

### **3. God Sees the Truth but Waits**

by Leo Tolstoy Tolstoy's short story 'God Sees the Truth, but Waits' first published in 1872 is about the false conviction and imprisonment of a man for a murder he did not commit, and it takes the form of a parable for forgiveness.

#### **About the Author**

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) was a Russian writer and a master of realistic fiction. He was born in a wealthy family in Russia. His parents died when he was a child. He was brought up by his elder brothers and relatives. He studied languages and law at Kazan University for three years. He was dissatisfied with the school and left Kazan without a degree. Then he returned to his estate and educated himself independently. In 1848, he moved to the capital, St. Petersburg, where he passed two tests for a law degree. He took military training and became an Army officer. He wrote his first novel *Childhood* (1852), which became a success. With writing *Boyhood* (1854) and *Youth* (1857), he concluded the autobiographical trilogy. He also wrote *Sevastopol Sketches* (1855), based upon his experiences in the Crimean War. He primarily wrote novels and short stories. Later in his life, he also wrote plays and essays. He is best known for the novels *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1877). His fiction includes dozens of short stories and several novellas such as *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886), *Family Happiness* (1859), and *Hadji Murad* (1912). During his last three decades, Tolstoy also achieved world renown as a moral and religious teacher.

#### **God Sees the Truth but Waits (Summary)**

The story "God Sees the Truth but Waits" is written by a popular Russian story writer Leo Tolstoy. This story is about a young merchant named Ivan Dmitrich Aksionov who lived in a town of Russia called Vladimir. He had two shops and a house. He was a

quite handsome, fair haired, curly-headed, full of fun and fond of singing. Before marriage, he used to drink much but after marriage, he gave up drinking.

One summer Aksionov planned to go to Nizhny Fair for business. When he got ready to go there and to say goodbye to his family, his wife urged him not to go because she had a bad dream to him. She explained the dream as she saw her husband with grey hair when he returned from the town. He didn't care about the will of his wife. He left the house and went to the town. When he travelled half-way, he met a merchant whom he knew. They both stayed at an inn. They drank tea and went to bed in nearby rooms. The next morning, when he got up, he visited the landlord of inn. He paid the bill and continued his journey. When he had gone about twenty-five miles, he stopped to feed the horse. At that time, he was approached by some policemen. They asked him some questions. Aksionov answered them. He was suspected as a murderer. They checked the luggage of him and found a blood-stained knife. Then he was arrested on a charge of robbery and murder of that merchant. He was sent to prison as the murderer though e claimed that he was not the murderer.

His wife came with their children to meet him in prison. She became unconscious after seeing the condition of her husband. When she became conscious, she informed Aksionov that an appeal to Czar had been rejected. His wife's suspicion question made him conclude that he could rely on God only to know the truth. Aksionov was tortured in prison a lot. Later on, he was sent to Siberian prison to work in mines. Aksionov spent his 26 years there. He became quite old with grey hair and beard.

One day a fresh gang of prisoners arrived in prison. Among them, there was Makar Semyonich who had been imprisoned for stealing a horse from a sledge. He shared his experience with other prisoners boastfully. After hearing the words of Makar, Aksionov became sure that he was responsible for the crime which he was blamed. The

following night, Aksionov noticed Makar digging a hole under the wall of the prison to escape from there. The next day the authorities came there and asked them about the person who made that hole to escape. The Governor asked the prisoners to tell the truth one by one. Aksionov didn't open his mouth. He told the Governor that he was unknown about that though he knew that Makar did that wrong activity.

The following night Aksionov found Makar sitting at the foot of his bunk. Makar overwhelmed by Aksionov's goodness in protecting him from the Governor. Makar explained the reality of his guilt so that Aksionov might be forgiven. Makar felt pity on his past deed. He beat his head on the floor and wept for his forgiveness. Aksionov even wept along with Makar hearing his sobbing. By hearing the regret of Makar, Aksionov's heart grew light. He longed to stay and die in prison. At last, Makar accepted his guilt to the authorities. Aksionov died shortly before the authorities ordered him to release.