

## Russian Proverbs and Sayings

(Collected by B.J. Gerth (*aka Tatiana Nikolaevna Tumanova*))

The end crowns the work.

You can't build a house without corners, you can't talk without proverbs.

All for one, one for all.

Where there's smoke, there's fire.

In troubled waters there's good fishing.

The game isn't worth the candle.

Chase after two rabbits and you won't catch one.

A cracked pot lives two centuries.

The rich man even has the wind at his back.

Be afraid to live, but don't be afraid to die.

A Tatar saw in a dream a bowl of jelly, but he had no spoon; so he went to bed with a spoon, but did not dream of jelly.

A crow in peacock feathers.

The priest will not read two masses to a deaf man.

A hungry hen dreams of millet.

Friends won't feel crowded even in one grave.

A fool will praise a fool.

Even a clown sometimes weeps.

Even a blind hen will sometimes find a grain.

Live a lifetime, hope a lifetime.

Nice to be a guest, but there's no place like home.

Just let there be a forest and there's sure to be a forest spirit.

We were having no trouble, so the devils got busy.

Every fox praises his own tail.

Everybody is both his own friend and enemy.

Crowded but not at odds.

Don't impress your regulations on another's monastery.

The deaf one hears and the blind one sees all sorts of things.

One doesn't look a gift horse in the mouth.

The task fears its master.

Houses are built not with the tongue but with rubles and hatchets.

Judge not others, look at yourself.

For fools no law is written.

No need to sow fools, they come up of themselves.

Tell him to pound (*something in a mortar*) and he'll knock the bottom out of the mortar.

Watch with all three eyes, don't yawn (*be alert*).

He has a heart, but it's shut with a little door.

Hindsight will not mend a matter.

He pours from the void into the empty.

I have the teeth, but there's nothing to eat.

As you shout, so the echo shouts back.

However well you feed the wolf, he keeps looking to the woods.

Like father, like son.

He floats in abundance like cheese in butter.

The key is the master of the lock.

Had a little mare -- no collar; got collar -- little mare gone.

He who is destined to hang won't drown.

The end crowns the work.

The kopeck saves the ruble.

A joke to the tomcat, but tears for the mice.

He who lied yesterday won't be believed tomorrow.

He who doesn't plow won't make a crooked furrow.

Might makes right.

Queer where a crooked path will sometimes take you.

Forge the iron while it's hot.

A kind word is stronger than a cudgel.

One doesn't hit a man who is down.

The forest does not grieve for the loss of a tree.

When trees are felled the chips fly.

If you like to coast you must also like to pull the sleigh uphill.

Better late than never.

A wet man does not fear rain.

My hut is on the outskirts, I don't know a thing.

The wise men have the honor, but the fools have the luck.

The husband is the brain, the wife -- the soul.

Poor Makar, all the pine cones drop on him.

No use reproaching the mirror if your mug is crooked.

No need for riches when there's peace in the family.

The scythe has hit a rock.

Honey on the tongue, but ice in the heart.

Don't get into another man's sleigh.

All that glitters is not gold.

It won't always be shrove-tide for the tomcat, the great fast is coming (*Lent*).

Not the gift is dear, love is dear.

An uninvited guest is worse than a raid by the Tatar (*Mongols*).

Not everybody plows the field, but everybody wants to eat bread.

Don't have a hundred rubles, have a hundred friends.

Don't spit in the well; the time may come when you want a drink.

The devil is not as frightful as he is painted.

Don't teach me dance, I am a clown myself.

Neither fish nor meat.

Two heads are better than one.

You won't carry a firebrand under your coat very far.

You can't tie a knot with one hand.

For one man the angels will forge his fate with little silver hammers, for another the devil does it with the butt of an ax.

Repetition is the mother of learning.

Caught a bear! -- Bring him here! -- He won't come. -- Then come yourself! -- He won't let me.

Seat a swine at the table and he'll put his feet on it.

Many are valiant after the battle.

Once misfortune comes you might as well open the gates.

To a bird the twigs are dearer than a golden cage.

A frightened crow is afraid of a bush.

The empty barrel thunders the loudest.

To a drunken man the sea is only knee-deep.

Work is no bear, it won't run away to the woods.

Too soon the birdie sings, the cat may still get it.

One hand washes the other.

A fisherman recognizes another from afar.

If you live with wolves you must howl like a wolf.

Lie down with dogs and you'll get up with fleas.

Measure seven times before you cut off once.

Morning gray -- a pretty day.

A word once spoken you cannot chop out with an ax.

To fear death is not to live.

If you're afraid of wolves, don't walk in the forest.

Death is not beyond the hills but behind your back.

The dog is barking to frighten the moon.

Conscience has no teeth but it will consume you.

You can't skin an ox twice.

Sleep is better than any medicine.

Argue 'til you weep, but don't make a bet.

Old is the tree, but the roots are fresh.

An old wolf knows what's what.

An old friend is better than two new ones.

The cap is sewn, but not in a cap-like manner.

A well-fed man cannot understand a hungry one.

The slower you drive, the farther you get.

A baby with seven nursemaids hasn't one eye watching him.

A smart man cannot always untie what a fool has tied.

The morning is wiser than the evening.

Learning is light, ignorance -- darkness.

It's nice to tease a bear from the window.

Smart though the devil is, God wants to have nothing to do with him.

Whether you smack the owl against the pole or with the pole whack the owl -- it's all the same; the owl is dead.

Chickens are counted in the fall.

With whatever we have we are glad to serve.

Anything to amuse the child, just so he won't cry.

What's on the mind is on the tongue.

What you sow you shall reap.

What is wholesome to a Russian is death to a German.

Kitty knows whose meat she ate (*stole*).

You can't hide an awl in a sack.

The tongue chatters, but the mind isn't catching up.

The eggs are teaching the hen.

Pray once when going to the wars; pray twice when going to sea; but pray thrice when going to get married.

A wife is no balalaika; you can't put her on the shelf after playing.

When money speaks, Truth keeps its mouth shut.

Don't trust a landlord 'til he's six feet under.

A man's a fool to make his doctor his heir.

If you're a rooster, crow; if you're a hen, lay eggs.

You can pull and pull, but you can't milk a bull.

A good friend is better than a hundred relatives.

The greatest Tsar must be put to bed with a shovel at last.

Pray to God, but keep rowing towards shore.

Born, baptized, or in the earth laid -- always the priest has to be paid.

Be righteous before God; be wealthy before a judge.

The Law is like an axle -- you can turn it whichever way you please, if you give it plenty of grease.

What men usually ask for when they pray to God is, that two and two may not make four.

With lies you may go ahead in the world, but you can never go back.

Don't buy the house, buy the neighborhood.

Pray to God, but don't anger the devil.

If a wolf has something in its teeth, George gave it. (*St. George is the patron of wild and domestic animals*)

A good merchant has neither money nor goods.

A net will catch more than a pole.

A priest's belly is made up of several sheepskins.

All ages are submissive to love.

An argument is fine only when there is to be a fight.

As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far place.

Don't drive a Binya into the woods if he has found his way to your house.

Don't raise your stick and the dog won't bark at you.

Eat what is cooked, listen to what is said.

Even honor is not an honor, if there is nothing to eat.

For him who does not believe in signs, there is no way to live in the world.

He can cheat a fish of its skin.

He took the devil's mat, but he'll pay back with his skin.

His word is as good as a tied knot.

If the pocket is empty, the judge is deaf.

If you don't deceive, you can't sell.

Loose words are picked up like gold coin.

No one knows how the poor man dines.

Not everything is a mermaid that dives into the water.

Old age is not a joy, but death is not a gain.

One man in a field is not a warrior.

Peace lasts till the army comes, and the army lasts till peace comes.

Smooth hands love the labor of others.

The horse loves oats; the earth, manure; and the governor, tribute.

The wise man boasts of his goods and wares; the foolish one of his young wife.

There's no harm in wine, it's drunkenness that's at fault.

To every high mountain, there is a higher one.

Until you have smoked out the bees, you can't eat the honey.

You can't do everything at once.

You do not drink soup with a knife.

A man is judged by his deeds, not by his words.

The sun will shine into our yard, too.

One does not sharpen the axes after the time they are needed.

After a storm (*comes*) fair weather, after sorrow (*comes*) joy.

All are not cooks that walk with long knives.

All cats are gray at night.

Every seed knows its time.

Any fish is good if it is on the hook.

All roads lead to Rome.

One does not regret giving one's own ear-ring to one's dear friend.

The appetite comes during a meal.

Onion treats seven ailments.

As you cooked the porridge, so must you eat it.

As you make your bed, so you will sleep.

It is a bad workman that has a bad saw.

One may make up a soft bed (*for somebody*), but still it will be hard to sleep in.

You needn't be afraid of a barking dog, but you should be afraid of a silent dog.

One does not look for good from good.

Better a dove on the plate than a woodgrouse in the mating place.

You cannot break through a wall with your forehead.

Better to stumble than make a slip of the tongue.

One who sits between two chairs may easily fall down.

Beware of a quiet dog and still water.

A sparrow in the hand is better than a cock on the roof.

A bird may be known by its flight.

Once burned by milk you will blow on cold water.

Idleness is the mother of all vices.

You cannot pull a fish out of a pond without labor.

No money is taken for just looking (*at somebody or something*).

He would exclaim “Ah” looking at himself.

One would like to eat fish, but would not like to get into the water.

Where something is thin, that’s where it tears.

A fly will not get into a closed mouth.

There will be trouble if the cobbler starts making pies.

Any sandpiper is great in his own swamp.

A drop hollows out a stone.

We do not care what we have, but we cry when it is lost.

Not everyone who has a cowl on is a monk.

Curious Varvara’s nose was torn off.

God does not give to the cow that butts.

Stretch your legs according to your clothes.

Stormy weather cannot stay all the time, the red sun will come out, too.

You need a sharp axe for a tough bough.

God takes care of the one who takes care of himself.

A wolf won’t eat wolf.

Do not praise yourself while going into battle; praise yourself coming out of battle.

You do not need a whip to urge on an obedient horse.

Do not carry rubbish out of your hut.

Cut down the tree that you are able to.

One does not go to Tula with one’s own samovar.



Do not cut the bough you are sitting on.

Do not make an elephant out of a fly.

Do not measure (*others*) by your own arshin (*1 arshin=28 inches*).

Do not plant a tree with its root upward.

A man should not be struck when he is down.

You do not swap horses while crossing the ford.

Do not teach a pike to swim, a pike knows his own science.

Drowning man clutches at straw.

God gives to those who get up early.

One is one's own master on one's own stove.

There is no evil without good.

He who digs a hole for another may fall in it himself.

All lay loads on a willing horse.

One does not look for good when he is well.

Every peasant is proud of the pond in his village because from it he measures the sea.

Every road has two directions.

Success and rest don't sleep together.

Live a century, learn a century.

Where there is courage, there is victory.

Looking at a tree see its fruit, looking at a man see his deeds.

Keep your ears wider and your mouth narrower.

A horse has four legs, but still it stumbles.

Water does not run under a lying stone.

Fear has big eyes.

East or West, home is best.

One cannot put back the clock.

The truth will surface.

Queer where a crooked path will sometimes take you.