



In March 1918, when civil war raged in Finland and across the border in Russia, my father heard the "Macedonian Call." It was clear and distinct: "Leave the country of Finland and come over into Russia and help us!"

The call was irresistible. And so, while the artillery thundered and machine guns chattered, my father and mother knelt together before the Lord and said yes to Him, that they would go and tell the Russian people that God loves them.

Despite the attempts of friends to dissuade them from going, within one hour after applying, my folks received their passports. With their first child, a baby girl, they left for Leningrad.

Those were turbulent days when Russia was in the grips of famine and engaged in the bloodiest civil war in the history of mankind. To obtain milk for their year-old infant, father had to arise at 2 and 3 a.m. to take his place in the milk line. Many times the supply had given out before his turn came, and despite all his efforts the baby finally died of starvation.

Several times my father was at the point of fainting from hunger while preaching in the meeting hall in Leningrad. However, he continued to avail himself of every opportunity to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ and the auditorium, seating 400, was continually crowded with people who were hungry to hear the word of God. The result was that many souls were saved.

Because the Bolshevik government had proclaimed freedom of religion for all (a liberty that was to be short lived), father was not content to preach only in the

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meeting hall, but would stand on the street corners and in open squares of the city and preach to the multitudes.

On one such occasion as a big crowd thronged to hear him speak, a commotion suddenly started on the outskirts of the crowd. A man in a Red Army uniform and carrying a rifle was pushing his way through the dense crowd. When he finally reached the open space where my father stood, he grasped the rifle by its barrel and swung it back like a baseball bat. My father threw up his hands to ward off the blow, at the same time asking, "Why do you disturb our meeting? Your law says that we are free to worship as we will."

"I don't know, nor do I care what the law says," the soldier replied. "We don't want your God nor your religion. I have orders to arrest everyone that preaches religion, so start walking." I doubt if I could be as calm as my father who asked if he could have ten minutes to close the service in an orderly way. Then the soldier could do whatever he wanted with him. The miracle began when the Red soldier granted the ten minutes. How well I remember my father saying that during those ten minutes he preached as he had never preached in his life, believing that there were but a few moments for him to live. He spoke as a dying man, speaking to dying men and dying women.

It's a wonderful thing what God can do in ten minutes. When my father's time was up, and he had prayed, he then turned and saw the soldier with head bowed, his cap in his hands and tears streaming down his cheeks. Placing his hand on the soldier's shoulders, my father said, "friend, I am ready. You may do with me as you please."

The man, who minutes ago came as a raging lion, hardly dared look up, and in a broken voice said, "Preacher, you mentioned that God loves sinners. You do not know who I am. Do you realize that these hands are still warm with human blood and that I was about to take your life? You mean to tell me that God can forgive such a sinner as I?"

"Yes, my friend," was my father's reply, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever, (and that means you if you will

believe on Him) shall not perish but have eternal life."

Meanwhile, the crowd which was expecting my father's execution was watching with amazement the miracle that was taking place before their very eyes. Instead of the soldier leading my father to his execution, my father was now leading him to the meeting hall a few blocks down the street.

No sooner had the soldier crossed the threshold when he was struck to the floor by conviction of his sin. There he lay, sobbing and crying to God for mercy. For one hour he wept, confessing his sins. When he got up, there was no doubt that he had been born again. He took hold of my father, hugged him, kissed him, and kept shouting, "I'm clean! I'm clean! I feel so light. I feel so good brother," he said, "what happened to me? Please tell me." My father showed him from God's Word that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, had cleansed him from all his sins.

The first question this born-again soldier asked father was whether he had enough bread. Being in the Red Army, he had enough for himself and was now willing to share his larger ration of bread with my parents. "I will bring you my bread," he said. "Will you accept it? Will you promise to read to me from that book (and he meant the Bible) and pray with me when I come?" And so he came every day, faithfully bringing his bread. In return, my father would share with him the Bread of Life and pray with him.

Inevitably however, the time came when the soldier sadly announced that this would be their last meeting. Because of his witnessing for Christ, he had been placed on the black list. But with a smile on his face, he declared with full assurance, "Brother Poysti, we shall meet up there."

He never returned. When my father went to inquire about him, he was rudely turned away and told that it was none of his business to inquire about the personnel of the Red Army.

Truly, only those who have experienced the power of God's Gospel in their lives can know how great God is. It is the power of the Gospel alone that gives us hope, both in this life and in the life to come.



Earl Poysti as he preaches the "Word of Life" in the Russian language over five powerful short-wave stations every Satur-

day night at 7:30 p.m. Moscow time. The response has been tremendous with letters coming from U.S.S.R., Latvia, Estonia,

Lithuania, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Germany, Iran, and Israel. Pray for this open door of the air waves.

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"Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh to the Father, but by me!'" My father, Bible in hand, was standing in a city square of Leningrad. A large crowd had gathered to hear his message. All seemed oblivious to the blasts of guns and angry shouting and fighting that raged in the streets around them. The year was 1918 and the Russian Civil War was in full swing.

Gradually, the noise and confusion edged its way toward the square where my father was proclaiming the peace of God. Suddenly, a great commotion was stirred up on the rim of the crowd. A uniformed soldier was thrashing his way through the people and cursing and swinging his rifle like a baseball bat as he went.

My father threw up his hands just in time to ward off a blow from the swinging gun.

"You," the soldier shouted while pointing at my father, "come with me." He grabbed my father roughly by the arm.

"Why are you disturbing our meeting," my father asked very calmly. "The law says that we're free to worship God as we please."

"I don't know and I don't care what any paper law says," the soldier answered angrily. "We don't want your silly myths and religion, and we don't want your God. I've got orders to arrest anyone that preaches religion. So, get moving!"

"Ok, I'll come," my father replied. "But, please, just give me ten minutes to finish the meeting in an orderly way. That'll save you from more trouble, too."

"All right, go ahead," the soldier said grudgingly, and he moved to the side to let this old-fashioned ^{preacher} ~~but~~ close his ~~little~~ ^{outdoor} service.

Ten minutes. . . like no time at all or like eternity. My father was convinced that this would be his last sermon. He preached for a life-time in ten minutes. With the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, he poured out his heart as a dying man to dying men and women. Christ is the answer. Eternity with Him! Death is conquered in Christ!

Then my father bowed his head and closed with prayer. Time was up. He was ready to go. He turned to the soldier. But. . . the soldier was not ready. His head was bowed. His cap was in his hands. Tears trickled down his rugged cheeks. My father went to his side and placed a hand on the soldier. "Friend, I'm ready. You may do with me as you please."

"But, I'm not ready," the soldier sobbed heavily. "I'm not ready to die. I'm not ready to meet God. Preacher, you said God loves sinners. Could He love someone like me? Do you know what kind of a man I am? These hands are still warm with human blood. I'd come here to kill you, too. Do you mean to say that God can forgive me, too? A sinner, as bad as I am?"

"Yes," my father replied gently. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever be-

lieveth on Him, shall not perish but have eternal life." Whosoever means you, too. Just believe on Him."

The crowd stood motionless. For ten minutes they'd listened intently to the words of the minister. They'd never heard anything like it before. Then they waited helplessly and trembling with anxiety as they expected to see their preacher carried off down the street and executed. Now hushed and awed, they watched the strange drama taking place before them. They were witnessing a miracle of God. The angry, cursing soldier had been reduced to tears and helplessness. The minister was now leading him down the street to the meeting hall.

Once inside the building the soldier fell to the floor sobbing and crying to God for mercy. The conviction of his sin was so deep and so great that he lay weeping and confessing his sins for more than an hour. Then the sweet peace and relief that God gives flooded his heart and soul. He got up and hugging and kissing my father, shouted over and over, "I'm clean, I'm clean. I feel so good, I feel so good. What's happened to me?"

My father opened the Word of God and showed him how the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son had cleansed him from all his sins.

In his new found faith the young soldier's animosity and anger toward the preacher were converted to concern and compassion.

"Do you have enough bread to eat?" he asked.

The soldier didn't know the trials and hunger his minister friend and family had suffered, but he did know that rations

were scarce.

He didn't know that friends and family had tried to dissuade my father and mother from leaving Finland in that troublesome year of 1918. For in the midst of all this strife, they had received the Macedonian call--"Come over to Russia and help us." It was a clear, urgent call.

Nor did the soldier know how the Lord had directed and that just one hour after submitting their applications, mother and father had their passports in hand. And, so, with their first child, a baby girl, they went to Leningrad.

He didn't know of the difficult and heart-breaking days that they had experienced. Russia was even then in the grips of famine. The Civil War raged on with all its bloodshed and destruction.

When he asked them, "Do you have enough bread to eat?" the soldier didn't know that for weeks the minister had risen at two and three in the morning to take his place in the milk line. Many times it was only to discover that the supply had given out before his turn came. The soldier didn't know that in spite of all efforts humanly possible the little baby girl ^{was to} had finally died of starvation.

Nor did the soldier know that ~~my~~ father himself was frequently at the point of fainting from hunger while preaching the Gospel in the Leningrad meeting hall. My father endured physical hunger in order to feed the spiritually hungry with the Word of God.

No, the soldier didn't know any of these things, but he did know that his own hungry soul had been fed and that he'd partaken of the Bread of Life. Now he wanted to share a portion of his earthly goods with my father. As a member of the Red Army, the soldier received a substantial ration of bread.

"I will bring my bread to you," he said; "will you accept it? And will you then read to me from that Holy Book and pray with me?"

The bargain was made and for some weeks the soldier came everyday to the home of his minister friend with his loaf of bread in order to learn more of the Bread of Life.

One day, however, the soldier reported that he couldn't come again. This would be their last time together. His witnessing and testimony for Jesus Christ had placed his name on the army black list. With a smile of assurance, however, he said, "Brother Poysti, we shall meet up there."

The next day my father and mother waited hopefully for their friend to return. He didn't come. My father went to inquire about him and was rudely turned away.

"It's none of your business what happens to the personnel of the Red Army." No more was ever heard or seen of the soldier on this earth, for he had paid the supreme sacrifice for his testimony.