

02.24.26

Dear Friends,

February 24 always brings us back to the sorrowful memory of the start of full-scale war in Ukraine four years ago. So many heartbreaking and tragic events have occurred during these four years that come to mind. Yet, God's grace shines even brighter against the darkness. As we reflect on nearly 1,500 days of war, I want to share what this time has meant to us as Ukrainians.

The length of the war has reshaped our entire perspective on life. We have learned that immense suffering and death can become a prolonged reality—something many generations before us knew well. We now see how naïve we were to assume that freedom, peace, and stability would naturally endure after the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the same time, we have rediscovered the enduring value of basic human virtues. In our friends and neighbors, we have witnessed remarkable courage, wisdom, and a deep longing for justice. Above all, we have experienced how faithfully Scripture sustains us through long and weary years of trial.

*How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?... But I trust in your unfailing love; my
heart rejoices in your salvation. (Psalm 13:2,5)*

Because of the intensity of the war, teaching REALIS students during cold, dark winters has often been possible only through online lectures and seminars. Many attend classes from bomb shelters; some join us after returning from the trenches. Yet we have discovered that theological education becomes even more vital in wartime. Pastors, missionaries, and Christian counselors need deep roots to serve others faithfully. We have also observed how suffering reshapes people's attitudes toward faith, the church, and—most importantly—toward God. Hearts often open when they witness the consistent, sacrificial presence of believers meeting real needs over time.

Despite the cruelty of war, we have learned that kindness, goodness, and love are much stronger than the forces of evil. In wartime, every small act of compassion becomes a quiet victory over darkness. Again and again, with the support of our partners, the REALIS team has been able to stand alongside those who have lost family members, homes, livelihoods, health, and hope.

We could not continue this work in Ukraine without you. One of our primary goals while in the United States has been to strengthen and expand the circle of REALIS partners and supporters. During our recent month-long trip across six states in the Central and Eastern U.S., Irina and I were deeply encouraged as we renewed longstanding relationships and formed new ones. The Lord met us at every step with timely encouragement.

We feel strengthened as we see God's sustaining hand over REALIS during this critical season of ministry in Ukraine. Next week, I will make a brief trip to Denver before we return to Ukraine in a few weeks. Later this year, we hope to visit supporters in the Western and Northern United States, and possibly Canada as well.

We hope to see each of you in person someday. And we look forward with confidence to that eternal fellowship in God’s Kingdom, where there will be no more war.

With deep gratitude for your prayers, friendship, and support,

Sergiy and Irina Tymchenko

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