



International Bible Society

Prison ministry in Russia

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Lost Son ... That's My Story Too



There are not many other places where the word “freedom” sounds both strange and desirable as it does in a prison. Yet even here, people can experience a specific kind of freedom. They can be “**Free on the inside**” in spite of the circumstances that are surround them.

On a bitterly cold Saturday morning, we arrived at the entrance of the women’s prison in Orjol, a town located about 400 km from Moscow. In front of the prison’s gate stood Lenin’s statue. He intended to set people free, but the revolution did not bring liberation. Even today we see the results of that regime. The prisoners who are gathered in a common room are not searching for Lenin’s kind of the freedom. The only way to fulfill the needs and expectations they have is to bring them the Word of God. Only the Bible with the good news of the Gospel can help them to become “**Free on the inside**”. This is the title of the Living New Testament that IBS has distributed in the Russian prison, along with a booklet entitled, **4th Man**. By reading both,

prisoners have accepted Jesus as their personal Savior. Here is one representative account:

Marina Alexandrovna is thirty-one years old and she was imprisoned four years ago.

“I grew up in Petersburg, a beautiful town beside the Neva river. When I remember my childhood, I have to admit that I was a spoiled, daddy’s little girl. I was allowed to do whatever I wanted to do. I was given all that I wanted. It was impossible for me to admit that other people had different points of view. I was pride, arrogant and intolerant of others.

My steps toward God started only in prison. When I was nineteen my father died and shortly after I was imprisoned for the first time. I can see that I had to go through it all, and I am fully aware now that God has helped me to overcome the past. He has changed my old, self-seeking heart. I confessed my sins and knew that God saved me in spite of all the wrong I had done. He has given me a new feeling of the freedom such as I never experienced when living outside of prison.



During the most recent trial I admitted my part in the criminal acts with no feeling of bitterness or enmity. I was guilty, but now I rest in God’s forgiveness and freedom. In the past I would have been ashamed to claim to be a Christian, but now it is a privilege to confess faith in Jesus, my Savior.

While I was reading the Bible I found myself in it! I was so surprised and deeply touched to find my life story there. The lost son in the Gospel of Luke is my story. Now I understand that my



*heavenly Father is waiting for me with open arms. Sometimes still I feel sadness and pain, but now I have peace and hope inside too. I can confess that I have experienced true liberation. Thanks be to God, I am **“Free on the inside”**. Reading the Bible is helping me improve my relationships with relatives and friends. For example, I have become reconciled in my relationship with my sister, and we have become close.*

I am very thankful for the work you are doing here. All of us prisoners need your help and support. Thanks especially to Aleksei Kirillovich, the IBS worker who gave the Bibles to us. We believers, here in prison, have hope because Jesus has set us free spiritually.