

Life and Happiness

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918 – 2008) was a Russian novelist, historian and critic of Soviet totalitarianism. He helped to raise global awareness of the gulag and the Soviet Union's forced labor camp system. And he paid a price for it.

According to *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia, Solzhenitsyn was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1970 "for the ethical force with which he pursued the indispensable traditions of Russian literature." He was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1974 but returned to Russia in 1994 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Accused of anti-Soviet propaganda, Solzhenitsyn spent time in prison and later was sent to internal exile at Kok-Terek before being exonerated and freed in 1956.

So what would a man who suffered such persecution and deprivation of all that money could buy have to say about life and realistic happiness? You might be surprised.



In *The Prison Chronicle*, he wrote: "Don't be afraid of misfortune and do not yearn after happiness. It is, after all, all the same. The bitter doesn't last forever, and the sweet never fills the cup to overflowing." And then he adds:

"It is enough if you don't freeze in the cold and if hunger and thirst don't claw at your sides. If your back isn't broken, if your feet can walk, if both arms work, if both eyes can see, and if both ears can hear, then whom should you envy? And why? Our envy of others devours us most of all. Rub your eyes and purify your heart and prize above all else in the world those who love you and wish you well."

His words are fitly spoken.

And they should prompt us to reflect on – and be thankful for – the daily blessings showered upon us.

Every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change (James 1:17 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter