



Translating the Bible into Ukrainian

The Popchenko Family

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

Dear Friends and Family in Christ Jesus,

September/October 2007 Prayer Letter

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Greetings to all in Jesus' Name! I have reached the first landmark in Bible translation since our return to Ukraine: the first draft of the book of Philippians is done! When I first began to work on it, I thought it should be a pretty easy book to translate, but before long I realized that nearly every verse presents a new challenge. For those of you who are interested in the technical side of Bible translation, here are two examples of the difficulties I face on a daily basis. In Philippians 1:19, Paul writes, "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The question is what does the 'supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ' mean? Does it mean that the Spirit of Jesus Christ supplies Paul with something, like His gifts and grace or does it mean that the Spirit of Jesus Christ Himself is supplied to Paul? In Ukrainian, this cannot be translated in a neutral way as it is in English, leaving it up to the reader for interpretation. Besides this, Ukrainian does not have an exact equivalent of the English word 'supply'. All existing Ukrainian versions chose the first interpretation and translated this phrase as the 'help of the Holy Spirit', even though the Greek word in question has not been proven to have this meaning. Another example is found in Philippians 2:13, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The difficulty here is with the phrase 'of his good pleasure'. What is it related to: to the verb 'worketh', or 'to will and to do'? In other words, does the verse mean that God, out of His good pleasure, produces in believers the desire and ability to 'work out their salvation' (Phil. 2:12) or does it mean that God causes believers to want and to act according to His good pleasure? Both Russian and Ukrainian versions translate this in such an awkward way that it is virtually impossible for a native reader to understand what is meant. As you can imagine, for both verses there are commentators and dictionaries that advocate each position, so these tools are not always helpful. We hope that this glimpse into the process of Bible translation will be helpful to those who want to know how to effectively pray for me.

Since moving back to Kyiv, we have had many opportunities for ministry in our local church. I have been included in the regular schedule of preachers, preaching a few times a month (you will remember that Ukrainian churches have two, three or even four sermons per service). Further, the leader of the 'young families' Bible study group asked me to do a series on child training. This subject has not been covered yet and there is a real need for in-depth teaching on this important part of family life. So far, the interest level has been high and we are praying that the young parents will catch the vision of training their children for God as we continue in this several-part series. Also, after years of not being in a position to use our musical gifts to their fullest extent, both Wendy and I have been asked to help in the music ministry. Both church pianists are moving away so Wendy is now handling the choir pieces and I am playing for the congregational singing.

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Over the past two months several new avenues have opened up for distributing the gospel of John. In September, a group from the American mission "Gospelink" made a tour of several Ukrainian cities, visiting gatherings of national pastors for whom they raise support. Dean Kershner and his team took a thousand gospels of John which were gladly received by dozens of pastors for distribution in their various regions. Also, we have now made the gospels available in two Christian bookstores, one here in Kyiv and one in L'viv. This will allow more Christians to get acquainted with the new translation, as well as to obtain copies for evangelistic purposes.

Family update: This fall we have been fighting different viruses, one after another. On top of that, I (Yura) have had a sinus infection for over a month that I cannot seem to get over. Please pray for my healing and for our family's health as we move towards winter. We were finally able to find the supplement that the geneticist recommended almost a year ago, so the boys are now taking an assortment of vitamins and other supplements to help build up their ligaments. We have already been to an orthopedist here in Kyiv, but he was nowhere near as competent as the one we had in Moscow. Please pray that we will be able to find a more qualified doctor to oversee Sashko and Yurko's treatments. The boys both recently finished massage courses, Sashko was fitted for special, orthopedic shoe-boots and Yurko went through a course of ultrasound, vitamin D treatments on his knees. Sashko has also just learned to ride his bike without training wheels. This is great news around here since cycling is one of the top exercises recommended by his doctor.

Thank you all for your faithful prayers and financial support. We want to especially thank the young people of THE BIBLE Baptist Church of DeLand for their letters.

Your Fellow-laborers in our Lord's vineyard,
Yura, Wendy, Sashko and Yurko Popchenko