



BAPTIST INTERNATIONAL *Challenger*

A publication of **Baptist International Evangelistic Ministries**

Vol. 37 No. 2, 2019

Promoted to Heaven: Peter Rumachik (1931–2019)

If you were asked to name just one Christian from our time who had lived an exemplary life for God despite great pressure, which one would you name? For many believers around the globe, the choice would be Peter Vasilievich Rumachik.

On January 29, this faithful servant of God (and long-time friend of BIEM) passed to his eternal reward at the age of 87. But who was Peter Rumachik? What makes him so respected among believers? Let's glorify God by taking a brief look at how He led in Peter's life.

Early life

Peter was born in the Soviet Union in 1931, the period when Stalin's atheistic government was already working to strangle the church and eradicate faith in God. Because his mother was a Christian, Peter heard the Gospel from a young age.

He and his closest childhood friend Victor regularly met to read the Bible together.

So, even as a boy, Peter believed in God, and he understood the only way to Heaven was by God's grace through faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ. Yet, he saw the reality as the atheistic authorities imprisoned active Christians, confiscated Bibles, and seized places of worship. Understanding how difficult life could be



Peter Vasilievich Rumachik, 1931–2019

for a Christian in the Soviet Union, at age 16 Peter made a decision about becoming a child of God.

"Not right now, and not even in my youth or when I'm middle aged, but I'll follow the path of Christ when I am perhaps 50 or 60."

However when his best friend died at age 18, Peter realized he had no guarantee

of living to old age. He could die any time. Three months later, cutting through snowy woods, he knelt in the snow and prayed, putting his trust in Jesus Christ. In 1948 he was baptized.

Becoming active

Peter once recalled, "From the very beginning of my turning to the Lord, I believed deeply in my Savior, loved Him, and strove to serve Him in any way."

The period from 1955–1960 became particularly memorable for him. During those years he played an active role in preaching and assisting to start a house church in the Moscow suburb of Dyedovsk. By the end of the 1950s, the authorities had fined Peter and the other preachers multiple times. In 1961 the authorities began conducting searches of their homes. The authorities brought criminal charges

against Peter and four others: starting an illegal church, holding crowded meetings in a home, allowing children to be present at church, and for disobedience to the VSEKhB (the government-registered and controlled group of Evangelical Christian-Baptist churches). He and the others were put on trial and punished by being exiled to Siberia's primitive Krasnoyarsk region.

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Remembering Soviet Prisons

In 2003, Peter Rumachik and his son Pavel traveled by train to Siberia to visit some of the prisons where Peter had suffered for his faith in Soviet times. He shared with BIEM the following reminisces from the beginning of that long journey.

Snow-covered fields, forests, and villages flashed past the window of the train car. But in my heart memories welled up of past trips in prison cars that were, as a rule, packed to the limit. I studied the compartment in which I sat and recalled the days when soldiers would stuff up to twenty-two men into a compartment normally intended for four to six people. And then, when it wasn't possible to fit any more in, the soldiers would seize men by their hands and feet and hurl them over the heads of the prisoners already in the compartment.

They gave us sardines or herring, bread, and a little sugar. Lack of water

presented a huge problem. After we had eaten salted fish, our thirst became tortuous. The prisoners quickly drank their water ration. I don't know whether it was premeditated or from a shortage of water, but the soldiers didn't provide any additional water.

Scenes of prison transfers in those days came to mind. It was painful to recall the uncensored language, which was laced with more curse words than clean ones. So much smoke from prisoners' cigarettes filled the compartment that it was awful. In those conditions it was so hard to witness about God, to talk about a normal life let alone eternal life. Nonetheless, one could find individual inmates who listened with great hunger to the Word of God and asked various questions that troubled their sinful souls.

The first stop that lay ahead on this return journey was the strict-regime prison in Perm, where I had been two times. The rules there had been extremely harsh. From wake-up until lights-out, we were not only forbidden to lie down on our bunks; we couldn't even *sit* on them.

If someone asked, "Why not?" the guards responded, "What? Are you asking to be locked in isolation?" As a result, inmates lost their desire to ask such questions.

The second intensive prison I visited was the one in Sverdlovsk, where I was detained four times. This was the most terrible of all the prisons where I had been held. They didn't give us mattresses. The cells were so packed it wasn't possible to step into them. The soldiers just forced prisoners in with their feet. And if an inmate didn't manage to get his feet over the threshold, he risked having them crushed by the heavy metal door that the soldiers would slam shut with malicious contempt. This prison was the filthiest, the most infested with bed bugs. But even in these conditions the testimony of God had to go out.

Further on, I was in other intensive prisons in Novosibirsk, Krasnoyarsk,

Irkutsk, and finally in Chita. Each of those prisons had its characteristic trademarks; each of them had its own hardships. However, in each one I experienced specific joys connected with testifying of divine truths—not only to inmates, but also to the guards and administrators.... ■

Want to Know More?

Read the full story in Peter Rumachik's own words!

Pastor Peter Rumachik endured 18½ years in the Soviet penal system for his faith in Christ. His autobiography *A Path Not Lined with Roses* is available in English or Russian for a \$10 donation (176 pages, softbound). The expanded edition includes Peter's experiences and photos from his 2003 visit to Siberia. Get a copy to challenge and strengthen your heart. Get a second copy to encourage a Christian friend!

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A PATH Not Lined With Roses

by Peter, Pavel, and Luba Rumachik



EXPANDED EDITION

The inspiring story of Pastor Peter Rumachik, imprisoned over eighteen years in the Soviet Gulag for preaching the Gospel

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“While in the taiga wilderness, the grace of God didn’t abandon me. There, too, I was able to labor for His glory.” In 1965, in response to the prayers and petitions of God’s people, Peter was allowed to return home and was considered “rehabilitated.”

New repression

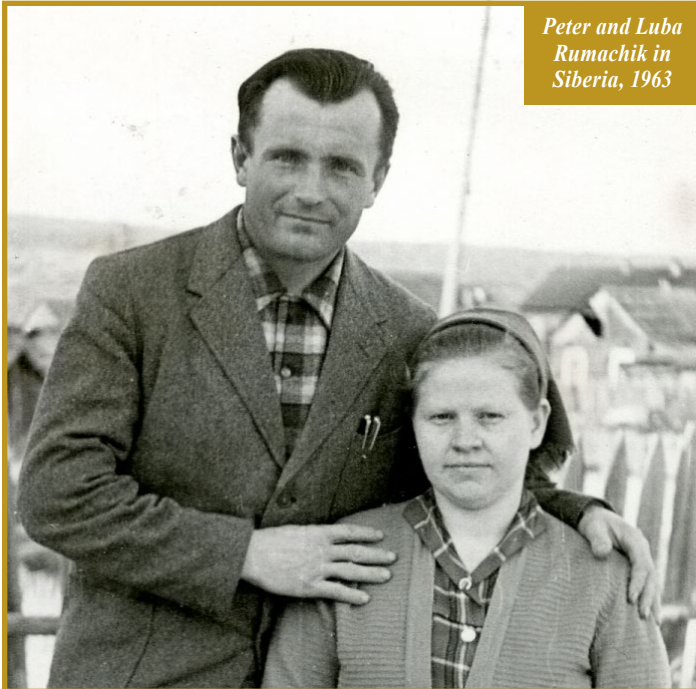
After returning from exile, Peter once again ministered in the Dyedovsk congregation (meeting in private homes). In 1966 he was ordained to the ministry of evangelist.

However, in 1966 the government issued a new decree, and the repression of

active believers greatly increased.

“The wave of repression grew and spread,” he later recalled, “but the children of God, despite difficulties, carried on the work of the ministry, rejoiced in their sorrows, and praised the Lord for such a role.”

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Peter and Luba Rumachik in Siberia, 1963



In 1969, the underground churches' covert prayer bulletins once again listed Peter under the heading "New Prisoners."

The Rumachik family in 1979.



In 1980 Pavel Rumachik met in secret with his father in the woods. Because Peter was in exile at the time, he had to be smuggled into Dyedovsk to see his family.



...Peter Rumachik *continued from page 3*

Again and again members of the Dyedovsk church endured persecution in the form of disrupted worship services, confiscation of Christian literature (whether printed or hand copied), and house searches.

“Before long the Lord once again gave me the honor of being a prisoner for His name.”

After Peter returned home from that term, local authorities began summoning him for discussions. They warned that, if he didn’t cease his religious activities, he

would soon find himself in prison again. However, having learned a lesson from the apostle Peter, who sank when he looked at the storm instead of at Jesus, Peter strived to follow the Lord faithfully. In 1970 he was arrested and shipped to the Volokolamsk prison.

Various tactics

Thus continued a cycle in which Peter was repeatedly investigated, arrested, put on trial for religious activities, shipped away to either an enclosed prison or a labor camp, released at the end of his term, and then investigated all over again.

When the atheistic authorities couldn’t break his faith with prison alone, they tried other tactics. One warden urged him to renounce God so he could go home, declaring that if he didn’t, he’d never be free again. He would die in prison. Peter replied, “Without God, even in freedom it’s prison; but with God I have freedom even in prison.”

Another time, two government agents talked to him in prison for nearly five hours. They declared what a shame it was that he was locked up when he could be home, enjoying life with his wife and children. As enticement, they promised

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Here Peter wears the same prison garb he wore home on the train after his final release in 1987.



With no guarantee he wouldn’t be rearrested, Peter continued preaching in house-church services in 1987.



In spring 2003, Peter and son Pavel traveled to Perm and Chita to revisit places where Peter had suffered for his faith. This cell with its wooden bunks is similar to some where he'd been held.



In the Chita prison in 2003, Peter received permission to share God's Word with a captive audience. They asked questions about God, and one prisoner trusted Christ!

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he could go home right away if he would collaborate with the KGB, to be their man inside the church. Peter rejected the offer. He declared he wouldn't become a Judas for thirty pieces of silver. It wasn't the last time they tried to sway him by offering freedom in exchange for collaboration with the atheists.

Blessings

Along with the hardships, discomforts, and misery, God granted Peter blessings even in bonds. Not everyone

would listen to the Gospel, but some did and accepted Christ. In this way, he won souls among a locked-up segment of Soviet society that no preacher in freedom could contact.

At last, in the late 1980s, reforms took place in the Soviet government. In winter of 1987, Peter was released early from prison and allowed to return home. This time the cycle finally ended. He had endured persecution and 18½ years of imprisonment for his faith in Christ. And the Lord gave him over 30 more years of

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"For thou hast been... a refuge from the storm," Isaiah 25:4.

For years, this picture adorned a wall of the Rumachik home.



Believers traveled from far and wide to attend Peter's funeral in Dyedovsk.

Continuing Fruit from Summer Camps

The summer camps of 2018 are history, but they continue to bear fruit! Here's just one example, from Bilogorodka, Ukraine.

“**T**he older girls’ Sunday school class is continuing to fill up with girls from camp. Katya, the girl we’ve already told about, still attends even though her parents are against it. After a time, three other girls from the older camp group also began attending. One has a Christian grandmother. Her parents aren’t believers, but they happily allow her to attend church services.

“Here’s an interesting thing about a girl named Masha. Following camp, she never showed up for church even though she’d said she wanted to come. At first she got sick. Then she got nervous. Another time she couldn’t come. However, one Sunday she simply showed up. She continues to come. Her family are unbelievers, yet they always let her come. Whenever one of her parents calls [her cell phone] while she’s here, she answers calmly, “No, Mama. I’m still at church. Everything is fine. Okay, bye.” Masha says our camp last summer was the first Christian camp she’d ever attended. In fact, it was the first event she’d ever attended with any connection to church.



Thanks to last year's camp, these girls continue learning of the Lord.

“All of these girls joyfully learn new songs. They say they really enjoy singing even though they didn’t sing in the past. After church, they never hurry home. They linger to chat and help out. These same girls gladly assisted when we put together gift packages for the orphanage children.

“Younger kids who were in camp also come for Sunday school. The number of these children causes us to rejoice.

“We want to express our great gratitude to you who shared your finances so we could hold a camp, and also for your

prayers. Praise God for last summer’s camp, which has drawn so many hearts to Sunday school and to the church!”

*Dear friends of BIEM, this is only one of multiple testimonies we’ve received about the positive impact of camps continuing long afterward. Can you help us with a **gift for 2019 camps**? Gifts of any size will be a big help. Also, now would be a great time to pause and pray for God to work in the hearts of these past campers and in those who will come this summer. Your prayers are vital!* ■

...Peter Rumachik *continued from page 5*

life on earth, in which he continued laboring for the Lord. During those latter years, BIEM hosted him on numerous trips to the U.S., where he shared his testimony in American churches.

How did this man endure such hostility and oppression? Through his own human strength and determination? Not at all. At every turn, he depended on prayer and requested God’s help. He kept in mind that “ahead of me awaits a glorious eternity, which cannot be exchanged for anything in this life.”

Peter is finally enjoying the glorious eternity to which he looked forward for so long. May his example continue to inspire others. Amen! ■



Peter began his walk with Christ by kneeling to pray in a snowy forest. Fittingly, his body was laid to rest in a snowy cemetery surrounded by woods.