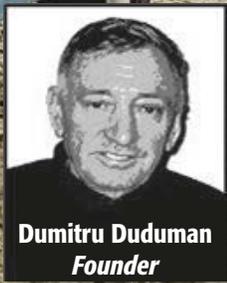




# Hand of **HELP**



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# The Encouragers Become the Encouraged

The preceding title isn't news for anyone who has ever served on the mission field. With great love for God and lost souls, we set out to fulfill our part in the Great Commission by proclaiming the good news of the Gospel and encouraging the oppressed and downtrodden, fully aware of the hardships we will face along the way. Because the road is hard, oftentimes, we are the recipients of the selfsame encouragement we strive to impart.

Living in wealthy, developed countries like the US does not bring out the best in Christians. On the contrary, the opposite is true more often than not. Many think persecution is when your local donut shop runs out of your favorite bear claw the day you wanted one, or the local grocery store limits the purchase of toilet paper to one bale per household. Different parts of the world have different metrics when it comes to hardship.

We have grown so accustomed to our comforts that any sign of disturbing our ecosystem leads to an overly dramatic, exacerbated response. We are often so caught up in our pointless pity party that we miss out on the main things, being the salt of the earth and shining as the light of the world.

*Matthew 5:13-16 You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Now is the time; in fact, the time is past due, when believers everywhere must humbly cry out before our Abba Father and ask that He would accomplish His will in us, that we would be found steadfast and growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus.

*Zechariah 13:9 ...I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'*

Through life's most significant trials, the Christian is strengthened most, not by anything he has achieved, but by the grace that our heavenly Father poured out.

*2 Peter 3:17-18 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

I pray that if my words offend anyone, they will do so unto prayerful consideration and action.

I write as one who has recently been humbled, challenged and encouraged by the witness and testimonies of my brothers and sisters in Ukraine.

As waves upon waves of uncertainty loom at their doorstep, I am witnessing a group of servant brothers and sisters that have surrendered their lives entirely unto the Lord and His service and have trusted He who knows the hour of their end wholeheartedly.

I pray that if the Lord had us go through similar trials, we too would leave behind a testimony of steadfastness, humility, perseverance, of being the salt and the light.

James 1:2-4 *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

Please be encouraged by the short messages we've received from our brothers and sisters on the frontlines these past couple of weeks.

Daniel Boldea

People are watching the news and cultivating their fears. Many Christians pray for peace, but most pray, "God, let Your will be done and make me a part of it!"

For the most part, foreign visitors and business people are leaving Ukraine right now. The local people are stocking up on groceries, filling up their gas tanks, trying to have some cash on hand, packing their emergency go bags, and making evacuation plans. The believers frequently gather for prayer, and new prayer groups are organized. We feel like we are on the brink of war, and it seems like it will pummel us as it has twice in the past century.

I believe that these days, believers will enter their true callings of genuine discipleship and being used in revealing His heavenly glory on earth.

We must seize this time and opportunity to be good servants of God.

Yes, we fear, but we say as David did, "*Bless the Lord, O my soul*" Psalm 103:1. We know Whose Kingdom we are citizens of, and we have been told in His Word, "*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" John 16:33

*A pastor from Ukraine*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS!

A loud bomb went off this morning, followed by automatic weapons firing. We don't want to leave! However, the authorities are telling us that if the war starts from the East, we will be forced to evacuate due to the proximity of our home to the border. Therefore, we are moving forward with our ministry, wanting to do as much as possible in the time we have left.

*A family of missionaries on the frontlines*

Dear family in Christ, during these days of incredible tension, the Ukrainian people, as never before, feel that the Lord is answering your prayers for us. Thank you for your faithfulness to our King of kings as we labor together to build the Kingdom of God and glorify Him! Thank you for your love and generous support of our work! May God richly reward you.

*A pastor from Ukraine*

I am not going anywhere. I am tired. If I must die, I will die here, doing the Lord's work.

*An octogenarian pastor in Ukraine*

We are not nearly as worried for ourselves or our families as we are about the people that will perish and go to hell. This thought keeps us up at night and makes us weep.

*A family of missionaries on the frontlines that are currently woken up by shelling every morning*

# Pastor, Builder, Baker

I recall participating in a large Sunday service as a child. The worship leader started the service by leading us in a time of prayer, then singing, and soon after, asked the pastor to come and deliver his sermon. The pastor joined the large congregation through a door that was conveniently placed behind the pulpit. The door would allow him to not only avoid small talk before the service but would also prove to be a great escape route after finishing his message.

I'm sure we have all seen pastors that are disconnected from the flock and who feel like the entirety of their duty is in delivering a 20-25-minute motivational speech inspired by Tony Robbins himself.

Today, we don't even need an escape hatch for pastors to be absent from their flock. "Sermons" are efficiently streamed in the comfort of your home via a recording from the comfort of the pastor's home. So streamlined and convenient, no one even thinks twice as long as the tithing is up.

Surely that passage in Hebrews is antiquated, is it not?

Hebrews 10:24-25 *Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Elders/Pastors are called to *"shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."* 1 Peter 5:2-4

All that to say, when you do get to shake the hand of a true shepherd leader, count it as a privilege. If you

are blessed with such a leader, pray for them often!

I was blessed to meet pastor Roma from Druzhkovka, Ukraine.

As often is the case in this part of the world, a pastor's job is non-stop. They not only serve the congregation by preaching the Word of God but become an integral part of the life of their parishioners, well exceeding even what is Scripturally required of them.

Druzhkovka was not part of our initial itinerary, but a trusted brother insisted that we stop by and visit with brother Roma.

We drove up and were welcomed by the sweet aroma of freshly baked bread. I need to point out that it was a Saturday, and the baked bread aroma was not a marketing gimmick to boost church membership by pleasing the olfactory (like realtors suggest owners baking cookies when they are showing a home to manipulate the senses), but rather a ministry that the church had taken on to serve their community.



Pastor Roma tends to the fire of a new type of oven that can bake bread using only small pieces of wood and mostly cardboard, while his wife and a team of volunteers knead and shape loaf after loaf. Those in need are welcome to take the



Pastor Roma shared how the project never stagnated because of a lack of funds. Working alongside volunteer construction workers, pastor Roma never stopped smiling. Not only was he wearing many hats, but he was also doing so joyfully, being an example of service to his flock as unto the Lord.



bread for free, while the others can purchase their loaves 50% cheaper than the going rate in town. The monies collected cover the cost of the free bread distributed and help fund various projects around their small church.

We prayed with our brothers and thanked them for their dedication to the Lord as servants. We left some money with them for their project and pray that we can continue to support their work.

The pastor showed us around and shared that their largest demographic was the children. After continued growth, having as many as 60 children participating in Sunday school, in faith, they broke ground on a three-room addition for this purpose.

The following day, I received pictures with the wood beams required to continue the work; the bill was for the exact amount we had given them. We thank God for His Providence!

For those wondering, yes, we received samples of the oven-hot bread, which was delicious.

Daniel Boldea



# The Certain and Uncertain

There are a few things that we can expect that are, in fact, certain. If you go long enough without a meal, you will experience hunger. If you live in the Midwest or in the area of the world we minister in, you will inevitably experience extreme cold. If you give a politician enough time, he will surely disappoint, but that's a subject for a different time.

Given the certainty of hunger and cold, desperate pleas are also a certainty.

The uncertainty lies with whether or not we can meet those requests. As new mission field opportunities arise, we stop for a brief minute and think, how can we possibly meet all of these needs?

In the almost 40 years that we have been around, our God has provided over and above anything we could have imagined. This year has been no different.

Because of your prayers and generous support, we were able to turn uncertainty to certainly meeting all of the needs brought to our attention, distributing massive amounts of firewood, food and livestock.

Thank you for the intricate part you play in this work.

We certainly serve a gracious Father!

*2 Cor. 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

Hand of Help Staff





# *The Certain and Uncertain (cont.)*



# Child of the Month

Carla, born in 2008, comes from a family of 4 children living in Botosani county. The family's oldest child has been in foster care, living with a relative since he was only three months old. The local Child Protection authorities have always focused on their situation, attempting to make the parents sensitive to the importance of adequately raising, caring for, and loving their children.

Their family problems escalated once the fourth child was born in December 2012. The family doctor monitoring the child's development in his first months of life noticed a total lack of care. They were often left alone in the house with no food and no heat.

Additionally, the newborn child was urgently transferred to a foster family due to lack of food and the imminent prospect of losing his life.

Carla and her brother, Vlad, the two remaining children, were often silent witnesses to constant conflicts involving verbal and physical abuse between their parents at home.

Carla's mother struggled with alcohol and neglected her children, leaving them alone while the father was at work.

On one of those days, the father forced his wife to leave their house as she manifested no interest or love whatsoever in raising

their children. Being the only adult in the home and the only one who could work, the father stayed at work all day long, struggling to bring home as much money as possible. The neighbors noticed that the children would frequently remain alone in the house, deprived of the essential resources: food, water, light, heat.



Vlad's right palm was burned because of such deprivation and lack of parental control. The scar tissue prevented Vlad's normal development, leaving him with a visible deficiency in the correct function of his hand.

We welcomed Carla and Vlad to our family in 2013. We were overjoyed to see them adjust to their new environment and slowly start their path to maturity.

Carla is in the 7th grade. She is a studious young girl and would like to continue her education. She loves reading, listening to music, and playing soccer. She has a strong relationship with her brother, and together they spend part of their school breaks with their father or aunt. She desires to get a job and help her father as much as possible. We know God is the One able to mend their wounds and restore their family. May they be obedient to our God and experience the hope and love that He wants to pour over them!

# Dear Brethren,

Every pursuit or endeavor must start with an end goal in mind. It cannot be vague or lacking detail, at least if you want it to succeed in any meaningful way. After an end goal has been established, a rational, logical human being would then sit down and account for time, energy, resources, and steps it would take to reach it. It's at this juncture that the distinction between wise and unwise is most readily visible because while the wise man will acknowledge the difficulty of the task before him, the imprudent one will sugarcoat the hardships and gloss over the effort required to succeed.

When we acknowledge the difficulty of the task before us, we take steps to mitigate it. When we minimize the difficulty, we end up on the side of the road, defeated and broken, hoping some good Samaritan will take pity. There are always unforeseen issues that may arise along the way, but if we plan for the foreseeable ones, the unforeseen ones won't impact in such a devastating fashion.

The fact that we are living in the last days is becoming increasingly undeniable. Everything Jesus forewarned us of, from wars and rumors of war to pestilences, division, and animosity among humanity, is playing out before our eyes.

Since to be forewarned is to be forearmed, if the season we are entering into finds us ill-equipped, unprepared, or asleep, we will have no one to blame for our inaction but ourselves. What more could God have done than what He has already done to wake the church from its slumber? What more could God have done than what He has already done to make the household of faith aware of just how perilous these times would be?

The entirety of the end times landscape has been laid out meticulously within the pages of Scripture. Yet, most do their utmost to find ways of ignoring, minimizing, or skirting those passages. From the ever-popular "Those scriptures weren't meant for us" to the likewise in vogue "We're not going to be here for those times" rather than prepare, the church is justifying its indifference.

Every day we are hoping for better, and it just gets worse. The reason for this is twofold: first, we are hoping that politicians, policies, and politics will make it better rather than God. Second, we hope this will get better with us standing on the sidelines and having no skin in the game.



The church of today no longer wants to lead. The church of today wants nothing to do with bravery or standing up for what's right, but hoping that if it shrinks into the shadows, makes itself small and unassuming, the godless will leave them to enjoy their Hillsong and empty mantras.

We've gone from church being the place where saints go to fellowship, get equipped, and encouraged, to one that caters to making sinners feel better about continuing in their sin, refusing to call them to repentance for fear of making them feel uncomfortable.

Of all the things that Jesus said regarding the last days, it's not the wars, famines, earthquakes, or pestilences that trouble me; it's the reality that many will come in His Name and deceive many, and though men might claim otherwise, that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first.

You have all you need to finish the race. You have all you need to achieve your objective. It is all laid out in the Book, including the pitfalls, hardships, and troubles you will face along your journey. If it's of any comfort know that you are not alone in this race, and in His abundant grace, when you grow weary, He will carry you home.

*Deuteronomy 31:8 And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.*

With love in Christ,

Michael Boldea, Jr.