



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,

January/February 2006 Prayer Letter

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Greetings in our precious Savior's Name from the Popchenko Family! We are all safely back from our trips to Ukraine and the new university semester has begun. Wendy had a trouble-free, there-and-back trip to Kyiv and we were able to get her registered for another six months. Even though we had some delays in submitting the paperwork, we were not fined. Praise the Lord! I was able to take care of my business in Ukraine... in spite of the -17 F weather. Thank you for praying for us.

In Kyiv I met with some people and heard more feedback on my translation of the Gospel of John. Pastor Stahursky, pastor of a Baptist church in Kyiv, related the following from a pastor-friend of his: "Usually new translations are produced in order to water down main Christian doctrines. In this translation the opposite is true: they are emphasized. I like it." This gave me an opportunity to point out the biggest problem with salvation passages in the existing Ukrainian and Russian versions. The fact is that the Ukrainian verb, unlike the English, has the category of aspect. According to this category, verbs can be perfective or imperfective, denoting completed, one-time action or continuous, repetitive action respectively. In all salvation passages the Greek text uses a tense that corresponds to the Ukrainian perfective aspect. However, in all existing Ukrainian and Russian versions, contrary to Greek grammar (!), they are translated with the imperfective aspect, making salvation a lifetime process. Thus, Romans 10:9, for example, would really mean the following in those versions: "If you continuously confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and continuously believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will eventually be saved (i.e. at the end of your life)". In our conversation, I went on to point out two passages in John that speak of salvation figuratively. The first is 4:13-14 where salvation is spoken of as living water. According to the existing Ukrainian versions, one has to drink of it continuously, all of his life, in order to quench his thirst (i.e. get saved). In my translation, in accordance with Greek grammar, a man needs to drink of the living water only once. The second passage is 6:48-53 where salvation is spoken of as the bread of life. Again, according to the existing Ukrainian versions, one has to eat of it continuously in order to live forever, whereas in my translation, in accordance with Greek grammar, a man needs to eat of it only once. Besides, the idea of constantly eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood, taken from corrupted versions, makes even some Ukrainian Baptists think that Jesus is talking here about the Lord's Supper. Consequently, they believe that a Christian has to keep partaking of the Lord's Supper in order to keep being saved. After hearing this, Pastor Stahursky said, "Why don't you write an article about it? People need to know this. Also, write about your Bible translation work so people can be praying for you." (Pastor Stahursky is the editor-in-chief of the "Horizons of Faith" Christian magazine). Please pray that I will be able finish this article during my very busy semester schedule.

I was also able to meet with my cousin Sashko Savchenko, Pastor Savchenko's son, who helped a lot in the proof reading of John. He related to me a negative comment from a minister-friend of his:

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this man felt I had used too many italics. Knowing that he knew no Greek to compare my translation with, I went to existing Ukrainian versions and here is what I found: they often added particles, words, and even phrases to the text without putting them in italics! No wonder he felt I had used too many italics. Also, at a recent conference for preachers in the Kyiv region, Sashko Savchenko gave over 3000 Gospels of John to pastors for distribution. This almost totally depletes our supply and we are already thinking about doing another printing this summer, as the Lord provides.

During my school break I visited Jack Chick's web site to see what Ukrainian tracts they had available. I found that most of them were rather poorly translated. Chick Publications has an open invitation to translators, so I wrote them offering my help. Although I did not have enough time to fix them all, I could not pass by "This Was Your Life" - a tract that had greatly impacted me in my childhood. I completely retranslated it, including all the Scriptures (so Romans 10:9 is right!), and submitted it. We are nearing the end of the revision process, so by the time you receive this letter it should be available for on-line viewing.

Yurko's rickets is still of major concern. We completed the ultraviolet light treatments and just received a vitamin supplement course from the states to try. Please keep praying for Yurko's healing.

I would also ask you to pray for my health right now. The long, severe winter and heavy school load have taken their toll on me. Please pray for me to have the strength to get through this semester.

Our family appreciates each one of you and we pray for God to bless you abundantly as you labor for Him.

With love in the Lord Jesus,  
Yura, Wendy, Sashko and Yurko Popchenko