

News From GHT



By Nita Hanson

In A Time of Adversity

I don't know anyone who hasn't gone through some real testing times in their lives. I believe God allows these times of adversity for many purposes, such as to:

- reveal where we are in our faith walk;
- give us an opportunity to grow in our faith and raise our trust level;
- grow us in wisdom and understanding;
- remove the dross (or unnecessary things) from our lives;
- and to strengthen us.

When we are going through such a time, it is extremely painful and LONG – even described as a time in the desert! For some it is a time of doubting God's love or that He even knows they exist. Afterwards we can look back with joy as we see the times where God has so directly worked in our lives, and thus we learn to give thanks in all circumstances and even to be content in the midst of them. (*"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* Philippians 4:6).

God is often referred to as the "Refiner of Silver." A Bible study group came across this name in one of their studies and one woman asked, "What exactly does that mean?" Since no one knew, she volunteered to visit a silversmith and ask him.

The silversmith explained that during the refining process, the silver is placed over the hottest part of the flame – this to burn off the dross and purify the silver. Then he added, "When the silver is in the hottest part of the flame, I cannot take my eyes off of it for even one second because if I leave it in too long, the silver is ruined – or if I take it out too soon, the dross is not removed and the silver is dull and tarnished looking."

Now imagine your Lord, keeping His eyes on you EVERY SECOND when you are in the fire – never looking away even for an instant! What an awesome revelation, and here many of us thought that we were alone and abandoned!

If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." Proverbs 24:10



Over the years I have watched the pain and suffering of parents whose children are not like other kids – whose children cannot walk or run or even feed themselves -- or of kids with life-threatening diseases such as early on-set diabetes. I see the agony of kids who want to be like the other kids – who long for a future larger than the four walls of their flat or to be free of the fear of amputation and early death.

I have been moved beyond words when I see the changes in the families when the love of Christ is introduced – when the realization that God has a plan and a purpose for their lives too takes root. The story of Roma on the following pages is tragic – sad - even puzzling as we wonder, “Why, Lord?” I do know that as I talked with Roma’s mom last month, she told me how excited he was when he returned from camp – how he was truly changed and how he told her, “Mom, I know I can’t live my life just for me anymore – I want to live for others.” And again, I was moved to tears and the sure knowledge that God is in control!

The story of little Olia which follows is a story of hope that was birthed out of the love of her family and of Christ. We have seen many such stories – we are privileged to share in their times of adversity – privileged to see their strength, faith and trust in God grow by leaps and bounds. You, too, share in this wonderful privilege. Thank you for being willing to sacrifice your time and money on their behalf by your giving. Thank you for the many prayers lifted up before the Throne for them.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God,
who are the called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths” Proverbs 3:6

In January, keep an eye out for our **NEW, IMPROVED, UPDATED, renovated** Website!

Same address: www.godshiddentreasures.org



A Tribute to Roma

NEWS FROM GHT

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By Rev. Scott Yount

Roma Bondarenko of Bila Tserkva, Ukraine, died at the age of 19 after being struck by a vehicle while on vacation in the Crimea. For many years he attended God's Hidden Treasure's Summer Camp. *"When sorrows come, they come not single spies but in battalions."* - Claudius (Hamlet 4.5.78-79). And when the news of young Roma's death reached those of us who knew him so well, it was like an entire army had marched over our hearts. We weep at the loss of a young man who spent his years being a wonderful son, grandson, brother, and friend to many.



I first met Roma as a young camper at a God's Hidden Treasure's Bible Camp in Ukraine in 2007. He amazed me with his joyful personality and incredible talents. His beautiful singing voice and skills on the guitar brought joy to many people. I'll never forget our ping pong battles or our time spent swimming at the river. We were blessed to have him as one of our kids at camp.



By 2012, he had grown into a wonderful young man. He had become one of our interpreters for that same camp. As our interpreter he truly had a servant's heart. He jumped right in helping out with games and Bible studies. He never complained when we gave him a task to do. Everyone who knew him could share story after story demonstrating Roma's tremendous character.

However, there is no greater shining example of his character than how he spent his last moments here on earth. **Witnesses of the accident said the last thing he did was save his friend's life, pushing her to safety.** John 15:13 tells us ***"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."*** Roma made the ultimate sacrifice of love in his final moments. Even with his heroic actions, we still feel the pain of losing him so young. His death reminds us that we live in a fallen world. A world that is fragile and filled with sorrow and suffering.

Scripture teaches us that it is right to mourn his death. But we do not grieve like those who have no hope. Even in the tragedy of losing our friend Roma, we know there is hope to be found. Our hope is that death is not the end. Death does not get the last word. As Roma laid his life down for a friend, we know Christ laid down his life for Roma and for all who believe in him. That same Christ rose from the dead, defeating death once and for all. Our hope is that because Christ lives, Roma lives.



One of the lasting images I'll have of Roma, is him pushing around one of the young handicapped children from our camp on his bicycle. He patiently walked beside the young boy Bogdon, helping him steer, taking great care in making sure he didn't fall. Roma was an exceptionally kind person, and the care he showed that young boy reminded me of a story.

It is the story of Pastor John Todd who lived in the 1800's. He lost both of his parents when he was only 6 years old. He was left alone until his kind-hearted aunt took him in and helped raised him. As he grew up he decided to go into the ministry and become a pastor.

Later in life he received a letter from his dear aunt. She was ill and dying, and asked her nephew whether or not death would be the end, or if she could hope for something more, if she could hope for something beyond this life?

In a letter he wrote back to her, that it had been thirty-five years since he was a young boy and his parents died. He was left quite alone in the world. He remembered receiving word from his aunt that she would welcome him into his home and be a kind mother to him. He told her he would never forget the day that he made that long journey to her house. He was quite disappointed when his aunt did not come to pick him up, but one of her servants had. He remembered his tears and the anxiety he felt as he clung to this man on his horse as they rode off to his new home.

Night fell before the journey was over, and he became afraid. He asked the man, "Do you think she'll go to bed before we get there?" "Oh no," replied the servant, "She will stay up for you. When we get out of these woods, you'll see her candle shining in the window."

Sure enough as they got close he could see the candle light. As they got even closer, there she was waiting at the door. She put her arms around him, took him to the warm fire, served him a hot supper, showed him his new room, listened to him say his prayers and sat beside him until he fell asleep.

He finished his letter with this. "'Someday soon God will send for you, to take you to a new home. Don't fear the summons, the strange journey, or the messenger of death. God can be trusted to do as much for you as you were kind enough to do for me so many years ago. At the end of the road you will find love and a welcome waiting, and you will be safe in God's care."

The same warmth and comfort Roma showed to others—the same warmth that aunt showed to her orphan nephew—is the same warmth and comfort Roma now receives from our Lord Jesus. It is the same warmth and comfort found in the Gospel of John chapter 14, where Jesus tells his disciples, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."*

Christ, just like that aunt, is busy preparing a room that will be ours. On our own we would have no place. We would have no room, no shelter at all. On our own we were sinners who do not belong in the Father's house, but thankfully we are not alone. We have Christ, who has done the work for us. He has prepared the room. He is the way the truth and the life. Believing in Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. It is that simple, Christ is the way, he prepared the room, and he has done the work. For that reason we have hope.

We find hope, in that through his belief, Roma has overcome death forever, and has received that warm welcome of our Heavenly Father. Our hope is that we too will receive that same welcome, and be reunited with him on that last day, when Jesus Christ returns to show us the way, and call all of his children home.



By Lillia Yatsenko

The Story of Olia

There are 60 disabled children under the guardianship of our organization. Disabled kids – sounds blasphemous, but it's a cruel reality of life. These are 60 tragedies, 60 uneasy destinies. When we meet these kids, we look for the words which will be a good support and will help them to take a good step into the future. In such cases we have to rely completely on God's wisdom. This wisdom was necessary when 12 years ago the father of a sweet little girl, Olia Esina, came to us.

The young happy family had two wonderful daughters, Aliona and Olia, and parents did everything to give them a happy future. The elder daughter was finishing school and was preparing to enter the pedagogical college, and little curly-haired Olia was a joy for all the family. **In one tragic day everything changed – little Olia fell out of the window from the fifth floor.** The doctors did everything they could, and the rest was given to God's hands. Olia had spinal cord damage and the doctors said that she would live, but never be able to sit or walk by herself.

The fall from the fifth floor was swift and momentary - coming back to life was hard and exhausting. Millimeter after millimeter, step-by-step, with love, patience and sacrifice, the whole family was bringing Olia back to life. Everyone in the family was focused on Olia getting well, and she grew up to be a real fighter.



After this there were a lot of firsts: the first wheelchair, the first class in the Rehab Center, "Chance" the first classes at school, the first dance with Serghei Sheptitskiy in which they were dancing together in the wheelchairs, and the first meeting with a fencing coach. These were the moments when her life began to change.





There was a lot of very hard work and training where she had to learn to overcome all the pain and problems. In Ukraine life for the handicapped is very difficult – there is no public transportation for the disabled – her building has no elevator or ramps. Competitive sport for the disabled in Ukraine began a few years ago and Olia often has to travel to Kiev – another real hardship! At times she wanted to quit because of the pain, despair and seeming hopelessness. But as usual, the

family surrounded her with love and encouragement. As time passed, there were the joys of victories and the tears of defeats.

During this time Olia attended the “Young Camper’s Group” – a ministry of GHT for disabled kids. Over the years Olia often said that her future is in sports. **Olia recently received the title of candidate of the master of sport in fencing.** This year Olia was awarded an apartment by the government!

Olia has a wonderful boyfriend, Dima, who has become her most ardent supporter. And now she and Dima perform in dancing concerts – she in her wheelchair and he as her partner.

These days Olia is going to the Ukrainian competitions in fencing, and membership in the professional National team depends on the result of these competitions. This membership will open the door to many opportunities for Olia and her future.



“Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.”

Jeremiah 29:12-13

NOTE: When Olia was first injured, disabled kids and adults had little hope of a meaningful future. Olia is just one of many stories of how “our” kids are dreaming of new possibilities and hoping for a future. Many of our kids are now enrolled in university rather than languishing at home, waiting for nothing more than being isolated in their apartments. Thank you for all your love, prayers and support – this wonderful love of Jesus brings renewed hope wherever He is proclaimed!



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