

February 7<sup>th</sup> 1990

Today is an anniversary. It is the anniversary of the end of the Russian government in 1990. All Christians should give thanks to God for this. The Russian government of this time hated Christians. Russia ruled many other countries. Christians were cruelly treated in Russia. They were cruelly treated on the orders of the Russian government. The same thing happened in the countries Russia ruled too.

It was hard to find out about what was happening to Christians in Russia. The Russian government did not let news of them get out. They did not want other countries to know what was happening to them. Christians were in prison in Russia. Their churches were closed. Their secret meetings were stopped. If they printed magazines they were taken away. The government tried to keep this secret from other countries. "We are a good, kind government," they said. "Our people are all prosperous and happy. We do not harm anyone. We only put criminals in prison."

But the news did get out. Little bits of news came out. A bit here and a bit there. The American government was interested. It put all the news together. It made a big report. The report covered all the countries ruled by Russia too: Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria half of Germany, Romania, Czechoslovakia. All these countries had signed an agreement. The agreement said they would not be cruel to people because of their religion. The agreement said they would not be cruel to people because of their ideas. The American government wondered, "Are the Russians keeping the agreement?"

Bit by bit the report was put together. It was sad to read it. Many people in Russia did not like the government. They could not vote to change the government. Only the Communist Party was allowed. Communism says there is no God. If people said they



did not like the Communist Party they were put in prison. If they complained about unfair officials they were put in prison. Some were sent far away to the cold north of Russia. Here it was cold. They did not have proper houses. They had to work very hard. They had little food. Some were put in special

hospitals. "You complain about our wonderful Communism," said the Russian government, "so you must have something wrong with your mind. We will give you treatment to put you right." Some people wanted to leave Russia. They wanted to leave because of Communism. They wanted to be free. "Communism is good," said the

Russian government, “you cannot leave. You are wicked to ask to leave. You will be put in prison.”

The report told about Christians too. People were becoming Christians in Russia. Many young people became Christians. The Russian government was worried. “This is not right,” they said to themselves, “Communism says Christianity should die out. Yet there are more Christians than ever. Communism cannot be wrong. We must stop people becoming Christians.” They were angry. “Communism is right!” they said, “There is nothing wrong with our system.” The Russian government thought out a plan. It took away the pastors of the churches. It put in new pastors. They were government spies. When they preached, the new pastors had a new message. The government had told them what to say. “No children may come to church,” said the new pastors. “No young people can be baptized. No one can join the church unless they are over 30 years old.” Soon the Christians did not go to these churches any more. They had their own churches. “Your churches are illegal,” said the government. They put Sunday school teachers in prison. They took away Bibles. All these things were found out and put in the report. The names of the men and women who were in prison for believing on Jesus Christ were in the report too.

The report noticed something else. People in other countries sometimes heard about the Christians in prison in Russia. They complained to the Russian government. Then the Christians were treated better in prison. Sometimes they were let out.

We can still read this report today. It shows that in the years 1970 to 1980 Christians were cruelly treated in Russia. Then something happened. Some prisoners were freed. Things got a little easier. The Russian system of government was in difficulties. On February 7<sup>th</sup> 1990 there was a big change. Communism was no longer the government of Russia. All the different nations that had made up Russia chose their own kind of government. Christians were let out of prison. Churches were allowed to meet. Some Christians left Russia. No one stopped them going now.

We can remember all this today. We can remember that the church in Russia did not die. It grew. The Russian Government said, “There is no God. Christianity will die out.” They were wrong. Today's memory verse says where we should go in troubled times. The Christians in Russia knew that verse!