according to the lists prepared for us by local volunteers in advance. For those who are not included in the list from the area to which we brought aid, we inform them that they will be included in the following lists and give the approximate date of our arrival.

To be honest, it is a very difficult task to determine which of all the inhabitants of the city really needs our help more than others; to be able to identify those for whom it is a matter of life and death. There are those whom we have to refuse for the reason that there is someone who needs it more, but it is very difficult. In this matter, we, as people who are not local, could never cope without help of our volunteers. The volunteers are well aware of our requirements, and they are ready to on the spot decide the issue of compiling lists with the residents of the district or street themselves. That is, the residents themselves decide who should get this help in the first place, and who can wait.

There were cases after which you cannot sleep peacefully and want to return to the place where you want to correct the situation as soon as possible. This is what happens when, at the end of the service, people come who are not on the lists for help, but who have incredible need. I can't forget the old man who fell on his knees and begged us to give him a grocery bag when all the bags had already been distributed.

"I promised my old wife that I would bring groceries home today. Please," the old man begged.

Since we had nothing left, we gathered what was in our pockets and backpacks, and this consoled our old man a little. We promised that next time he would be first on the lists for receiving food, and for ourselves we made it a rule to take 2-3 additional food packages. I will tell you that we never returned home with an unclaimed package. Somehow, they did not happen to be superfluous ...

I will now return to our young woman, who asked for food for her neighbor Vasily.

Taking one package from the additional fund along with a large pack of diapers, we went to him on foot and on the way got to know the young woman better. Her name was Nadezhda and, as it turned out, she lived more than modestly. I'm always fascinated by people who care about other people more than themselves, so we decided that she also needed to be encouraged and gave her one food package. Needless to say, our help was a huge and unexpected blessing for her. Thank you, Lord, for taking care of this!

When we entered Vasily's apartment, we saw that despite the fact that he had not been out of bed for more than a month, everything was clean in the apartment. There was not even a smell, which is usually present where there are bedridden patients. It was evident that Nadezhda was making every effort to do this and taking good care of her neighbor.

It was hard for Vasily to speak, but he heard everything and nodded his head in agreement with what we told him.

In cases like this, we certainly don't preach much. But it is necessary to say the main thing that every person should know during his lifetime. I said something like this:

"Jesus Christ loves you. He died for you two thousand years ago and resurrected for you to live. And we are here with you for only one reason: so that you know that God loves you! And we love you."

Vasily listened very attentively to my words, and I saw a tear roll down his cheek when I spoke of God's love for him.

In order not to tire the sick old man, we prayed a short prayer over him and left him in the hands of God.

Nadia led us back to our bus. We said goodbye and left.

On another ministry mission, we arrived in Krasnogorovka two weeks later, and when we had finished the service, our friend Nadezhda approached us.

"You remember me?" she asked.

"Well, of course, Nadia," I said. "How is our Vasily doing?"

"Grandpa is dead," said Nadia. "He died shortly after your visit." –

She then added with a quiet sadness, "But he died peacefully. Right after you prayed and left, he got better. We talked with him for a long time about you and your words. Grandfather Vasily told me about himself; about how much grief and disappointment was on his life path. His wife died early, the children left him and were not interested in the fate of their father. He never had

real friends. He said that all his life no one loved him, although he tried not to harm anyone. And now, sick and alone, he was tormented most of all by the thought that no one needed him and no one loved him.”

The news that Vasily died greatly upset us. Nadezhda, noticing this, continued her story, for the sake of which she approached us.

“Do not be upset. Now I want to say the most important thing,” she said. “Before his death, Grandfather Vasily told me the following: “All my life I was sure that no one loves me. But when these believers came with help and told me that God loves me, and they also love me, I suddenly realized that the Lord Jesus Christ loved me and called me to Himself all my life.”

“He died with a smile on his face, with the thought that the Lord has forgiven his sins, loves him and is waiting for him,” Nadia said as she finished her story.

Something very important and joyful is happening in the spiritual world, when the souls lost on this earth in repentance return to their loving Father God. It should be so, and perhaps this is the meaning of the universe. Only in this way does death have the meaning of gain, and not of loss.

How I pity people who do not have the joyful hope of meeting the Lord in heaven. Some of them saw a lot good things in their lives, while others suffered and suffered all their lives. I grieve for all those who did not meet God's love on their life path and leave this world with a grieved heart. Heaven mourns for them.

In my short sermons to the residents of front-line towns and villages, I often say the following words:

“I know how you suffer here from the troubles that war brings with it. I am very glad, and our Lord rejoices, when we can help you even a little bit, testifying to you about God's love. But I will be very upset if, in the midst of all your suffering, you do not believe and accept God's love. I will be very sorry if I do not meet all of you at the feet of the One who loves us all so much. Amen!”

