



PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

«And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free»

John 8:32

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Someone said that everything is learned through comparison. And indeed, in order to understand something, circumstances or conditions to which to compare our situation to are necessary. For example, it is impossible to fully appreciate the beauty of heat, if you have never experienced cold, or how can you enjoy something sweet, if you have never tasted anything bitter? Also it is impossible to feel coziness and comfort if you never lived in a slum. How you can really know joy and happiness if you have never gone through troubles and grief? Can a person see and appreciate the beauty of nature as well as a person who has not seen it for decades? And can one understand the value of freedom, if one has never been deprived of it?

Every day, millions and billions of people wake up and plunging headlong into everyday vanity, do not see anything before themselves. Does one pay attention to the beautiful sky when one rushes to work? Perhaps, not. Most people see the sky as something ordinary and not interesting. The one time that the human eye does notice the sky is when it is raining. Otherwise, few people, looking up, breathe the air to the fullest and admire the greatness of the heavens. People basically live as if nothing unusual around them is happening and everything that surrounds them is nothing more than something ordinary and everyday. People do not look at the sun, because it blinds their eyes.

me, but in the sky like in a mirror I can see the reflection of any time of the year, see buds on spring trees that I did not pay attention to before, and I can see all the glory of earthly nature and the greatness of the universe in the night sky. The rain and thunderstorms also became for me a mysterious phenomena of nature, to which I now look differently. Now, when I hear the thunder, I immediately recall the words of Job, where he says: **«Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him? But the thunder of His power who can understand?»** (Job 26:14).

Today, I perceive people quite differently. For example, if I think about my attitude toward enemies, today for me enemies do not exist. The knowledge of Jesus Christ changed my mind about how I view others. The Lord teaches us, **«Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you»** (Matthew 5:44). Indeed, when I began to put into practice the recommendation of Jesus Christ, there was no room for enmity and revenge in my heart. Long years spent by me in prison, convinced me that much is learned by comparison. My whole life divided into before and after, has cardinally opposite sides. I have something to compare my life to the prison and the one that it became from the moment when I repented and believed

EVERYTHING IS LEARNED THROUGH COMPARISON, BUT DO WE NEED TO PAY A PRICE?!



They look at the moon and the stars only in passing, for this has become ordinary and uninteresting for them. From the rain they hide, from the wind, they wrinkle and curl; and from the snow, they wrap themselves up and shiver. In general, because of everyday routine, people do not notice much about themselves either, and life passes them by in a blur.

Until a certain moment, I lived like this — without seeing anything around me. I lived as if I knew everything in the world and there was nothing unusual around me. I was not surprised at anything. I looked to the sky only when I needed to determine where the sun was. My eyes rarely gazed at the boundless azure of the sky. I also did not particularly look at the night sky, filled with stars and the moon. I did not pay attention to the swollen buds of spring trees; the snowflakes in the winter were not unusual for me. The whole nature around me, together with its forests, seas and rivers, was for me a common occurrence and did not impress me at all. Even close people whom I loved, became for me a part of my daily routine, in which I did not even consider doing something nice or special for them. Everything around me was ordinary: nature, people, work, home and so on. So passed the months, the years and whole decades, until I was imprisoned.

Then the days came when I started remembering what I no longer had. I compared everything and found a striking difference in everything. Everything that I did not pay attention to before became close and dear to me. Now I finally clearly understood that everything is learned in comparison. In order to compare I was given not only an opportunity, but forced circumstances, into which I had driven myself. I not only learned to compare heat to cold or rain with snow, or to distinguish love from passion, but also learned to appreciate everything that God gives me each day. One day, reading the book of Isaiah, I stumbled upon words after reading which, I suddenly began to see everything that surrounded me in a new light. In one of the chapters of his book there are these words: **«Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth»** (Isaiah 40:26). These words, as if through open windows, turned my gaze to the greatness of the heavens. Today, unfortunately I do not see the nature around

in God. Today I know the price of air and bread perfectly. I know what cold is, and also the intolerable stuffiness and stench. I can tell tasty from tasteless. I know what duties are and the total absence of any rights. I know what it's like to be closed in for twenty-three hours a day in a cell for decades with only an hour to see the sky from the hallway windows while passing by. I know what it is like to lose loved ones and not being able to spend time with them. I know how it is to be a father and not to be able to educate your children and give them your love. I know what betrayal is, and I know the value of friendship. But most importantly, I have learned and am able to love not only those who love me, but even those who are unworthy of love. Today I learned a lot from life. As Apostle Paul said, **«I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need»** (Philippians 4:12).

Thank God that all this came into my life. I really learned a lot and learned a lot by comparing. I appreciate now what I did not appreciate before, and I love those whom I hated. I learned a lot in comparison, but one question still remains, *Is it really necessary to pay such a high price to know all this?*

Surely, many of those who are reading these lines now see their own reflection in them. You, probably as well as I ask the same question, *Do we really have to pay such a high price to gain insight and to know the truth?* You as well as me are uncomfortable recalling the past in order to compare it to the present; we are ashamed of ourselves. It's a shame and bitter that everything that has already happened can not be changed or corrected. You cannot return what is not returnable, and you cannot ask forgiveness from those who will never hear you again. Now all that remains is to live alone with the conscience that reproaches us and a desire to save many erring people from the evil ways. Although someone once said that everything is known in comparison, God forbid anyone to discover this life at such a price!

Today, only one can serve as a comfort today. The Holy Scripture says: **«Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new»** (2 Corinthians 5:17). Thank God that every sinner is given a chance to start life from scratch.

I. GORIK.

CHRISTIAN NEWS

THE CAPTAIN OF THE FOOTBALL TEAM OF IRAN OPENLY PROFESSES CHRISTIANITY

In 2006, for the first time in a hundred years in the national team in Iranian soccer appeared a Christian player named Andranik Teymourian, who's an Armenian from Tehran.

«I play on a Muslim team, but I'm a Christian. I have Armenian roots, Iranian passport, and I'm proud of it», — reports, radios,



referring to an interview of a footballer the British «Guardian».

After the first game the captain crossed himself under the sounds of the Iranian national anthem in front of the whole stadium, and then began to do so after each goal scored.

Wherever the team played, Teymourian immediately on arrival in the country looked for a Church, he was assigned a private room for prayer.

The radio station notes that women in Iran are prohibited from attending football matches, and many of them came to Russia specifically to at least once in their life see a football game at the stadium.

<https://cnl.news>

YOUR LETTERS

LOOKING FOR RELATIVES

Hello, dear editorial staff of the newspaper «Prisoner»!

I am writing to you with a request for help in search of my brother, **Igor Vladimirovich Odnogorchenko**, born in 1991. Identifying marks include: large burns on both calves.

When my brother was only five years old, our parents were denied parental rights and he was taken with my sister and I to the hospital. I escaped from there, but they stayed. Then they were distributed: my sister was taken to a boarding school and my brother to an orphanage. When my parents were alive, my father went to the city executive committee where he was informed that Americans adopted my brother. So I decided to contact your editorial staff, since the newspaper «Prisoner» is also published in America.

Please publish my request for the search of my brother in your blessed newspaper. One of these days I will be released and as soon as I will be released, I will inform you the place of my residence for contact. Thank you very much for the newspaper. May the Lord be with you!

Г. ОДНОГОРЧЕНКО,
ул. Таджикская, 17, ХИК-43, г. Харьков, Украина, 61089.

Dear brother Igor, I greet you and all the employees of the editorial office of the newspaper «Prisoner»!

Thank you for helping me find friends, brothers and sisters through this section of the newspaper. I want to express my gratitude to all the Christians who bear the Good News of Jesus Christ in the world of sin and wickedness. Thank you very much and thank you very much for everything.

I would like to take this opportunity to ask you to find my relatives: **my sister Irina Ivanovna Vasilyuk**, born in 1979, who lives in the city of Homiel or in that region (I've been looking for her since childhood, my parents were deprived of their parental rights, and we were sent to different boarding schools); **father Aleksandr Nikolaevich Vasilyuk** and **grandmother N. Vasilyuk** (they lived in the city of Brest at 22, Levanevsky Str., apt. 6, from 1970 to 1990). My mother **Lyudmila Ivanovna Vasilyuk**, born in 1956, died of cancer in 2015. She has two sisters. Maybe someone knows something about them, and they can help me find my relatives.

I will be very grateful to you. Perhaps someone can help me with a wheelchair.

God bless you all to live holy! With love,

Александр ВАСИЛЮК,
ул. Советская, 22а, тюрьма № 8, к. 47, г. Жодино,
Минская обл., Беларусь, 222160.

Turn to The Lord for Repentance, And He Will Not Forsake You

Greetings to you, I thank our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for giving you wisdom and love to work for His glory!

Thank you for every issue of the newspaper «Prisoner», which I receive regularly. I have a desire to share my testimony from my heart.

My name is Yevgeny, a native of Belarus, I'm thirty-four years old. Most of these years passed in a real nightmare, until I opened my heart to the Lord. I am very grateful to Him for His longsuffering for me!

I can tell you about myself in just a few words. I was a drug user everywhere, in prison, in a colony, and when free. It's scary, but that's the truth. It is impossible to convey all the dirt and all the horror in which I lived. God kept knocking on the door to my heart, but I did not want to leave this life. Once again, when I got to prison, I was diagnosed with HIV and hepatitis C.

Coming out of the colony, I met a girl who was not frightened by my lifestyle or by my illnesses, and we began to cohabit. She simply did not understand the full extent of the horror in which I lived. When she was faced with reality, she could not leave me, because she had fallen in love. My mother told her about God, and she suggested I go to church, but I was absolutely against it. My health worsened; there was practically no liver left. Everything seems out of control, so that I wanted to commit suicide several times. But the Lord did not want this; He had other plans for me. It took a long time for me to come to the Lord and during this time I managed to do a lot of stupid things and sin a lot before I knelt down before the congregation and turned to God with a repentant heart. It was a miracle! Glory and praise be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! All that I have made with the devil, God began to clean up slowly. This process was not easy. However, what is impossible for a person, is possible for God. Dasha and I got married officially. Glory and thanksgiving to the Lord! Mama did not give up during the long years of suffering I took her through. Nine years, she persistently prayed to God for me. I thank You, Jesus, for my relatives: Mama, my brother, and my wife! Thank You, Lord, for this prison, for it was here that You gave me salvation and a beautiful wife. I'm in prison, but I'm free, because God freed me from all dependence. The Word of God teaches us to extract the precious from the insignificant. Therefore, with joy I say: blessed are the sufferings that brought me to Jesus Christ! God has given me a new heart, and every day I try to keep it clean. Thank God for His mercy, love and longsuffering.

I believe that through my little testimony, God will touch the hearts of people. Everyone needs God, because we are His creation.

Dear friend, if you are now in the same situation as I was, do not look for strength in yourself. Believe me, a person himself cannot do anything. Turn to the Lord in repentance, and He will not forsake you.

Be blessed!



Yevgeny NECHAI, Hlybokaye, Belarus.

Good afternoon, dear editors of the newspaper «Prisoner»!

For a long time I could not dare talk about my worthless life in public, the life which I led until I got acquainted with God. I got acquainted with God through a testimony. People shared their testimony with me when I was going through a difficult time. That's when I found the strength to overcome my fear in order to tell others how I lost almost everything and remained completely alone. Maybe my tragic life story will help someone turn to God.

My acquaintance with our Lord



God punishes those whom He loves to cleanse them of their sins

took place quite recently, that's why I'm still much like a baby who needs spiritual milk.

Previously, I was already serving a sentence in a place of detention for robbery. My wild life led me to this, the taste of easy money for which I had to answer. I soon realized that all the so-called romanticism is just an illusion and self-deception. As soon as we were detained, everyone began to shift the blame from one to another. The so-called friends who were always very cheerful who promised to always help disappeared somewhere. This was a great lesson for me as I understood who were my real friends and realized that prison life is not fun, only greyness, evil and loss of personal freedom.

While in custody, I started looking into ways to be able to get out earlier. But unfortunately, I did not repent or analyze my life then. At first I tried to follow the law and live without crime. However, after liberation it's hard to get up on your feet for understandable reasons. The relationship with my family was complicated. I had to work random jobs and earn money where I could, since after having a conviction a permanent or prestigious job is out of question. This continued until the war moved into Donbass. In connection



with these events, people united and began to help those who needed help: the settlers, the military. That's when I began to feel necessary and useful. With the new wave of mobilization, my time also came and I was called to serve in the army. I got into the ATU zone where there were not always humane conditions. There should have been discipline in the army but in most cases everything was the opposite. I will not go into depth, let's just say that I started drinking alcohol. My term of mobilization was coming to an end, and I was already preparing for demobilization. At that time I had a girl whom I loved; I even dreamed about a family and children. At the time of my service, everything was fine at first but over time I got addicted to alcohol and I began to be so heavily infiltrated that sometimes I did not even understand what I was doing. I had just a few days left before I would return to civilian life, but my stupidity got me into the military hospital in the city of Zaporizhia. There, I again showed negligence about myself and my duties. Instead of waiting for due dismissal from the military unit, I simply left the hospital on my own, left to see my girlfriend in Kharkov. Having come into

contact with civil life, I start to abuse alcohol and this took precedence over my mind; scandals began, parties with merry revelry. I stopped appreciating everything that was really dear to me. Binges grew into drinking-bouts, quarrels became more frequent, I began to change and no longer spent the night at home. I was full of myself and thought that a girl who loves me very much and wants me only good will not go away from me anywhere. But the day came when it was over. Soon I realized the grief and suffering I had taken my girlfriend and relatives through. However, I still could not stop; with each day it only got worse. I returned home to the Lviv region, while there I ruined all my relations with my relatives and left home. I spent the night

acquainted with the newspaper «Prisoner», which I began to read with interest. I caught sight of the testimonies of people who turned to God, Who changed their lives. God through the newspaper «Prisoner» held me captive; without meaning to I read the newspaper completely, from cover to cover. It was then that I got answers to the questions that bothered me.

Earlier on, I had not paid much attention to the spiritual world but at the same time I considered myself a believer. Just like many others, I was baptized as a child in the Orthodox church. I went to the church services during the holidays, and wore a cross on my neck. However, in reality, I did not know God and never had read the Bible. I always believed that I could overcome all difficulties, but the truth was that I could not for without God I was simply powerless. How wrong I was in the thinking. I realized this only after I lost everything when I was in my thirties. It was meant to happen, for whom God loves He also punishes so that man could realize all his sinfulness and repent.

Today, when I feel emptiness in my soul and I have no one to share my struggles with, I try to find a quiet corner and talk to God without fear, lies and ridicule. After I spend alone time with God, I gain so much: calmness and quietness in my soul, relief and peacefulness, and I realize that I am not alone but loved and understood by someone who knows the depths of my heart. That's how I began to learn about the real Lord and Savior whom can change hearts. I'm grateful to the Lord that He saved me.

I want to take this opportunity and ask forgiveness from the people I brought grief to. I want to bring everything back and change everything that I've done. But, unfortunately, this is already impossible. However, thank God, I now have a chance to build a future with God.

I thank you editors that you are helping people turn their backs on sinful life and give them the opportunity to become real children of our Heavenly Father.

If you have such an opportunity — to include me in the list for communicating with Christians who can guide and give wise advice so that I do not stumble again, I will be very grateful to you. Praise God that you carry this necessary ministry.

Aleksandr TIMKESHEV,
Kamensk Township, Donetsk region, Ukraine.

I was rescued by the doctors and brought to consciousness. The military service of law and order had tracked me down. I was charged under article 407, part 4 (unauthorized abandonment of the military unit). As a result, my stupidity led me to the fact that I also became a criminal. I was given four years of imprisonment. While in prison, I began to recover. I was even glad that I was imprisoned and given the opportunity to think back on my life one more time, because otherwise I would have died near some fence on the street.

After a short time in the four walls of a small cell, I began to read these newspapers. I got

TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

SEVEN MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Women played a monumental role in forming the structure of the modern (New Testament) church. Women were the first at the grave of Jesus Christ during his arising, and were the last to leave the foot of the cross during His death. Women served Jesus Christ during His travels and preaching and also supported Him financially. Women were among the 120 gathered people during the day of the Pentecost when the New Testament church originally formed. In order to pay due respect to women who played a foundational role in the forming of the modern day church, I would like to outline, in my opinion, the seven most influential women in the New Testament.

1. MARY MAGDALENE — THE FIRST PREACHER

Today, many oppose women preachers, but few know that the first Christian preacher was a woman! In the 20th chapter of the Gospel of John it is written that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene at the tomb and instructed her to bring the Good News of His resurrection to the disciples. What is preaching? Preaching is the gospel or the transmission of the gospel.

And it was Mary Magdalene who was first instructed to carry the Gospel (Good News) to other people and telling them that Jesus had risen from the dead! It is worth noting that this was not an easy task, as many men doubted her message.

2. LYDIA — THE FIRST EUROPEAN TO ACCEPT CHRIST

Lydia from the 16th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles was not only a successful businesswoman, but also became the first European to accept Christ! When the apostle



Paul, at the instruction of the Lord, came to Europe for the first time and began preaching the Gospel in the city of Philippi, the first Europeans who responded to his preaching was Lydia. From history, we know that it was Europe that preserved Christianity, so I believe that this is partially the merit of the first European Christian Lydia.

3. JUNIA — WOMAN APOSTLE

The Apostle Paul writes in the *Epistle to the Romans (16:7)*: *Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.*

By carefully studying the Greek text, theologians maintain that this verse in the Bible indicates that Junia was one of the apostles and was imprisoned with Paul for preaching the word of God. She was so active in the spread of the Gospel that it says that she was famous for her labors among the other apostles.

It is interesting to note that the American Assemblies of God hold the same opinion.

4. CHOSEN LADY — LEADER OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

2 John 1:1 is addressed to a certain chosen woman: *To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth.*

The theologians, carefully studying this text, admit that this lady was called Kiriya. Since the holy message of John, which entered the canonical Bible, was addressed to a woman, it can be deduced that Kiriya was the leader of the

local christian community and one of the first leaders in Christianity.

5. EUNICE — A WOMAN OF GREAT FAITH

Eunice had such a large and sincere faith that she could pass it on to her son Timothy. In the Second Epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul writes that the faith that was in you used to dwell in your mother Eunice and grandmother Loid.

The merit of Eunice was that, being married to a Greek (Hellenic), she was able not only to preserve her faith, but also had a great influence on her son, who became one of the main leaders of the first church. Tradition claims that the church in which Timothy was a pastor, numbered about 50 thousand people!

6. PRISCILLA — FEMALE EVANGELIST

Priscilla and her husband Aquila were the spiritual helpers of the apostle Paul. Together they worked to spread the gospel in the city of Corinth. In four of the six cases of mentioning their names in the New Testament, Priscilla is in the first place, before her husband. The theologians say that this indicates that it was the woman, Priscilla, who was the spiritual leader in that evangelistic duo.

7. MARY — THE MOTHER OF JESUS CHRIST

And of course, the most influential woman in the New Testament is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary was not only the physical mother of Christ, but she also took an active part in the birth of the church. It is interesting to note that her husband Joseph is so little mentioned in the Gospels that some theologians admit that he died when Jesus was still a teenager. Whatever it was, we know that God used a woman to bring Christ into this world and to reveal to mankind His plan for the salvation of people. It was obedience, faith and courage of Mary played a huge role in the development of modern Christianity.

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Knowledge is a collection of information and facts acquired through the use of one's own / others' experience or a thought process. Knowledge is not just knowing definitions from a dictionary, this is what a person has learned, understood, realized...

I. KNOWLEDGE MAY DIFFER

There are two classifications of knowledge. The first — divides knowledge into practical and theoretical. The second — divides knowledge into intellectual, moral, physical and spiritual.

1. **Mental, intellectual knowledge** by itself, no matter how good they are, are not perfect. They usually give rise to pride (1 Corinthians 8:1 — *...knowledge makes one arrogant, and love edifies; Romans 1:21-22 — ...because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools...*).

2. **Moral knowledge** influences the will of man (Proverbs 17:7 — *Excellent speech is not becoming to a fool, Much less lying lips to a prince*). This, in essence, knowledge the heart gains and not only reasoning of the mind. The book of proverbs mainly affects this type of human knowledge.

3. **Practical knowledge** — knowledge gained from experience (Genesis 4:1 — *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain; 2 Corinthians 5:21 — For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him; 1 John 4:7-8 — Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love*).

4. **Spiritual knowledge.** The Apostle Paul, in a letter to the Colossians, expressed his ardent desire that they grow in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10 — *...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God*).

II. THE COGNITION OF GOD

The greatest truth is that man is able to know God. Psalm 46:10 — *Be still and know that I am God.*

IS GOD AGAINST HAVING KNOWLEDGE?

John 8:31-32 — *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, «If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free».*

1. **The most interesting thing is that the knowledge of God can not be acquired through reason alone.**

Job 11:7-12 — *Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven — what can you do? Deeper than Sheol — what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth. And broader than the sea. «If He passes by, imprisons, and gathers to judgment, Then who can hinder Him? For He knows deceitful men; He sees wickedness also. Will He not then consider it? For an empty-headed man will be wise, When a wild donkey's colt is born a man».*

Romans 11:33-36 — *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! «For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?» «Or who has first given to Him? And it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen».*

2. **Knowledge of God is formed with the help of God, who Himself reveals His existence to man.**

A. Through nature and consciousness (Psalm 18, Romans 1:19-20 — *...because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse*).

B. Through history and historical events (Deuteronomy 6:20-25, Daniel 2:20-22 — *Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, For wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise And knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, And light dwells with Him*).

C. **And especially through the Bible (Psalm 118, Revelations 1:1-3 — Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near).**

Science alone will never be able to give an exact answer about the origin and destination of the solar system and everything that fills it. The answer is only in Christ, who is

is; Romans 12:2 — *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God,*

☉ His path (Proverbs 3:12 — *In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your path,*

☉ the true God (1 John 5:20 — *And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an*

☉ that right now, we cannot know everything (1 Corinthians 13:12 — *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known*).

CONCLUSION

The Lord God created man in His image and likeness, giving him not only a physical body and spirit, but also a soul — mind, will and feelings. Due to this we are able to acquire knowledge, develop mentally and grow spiritually.

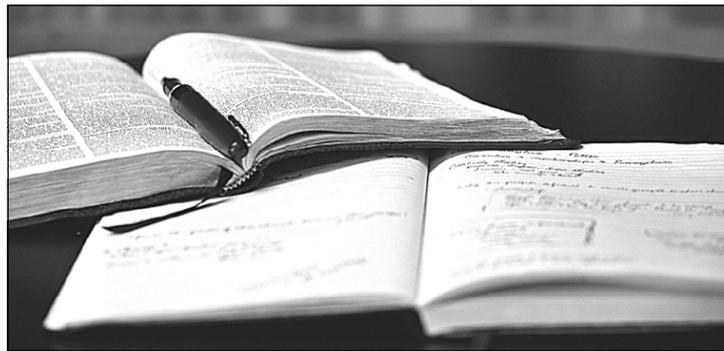
However, God warned us that knowledge brings arrogance, while only love really edifies. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 — *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.*

God has nothing against knowledge. He Himself is the all-knowing God. He knows everything. And we, the people, are far away from this. And there is not enough human life (even if we live like Adam for 900 years) to know at least a hundredth part of what God knows.

Is it the meaning of life to learn as much as possible? We may know more than anyone, so what? After death, this knowledge will not be needed. Jesus asked the question in Matthew 16:26 — *For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*

So let us acquire the knowledge that leads to eternal life and will be useful to us after death! Of course, we are talking about the knowledge of our Creator and His perfect will.

Material for the newspaper «Prisoner» was kindly provided by the Biblical Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada <http://cogmtl.net/Articles/007.htm>



our God and Creator, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3).

But this does not mean that we must abandon and refuse to seek scientific knowledge. Not at all. It only means that we should have respect and humility during our scientific research. After all, this universe is the work of His hands, and therefore it reflects His perfect power, wisdom and love.

III. WHAT GOD COMMANDED US ABOUT KNOWLEDGE

What we should not try to understand:

☉ the depths of Satan (Revelation 2:24 — *Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden,*

☉ wrong (unjust) ways (Jeremiah 10:2 — *Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, For the Gentiles are dismayed at them*).

What we should seek to understand:

☉ His will (Ephesians 5:17 — *Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord*

understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life; Hebrews 8:11 — *None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, «Know the Lord», for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,*

☉ the truth (John 8:32 — *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,*

☉ that Christians are the sons of Abraham, sons of faith (Galatians 3:7 — *Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham,*

☉ that Jesus grants salvation (Psalms 20:6 — *Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven. With the saving strength of His right hand,*

☉ that the essence of eternal life is the knowledge of God (John 17:3 — *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent,*

☉ that God sent Jesus (John 17:25 — *O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me,*



WHAT IS YOUR WAY?

«There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death» (Proverbs 14:12, NKJV).

Many years ago, this was exactly what I thought. I was sure that my ways in life were straight and that in general I was a good person. I knew how to keep my word and I was responsible in all matters. I often defended the weak and even helped people I didn't know without the slightest hint of reward. Against the backdrop of life's cunning and evil I did not look like a bad person. The words «prison» or «jail» were so incompatible with my views and principles that in my mind I never imagined I would be a prisoner. I lived if I may say so like everyone else; to be more precise — like those who were far from the slightest idea of what a prison is. I had acquaintances that had gone through imprisonment but even talking to them, I could not imagine that one day I myself would become one of them. Considering myself a righteous person I was not afraid of prison and perhaps because of the lack of this fear I was not afraid of anything else. I was confident in my abilities and in everything that I did. I was not selfish or greedy. Striving for power or profit was not who I was. I did not dismiss money but it wasn't my main goal either. I was always busy in life and I do not know why but I was always afraid of something. My goals were noble and I thought that I lived mostly right and that meant I'm going the right way. But now after having spent a quarter of century in prison, I clearly understand the meaning of the words quoted above. Yes indeed there are ways that to us humans seem to be right but the end of them is the path to

death. And this path we choose ourselves due to the lack of spirituality in our lives. A person never knows on what he may stumble especially when he lives an unjust life. The Bible tells us: «But the path of the justislike the shiningsun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wickedislike darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble» (Proverbs 4:18-19).

I never imagined that I could stumble like this. Considering myself in many respects a righteous person, I never examined myself from this angle. I lived blindly and did not see anything terrible awaiting me on my way. However all this was already inevitable because nothing changed in my life until I was in prison. Being here among the concrete walls and lattices, smelly chambers and the courtyards covered in spit, I began to ask questions to myself for the first time. I could not understand: why did this happen to me? What do I do here, if as it seemed to me, I always acted correctly in everything? Only after I repented and came to God did truths begin to open to me, things I did not even know.

Once, after reading the sixth verse of the sixty-fourth chapter of the Book of Isaiah, I was horrified from what I read, for everything written there was about me. The sixth verse of this chapter says: «...all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away» (Isaiah 64:6). I was so strongly convicted of all this that for a while I just repeated this verse again and again in a stupor. These words touched me so deeply that I felt very

ashamed that I had considered myself righteous and in fact not being so.

God opened my eyes through His Word. Somewhere along the way pride disappeared, I didn't even notice. There was a desire to think, to pray and to serve others. As my faith grew not only I changed but my life as well. Today I have chosen the one true path, the path of truth with Jesus Christ. As the Holy Scripture says, «In the way of righteousness is life, And in its pathway there is no death» (Proverbs 12:28).

Certainly living by the way of truth is not easy in this world but nevertheless it is the only narrow way by which you will not be ashamed of living this life in vain. Even the bitterest truth still remains the truth. God is the God of love and the God of truth. Therefore God's way leads us to eternal life despite the fact that it is a narrow path. Jesus Christ, being on the earth, instructing us saying: «Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it» (Matthew 7:13-14).

By choosing God's path for ourselves rather than our own every person becomes protected by God. It is said for a reason: «When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him» (Proverbs 16:7). What can be better and more reliable than God's protection? I will say definitely nothing. When I lived and hoped only in myself I was nothing but an arrogant fool. Often in our lives it seems that we are self-sufficient and

strong enough to solve all our issues on our own. In fact even the most successful people who followed this path and done what was pleasing to them sooner or later realize that if they have everything that they already have, they lack the most important thing: peace with eternity. You can buy practically anything in this life except for eternal life. You cannot invest your money in it and God will not go into any financial transactions. The only way to eternal life is free and is offered to us by the Lord Himself. Jesus said: «...I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me» (John 14:6).

No matter what we choose for ourselves the path without God will eventually lead us to disappointment and emptiness. No amount of money or wealth will console a person in this life. For it is said: «Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, But righteousness delivers from death» (Proverbs 11:4).

God does not forbid us to earn money and have a lot of it, He simply does not recommend us obsessing over it or following this path. By disregarding the instruction and recommendation of the Lord, a person exposes himself to destruction. If all humanity is told clearly that wealth will not help in the day of judgement, then on what or on whom will people count on in this earthly path?

Once while reading Epistle of James, in the fifth chapter I received serious answers to some of my questions. What I read very clearly enlightened me and once again made me understand that happiness on earth is not wealth. Thank God that I have nothing to worry about, because I'm not rich and I have nothing to hide or guard. All my wealth is in me — it's everything the Lord teaches me.

After reading the fifth chapter of the Epistle of James, for some reason I sincerely felt sorry for all those who have become attached to everything material in this life and worry about it every day. In the Epistle of James it is said in simple and accessible language: «Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter» (James 5:1-5).

After reading from the apostle James, you involuntarily ask yourself the question: can this be happiness?!

That is why we are all told both in caution and in edification: «There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death» (Proverbs 14:12).

I. GORIK.

What Famous People Say About God and the Bible

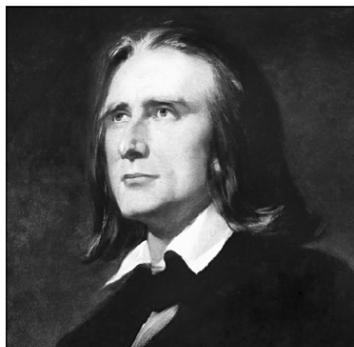
John LOCKE
(1632-1704),
English teacher and
philosopher



Once said about the Bible: «God is the Author, salvation is the ultimate goal, its content is the truth».

Heinrich HEINE
(1797-1856),
German poet

«Bible. It is also rightly called the Holy Scripture. Whoever lost his God will find Him again in this book, and whoever has never known Him, on him will the breath of God's Word pour out».



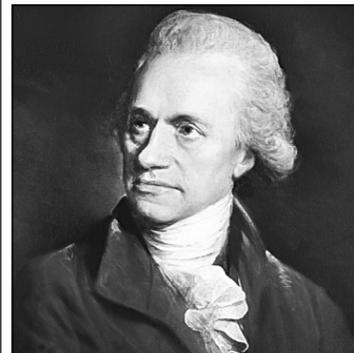
Antoine Laurent LAVOISIER
(1743-1794),
Founder of modern
chemistry



«You are doing an excellent job,» he wrote to a certain King, who published a treatise in defense of religion, «acting as the protector of Revelation and the authenticity of the scriptures».

William GRSHEL
(1738-1822),
English Astronomer

Frederick William Herschel, an outstanding English astronomer of German origin: «All human discoveries serve to strengthen the evidence of the truths found in the scriptures».



André-Marie AMPÈRE
(1775-1836),
Physicist and Mathematician



In the year of his death Ampère wrote: «I would always like to remember Apostle Paul's words: «and those who use this world as not misusing it».

<http://blago.dp.ua/aphorisms/101-podborka-citat-stihov-fraz-izvestnyh-lyudey-o-boge-verebiblii.html>

CHRISTIAN NEWS

New research has shown that religious people live on average four years longer than their agnostic and atheist peers

For the study, a team of Ohio University academics including associate professor of psychology Christian End, analyzed more than 1,500 obituaries from across the US to piece together how the defining features of our lives affect our longevity.

These records include religious affiliations and marriage details as well as information on activities, hobbies and habits, which can help or hinder our health, not otherwise captured in census data.

The study, published in Social Psychological and Personality Science today, found that on average people whose obituary mentioned they were religious lived an extra 5.64 years.

Life expectancy was still 3.82 years longer in religious people



when they statistically controlled for marriage rates, a factor which has been shown to increase life expectancy and help stave off disease.

«The study provides persuasive

evidence that there is a relationship between religious participation and how long a person lives», said Baldwin Way, co-author of the study and associate professor of psychology at Ohio State University.

The major part of the study used more than 1,000 obituaries from newspapers in 42 states. But a further analysis of 500 obituaries from the Des Moines Register, a paper in Iowa, found the effect was more pronounced and religion was associated with an extra 6.48 years of life, suggesting living in a more religious area might have a greater effect.

Religious participation often goes hand-in-hand with increased participation in activities and social groups, which might help tackle loneliness and sedentary lifestyles that could also shorten life expectancy.

But analysis of activities mentioned in the report found this accounted for a fraction of the effect.

«We found that volunteerism and involvement in social organizations

only accounted for a little less than one year of the longevity boost that religious affiliation provided», said Laura Wallace, the study's lead author.

«There's still a lot of the benefit of religious affiliation that this can't explain».

The authors suggested that the remaining life expectancy might be a result of religious people being more likely to abstain from alcohol and drug use and other behaviours that could affect life expectancy — though these were not regularly recorded in obituaries.

There also may be a benefit of «stress reducing practices» such as meditation, yoga or prayer, Dr Way added.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news>

A SCIENTIST REVEALS THE SECRET OF AFTERLIFE

Sensational revelations of the physicist Vladimir Yefremov, who miraculously returned from the other world

The leading designer of the OKB «Impulse», Vladimir Yefremov, died suddenly. After he stopped coughing, he sank onto the sofa and fell silent. Relatives could not understand what had happened.

They thought that he sat down to rest. Natalia was the first to make the discovery.

She touched her brother's shoulder, «Volodya, what's the matter with you?»

Yefremov fell helplessly on his side. Natalia tried to feel for his pulse. His heart did not beat! She began to do artificial respiration, but her brother was not breathing.

Natalia, herself a physician, knew that the chances of saving him were diminishing by the minute. She tried to get the heart to start beating by doing CPR. The eighth minute was coming to an end, when her palms felt a weak push back. Vladimir Grigoryevich's heart started beating and he took a breath.

«Alive!» His sister hugged him. «We thought you were dead, that it was the end».

«There's no end,» whispered Vladimir Grigoryevich. «There's life there too, but different. Better...»

Vladimir Grigoryevich recorded his after life experience in detail. His testimony is invaluable. Vladimir Grigoryevich published his experience in the journal «Scientific and Technical Bulletins of the St. Petersburg State Technical University», and then talked about them at a scientific conference.

His report on the afterlife became a sensation.

«It's impossible to make all of this up!» said Professor Anatoly Smirnov, the head of the International Club of Scientists.

Vladimir Yefremov's reputation in the scientific community is impeccable. He is a major specialist in the field of artificial intelligence, for a long time worked in the OKB «Impulse». Participated in the launch of Gagarin, contributed to the development of advanced missile systems. Four times his research team received the State Nobel Prize.

«Before my death, I considered myself an absolute atheist», says Vladimir Grigoryevich. «I trusted only facts». All reasoning about afterlife I considered religious dope. Honestly, I did not think about death then. There was so much work in my field that ten lives would not be enough to get everything done. There was no time get treated, my heart was having troubles, chronic bronchitis was torturing me, along with other ailments.

On March 12, at my sister's house, Natalya Grigoryevna's, I had a coughing fit. I felt that I was suffocating. My lungs did not obey me, I tried to inhale, and could not! My body became wadded; my heart stopped. Last bit of air came out of my lungs, wheezing and foam. A thought flashed through my brain that this was the last second of my life.

But my consciousness for some reason did not turn off. Suddenly there was a feeling of extraordinary ease. I had no pain, no throat, no heart, no stomach. I hadn't felt this comfortable since childhood. I did not feel my body and did not see it, but still had feelings and memories. I was flying somewhere along a giant pipe. The sensations of the flight turned out to be familiar, this happened before in a dream. Mentally tried to slow down the flight, change its direction. Happened! There was no horror and fear, only bliss. I tried to analyze what was happening. Conclusions came instantly, the world in which we live in exists, afterlife also exists. My thinking had the property of causality, since it could change the direction and speed of my flight.

Everything was fresh, bright and interesting. My mind worked quite differently than before. It covered everything at once, for there was no time or distance. I admired the

world around me. It was as if I had been pulled into a pipe. Did not see the sun, everywhere there was equal lighting, no shadows. On the walls of the pipe, there were some non-uniform structures resembling a relief. It was impossible to determine where the top, and where the bottom was.

I tried to remember the terrain over which I flew. It was similar to mountains.

I memorized the landscape, without any difficulty; the volume of my memory was truly bottomless. I tried to return to the place I had already flown over, mentally introducing it. Everything turned out! It was like teleportation.

There came a crazy thought. To what extent can you influence the world around you? And can you go back to your past life? Mentally I presented an old broken TV from my apartment. I saw the TV from all sides. I knew something about it from somewhere. How and where it was designed. I knew where the ore was mined, from which the metals



that were used in the construction were smelted. I knew which steelmaker did it. I knew that the steelmaker was married, that he had problems with his mother. I saw everything connected with this TV globally, realizing every little thing. And I knew exactly which part was faulty. Later, after I came to myself, I fixed it and the TV worked.

There was a feeling of an all-powerful thought. For two years our KB had been struggling to solve the most complicated task related to cruise missiles. And suddenly, having presented this design, I saw the problem in all of its many facets. The decision algorithm arose by itself. Later I wrote it down and introduced it.

The realization that I was not alone in the next world came to me.

My information interaction with the environment gradually lost its one-sided nature. On the formulated question in my mind there was an answer. Initially, such responses were perceived as a natural result of reflection. But the information that came to me began to go beyond the knowledge that I had during my lifetime. The knowledge received in this pipe, many times exceeded my former thought processes!

I realized that I was led by someone who is omnipresent, has no boundaries. And He has unlimited possibilities, is omnipotent and full of love. This invisible subject, tangible by my whole being, did everything to not frighten me. I realized that He showed me phenomena and problems in the whole cause-and-effect relationship. I did not see Him, but I felt Him acutely. And I knew that He was God.

Suddenly I noticed that something was stopping me. I was dragged outside, like a carrot from a bed. I did not want to go back. Everything flashed and I saw my sister. She was frightened, and I was beaming with delight».

Yefremov in his scientific works described the afterlife with the help of mathematical and physical terms. In this article, we decided to try to do without complicated concepts and formulas.

«Vladimir Grigoryevich, with what can you compare the world to which you went into after death?»

«Any comparison would be wrong. Processes there are not linear, like ours, they are not stretched in time. They go simultaneously and in all directions. Objects «in the next world» are represented in the form of information blocks, the content of which determines their location and properties. Everything and everything is with each other in a causal relationship. Objects and properties are enclosed in a single global information structure, in which everything goes according to a given leading subject, that is, God, to laws. It is subject to the appearance, change or removal of any objects, properties, processes, including the course of time».

«How free is a person there in his actions, his consciousness, his soul?»

«A person, as a source of information, can also influence objects in the sphere available to him. By my will, the relief of the «pipe» changed, earthly objects appeared».

It looks like the films «Solaris» and «Matrix»...

And a giant computer game. But both worlds, ours and the afterlife, are real. They constantly interact with each other, albeit separated from each other, and form, together with the managing subject, God, a global intellectual system.

Our world is simpler to comprehend, it has a rigid framework of constants that ensure the inviolability of the laws of nature, time connecting the events initiates time.

In the afterlife, there are either no constants at all, or they are much less than in ours, and they can change. The basis of the construction of that world consists of information formations containing the entire aggregate of known and yet unknown properties of material objects in the complete absence of the objects themselves. So, as it happens on the Earth in the conditions of computer simulation, I understood: a person sees there what he wants to see. Therefore, the descriptions of the afterlife by people who survived death differ from each other. The righteous sees paradise, the sinner sees hell.

For me, death was not a transferable joy, not comparable to anything on Earth. Even the love of a woman compared to the experience there is nothing.

The following is the Holy Scripture Vladimir Grigoryevich read after his resurrection. Through which he found confirmation of his posthumous experience and his thoughts about the information essence of the world.

Gospel of John says: «In the beginning was the Word,» Yefremov quotes the Bible. «And the Word was with God, and the Word was God. It was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made». Is not this a hint that in Scripture, by «word» is meant a kind of global information essence, which includes the comprehensive content of everything?»

Yefremov applied his posthumous experience in practice. The key to many complex tasks that have to be solved in earthly life, he brought from there.

«The thinking of all people has the property of causality,» says Vladimir Grigoryevich. «But very few people know about this. To avoid harming yourself and others, you need to follow the religious norms of life. Holy books are dictated by the Creator, this is the safety technology of mankind.

Death for me now is not terrible. I know that this is the door to another world».

Grigory TELNOV,
<http://www.religare.ru>

PASTOR'S WORD

SACRIFICE



I sometimes have to hear this from «Christians» *If I had the means, I would help in this service or When I have money, I will definitely take part in that need.* But this so desperately desired money does not appear for months and even years, yet needs come and go. God finds people elsewhere to fill them, and the person waiting for the appearance of money, remains barren. On the issue of sacrifice and virtue, the Bible has many examples and advice.

Sacrifice is willingness to decide or act for others at a loss to oneself. A sacrifice is a sacrifice when it is valuable to the donor himself. God Himself possesses this quality and wants to see it in the crown of His creation — man. In order to develop sacrifice in man, God instituted appropriate laws and regulations.

THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE LORD

In the law of God, set forth in the Bible, it was commanded that the Israelites bring the first fruits of the harvested harvest to the Lord before they could use the new harvest themselves, not after everything is gathered into storage. It was necessary to sacrifice to God, regardless if there was barely any crop in the field, or danger that the unprocessed crop can burn out from a fire or be flooded with rain and the owner would not get anything.

...Do not eat any new bread, no dried corn, or raw grains until the day in which you will bring an offering to your God: this is an eternal ordinance for your generations in all your dwellings (Lev. 23:14).

TITHING TO THE LORD

God also placed into law of the people of Israel, every year to dedicate to the Lord a tenth of all profits from the field, from the wine press, from the cattle and bring all this to the house of God to maintain the Levites and priests, as well as the costs of temple services.

In addition to the tithes, the Israelites were to offer many sacrifices to the Lord in the form of sacrifices, such as:

- 1) a burnt offering (Lev. 1:1-17; 7:11-21),
- 2) the grain offering (Lev. 2:1-16; 6:14-17),
- 3) the peace offering (Lev. 3:1-17; 7:11-21),
- 4) the sacrifice for the sin (Lev. 4:1-5; 6:24-30),
- 5) the sacrifice of the trespass (Lev. 5:14-19; 6:6-7; 7:1-10),
- 6) voluntary offerings (Deut. 12:6),
- 7) zealous offering (Lev. 22:18),
- 8) vow offering (Lev. 22:21).

Deut. 12:6 — *And there you shall offer your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave of your hands, your vows, your voluntary offerings, and the first-born of your cattle and your flock.*

Deut. 14:22-23 — *Separate the tenth of the whole product of your seeds, which comes from your field yearly, And every tenth of the large and small animals, of all that passes under the rod of the tenth, must be dedicated to the Lord; and eat before the LORD your God, in the place which He will choose to abide His name there; the tenth of your grain, your wine and your oil, and the first-born of your cattle and your flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God all the days.*

Lev. 27:32 — *And every tenth of the large and small cattle, of all that passes under the staff of the tenth, must be dedicated to the Lord.*

In addition to the regular yearly tithes, God installed another tithe — the tithe of every third year after the Sabbath year.

If the offerings of regular tithes were not to remain in the houses of the people of Israel, but were to be brought to Jerusalem to serve in the temple (Deut. 12:6, 17-18), then this tithe is said thus: *After three years, the tithes of thy works in that year, and put these in your gates; and let the Levite come, for he has no part and inheritance with you, and an alien, an orphan, and a widow who are in your dwellings, and let them eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in every work of your hands which you will do (Deut. 12:28-29).*

Do not forget that in the seventh year the Jews were not supposed to sow their

fields at all. It was the Sabbath year, the year of rest for the earth.

TITHING TO THE KING

Next we see that one more tenth in the form of a tax belonged to the king (or, in other words, state power,) since God, establishing the rights of the king, saying: *...and from your crops and from your vineyards the king will take a tenth and will give to his eunuchs and to his servants (1 Sam. 8:15).*

LEAVING PART OF THE CROP FOR THE POOR

Also during the harvest it was impossible to finish the field and if you forgot a sheaf on the field you could not go back for it, but leave it for the stranger, the widow and the orphan. *When you reap the harvest in your land, do not reap to the edge of your field, when you reap, and do not pick up the remainder from your harvest; to the poor and to the stranger, leave it. I am the Lord your God (Lev. 23:22).*

So, we see that God called to lead a sacrificial life and to care not for ourselves only. Someone might say that this is the Old Testament and this does not apply to us today.

SACRIFICE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospel teaching of Christ also contains many indications of this.

Christ speaks of tithing as follows: *this should be done, and that not to leave, meaning that it is necessary to exercise fair judgment, mercy and faith, and not to forget about tithing.*

Mt. 23:23 — *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, that you give tithes from mint, anise and cumin, but left the most important in the law: judgment, mercy and faith; These things were to be done, and the other not to leave.*

Lk. 11:41-42 — *Give alms instead of what you have, then everything will be clean. But woe to you, Pharisees, that you give tithes from mint, rue and all sorts of vegetables, but do not care about the judgment and the love of God: these things must be done, and the other not to leave.*

Following the law of God, one must take the steps of faith and prove that you love God more than yourself. That is the real sacrifice.

In this regard, the Bible contains an interesting story in the Book of the Prophet Haggai. It tells how the Jewish settlers returned from the Babylonian captivity to the original land of the fathers. In the seventy years of the absence, their homes became completely useless. Gardens and vineyards are overgrown beyond recognition. Wherever you look, there's a sea of work everywhere. Slavery was not easy either — one wants to relax and feel free. But when they took up work God blessed their restorative work and promoted success in their affairs. But one year passes, another. Already, dwellings are rebuilt and habitable, but the ruined house of God — the settlers do not hurry to restore. Worship of God is neglected.

Then God uses the following way to reach out to the consciousness of these selfish people. He deprives them of their blessing, allows drought and disease on cultivated plants. But they still do not understand why this is happening. Then God spoke to them through the prophet Haggai, and said *...«These people say, «The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house». Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: «Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?» Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: «Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink,*

but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it». This is what the Lord Almighty says: «Give careful thought to your ways. Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored», says the Lord. «You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?» declares the Lord Almighty. «Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the olive oil and everything else the ground produces, on people and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands (Hagg. 1:2-11).

After the settlers obeyed and began to restore the temple of God, God says: *«Now give careful thought to this from this day on — consider how things were before one stone was laid on another in the Lord's temple. When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty. I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew and hail, yet you did not return to me», declares the Lord. «From this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, give careful thought to the day when the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid. Give careful thought: Is there yet any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not borne fruit. «From this day on I will bless you» (Hagg. 2:15-19).*

From this story, we learn how God reacts to human egoism and greed. People who did not want to sacrifice their time and finances to rebuild the temple of God, He

do this to one of these smaller ones, you did not do to me (Matt. 25:45).

For people who do not believe that by providing help to the needy, they do it to the Lord, donated money to them is like money thrown into the wind. They do not experience the joy of giving.

From my personal observations as a pastor, I can say that people who do not want to sacrifice are unhappy people, although they may be believers. Such people often have health problems, problems of relationships in families, problems with children. Within the framework of a short article, it is impossible to give many examples that confirm the above, but there are hundreds and thousands of them. The Bible says:

Eccl. 11:1 — *Let your bread go on the water, because after many days you will find it again.*

Prov. 11:25 — *A charitable soul will be saturated, and whoever gives water to others will be watered up himself.*

Prov. 19:17 — *He that hath pity upon the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his goodness.*

Jesus Christ said about the fidelity of the working people in one of His parables: *His master said to him: «Well done, good and faithful servant!» in a little you have been faithful, I will set you over much; Enter into the joy of your lord (Matt. 25:21).*

Yes, it is good when the Lord will trust the person and give more than he had before. More spiritual strength, more finances. But He will do this only to those who are faithful in the small. And this should not be the goal in the giving. Better to sacrifice, not thinking in return to get back.

People regard the sacrifice of a person in terms of the size and quantity of the donated, but God looks differently. For Him, it is important, with what motive a good deed is done, and also how much it amounts to from

what the offering has. For example, a rich millionaire donated a hundred dollars to a beggar, and another person, who has nothing but the last piece of bread, shared it with the hungry. How can you compare the sacrifice of these two people? The millionaire sacrificed to the beggar a hundred times more than the second, but this amounts to a tiny fraction of what he has. The poor, having divided the last piece of bread with the hungry, gave half of everything that he had. His sacrifice is appreciated in God's eyes much higher. About the poor woman who put a sum equal to the cost of one-day food to the temple treasury, Christ said: *...this poor widow has put more than all those who put her in the treasury, because they have all laid down her surplus, and she, from her poverty, put everything she had, all her food (Mark 12:43-44).*

Suppose you are in debt. But you still have something, do you not? And if you have any income, then try to be faithful to the Lord, for it is written: *Honor the Lord from your estate and from the firstfruits of all your profits, and your barns will be filled to excess, and your vats will be poured with new wine (Prov. 3:9-10).*

God's Word says that if we honor God by obedience to His will and not be wasteful, the barns will be filled to excess and, moreover, there will be even an excess — a transference over the edge.

The Lord even offers to try Him: *Bring all the tithes into the house of the vault, that there may be food in My house, and though in this you try Me, says the Lord of hosts: will I not open the windows of heaven for you and pour you a blessing to excess? (Mal. 3:10)*

So it does not matter what and how much you have. Begin to sacrifice to God from what you have, and then you will see the Lord's faithfulness. *So, while we have time, let us do good to everyone, and especially to our own people by faith (Gal. 6:10).*

Aleksandr BORISENKO.



TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

I. Origin of dinosaurs

1. WHERE DID DINOSAURS COME FROM?

Dinosaurs were created by God like all plants, animals and humans. About the day in which God created the dinosaurs, you can read in **Genesis 1:20-25**. The Lord God created the whole universe in six days, as evidenced not only by **Genesis 1**, but also by **Exodus 20:11** and **John 1:3**. Moreover, man and dinosaurs lived at the same time, and not for millions and billions of years before the appearance of man.

2. IS THERE A NOTION ABOUT DINOSAURS IN THE BIBLE?

A. BEHEMOTH

Bible speaks of beings that resembled dinosaurs. The Bible uses names such as *hippo* and *tannin*. The word *behemoth* means a *giant royal animal*,

crocosaur or something like a crocosaur. It was one of the most ambitious sea creatures. Of course, it was not exactly a dinosaur, but it was something reminiscent of a reptile with huge sharp teeth.

The most incredible thing is that, most likely, such animals still existed in the time of King David. **Psalm 103:25-26** mentions the leviathan: *This is a great and vast sea: there are reptiles with no number, small animals with large ones; there are floating ships, there is this leviathan, whom You created to play in it.*

Most likely, they are talking about the Mediterranean Sea. It is interesting that many navigational magazines contain reports and reports on sea snakes, in appearance resembling ancient pliosaurus and mosasaurs. They looked like huge lizards or crocodiles, with fins or membranes on their paws. The fossilized remains confirm that the dorsal bones were very flexible. It is possible that they could swim, making serpentine movements.

III. Dinosaurs and dragons

There are many records and evidence of ancient people about mysterious creatures, in appearance resembling reptiles, which once abundantly inhabited the earth. Obviously, there were a lot of them, and different types and sizes — both large and small. They had their own names. For example, the ancient Europeans nicknamed them dragons. The description of dragons practically coincides with the description of dinosaurs. Ancient legends about dragons, most likely, have arisen on memoirs on dinosaurs. Scientists all over the world agree that all legends are based on facts, and not just on the imagination game. It is also fortuitous that the legends and images of dinosaurs can be found in any part of the world: in Africa, India, Europe, as well as in the Near and Far East, in the Americas and so on. The mention of dinosaurs is present in the earliest written testimonies of history.

BIBLE AND DINOSAURS

and the word *tannin* combines dragon-like and giant sea creatures such as whales, giant octopuses and squid, and marine reptiles like pliosaurus, which today have virtually died out.

One of the most exhaustive descriptions of a dinosaur-like being is described in the 40th chapter of the Book of Job:

Behold, the hippopotamus whom I created, like you; he eats grass like a wolf; Behold, his strength is in his loins, and his strength is in the muscles of his womb; he turns his tail like a cedar; The veins on his thighs are intertwined; His feet are like brass pipes; His bones are like iron bars; this is the height of the ways of God; Only the one who created him can bring his sword to him; the mountains bring him food, and there all the beasts of the field play; he lies under shady trees, under the roof of reeds and in swamps; The shady trees cover it with their shadow; willows surround it with streams; Now, he is drinking from the river and is not in a hurry; remains calm, even if the Jordan rushed to his mouth. Will anyone take it in his eyes and pierce his nose with a harpoon? (Job 40:10-19).

The book of Job is an ancient book written after the Flood, approximately 2000 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. Here God describes the king of terrestrial animals, similar to such huge dinosaurs as diplodocus or apatosaurus. It was a majestic animal, with large and strong bones and muscles and eating giant plants.

«Behemoth» had nothing to be afraid of. It was huge, and its long and powerful tail was like a cedar tree — one of the most mighty trees of the Ancient World.

It so happened that over time, the biblical «hippopotamus» became extinct or were exterminated and people forgot about them. And only about 150 years ago, museums began to make their bones into huge, majestic artifacts. Today, many mistakenly believe that the «behemoth» mentioned in the Bible is none other than an elephant or hippopotamus (behemoth). However, they do not correspond to the description of the biblical «hippopotamus», since neither the tail of the elephant nor the tail of the hippopotamus resembles the trunk of the cedar in its appearance.

B. LEVIATHAN

On the leviathan the Bible mentions in the 40th and 41st chapters of the Book of Job and describes it as the greatest inhabitant of the sea. Leviathan was impossible to catch by hooks, harpoons or nets. *There is none like him on earth; he was made fearless... (Job 41:25).*

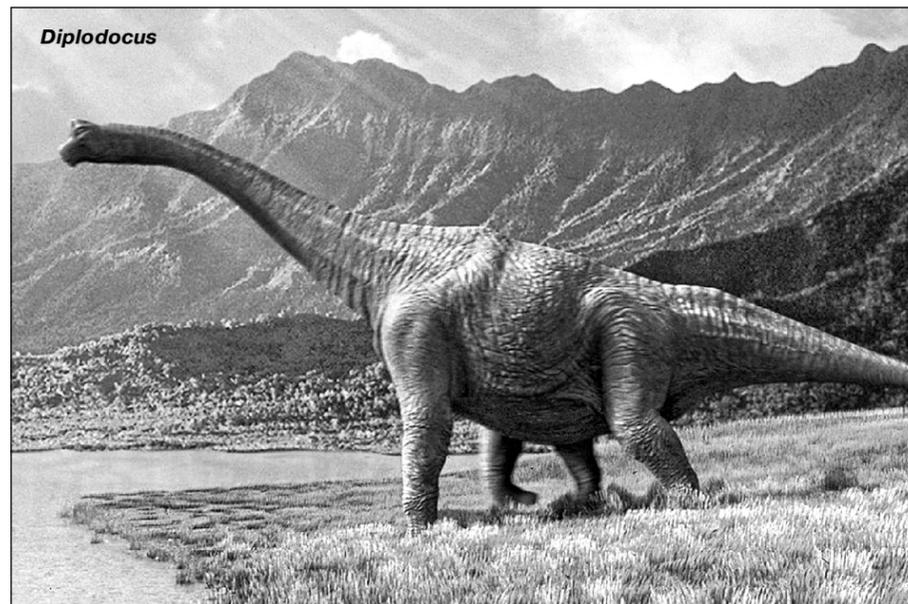
What kind of animal is a leviathan? The huge size, strong jaws, big teeth, the ability to move quickly under water — all this sheds light on what kind of animal it is. It is possible that this is a



Kronosaurus

A similar creature was seen by a German submarine during the First World War. Captain Georg von Faustner describes the incident as follows:

On July 30, 1915, we torpedoed the British steamship Iberine, which was heading with a heavy load to the North Atlantic. The steamship began to sink quickly at a right angle. In 25 seconds after diving underwater there was a huge explosion. A few minutes later, the wreckage of the steamer was thrown out and thrown to the surface with enormous force 20-30 meters from the water, between which we saw a huge sea animal (in convulsions and spasms). I was on the observation tower with my officers, a senior engineer, a navigator and a helmsman. Each of us simultaneously screamed and pointed his hand at the sea monster. None of us knew what it was like. The animal sank in 10-15 seconds, so we did not even have time to photograph it. It was about 20 meters long, had the shape of a crocodile and had four limbs with webbed feet and a long tapering tail at the end.



Diplodocus

II. Definition of the term dinosaur

The word *dinosaur* is often used incorrectly. Most people believe that all ancient reptiles, including flying reptiles and huge ancient animals, are dinosaurs.

Name *Dinosauria* (terrible lizards) was given by Dr. Richard Owen — a friend of the famous French scientist Dr. Georges Cuvier. Owen was the first to use this word in his scientific work of 1941 «Report on the British remains of reptiles». The term *dinosaur* consists of two Greek words: *deinos* (terrible, scary, awesome) and *sauros* (lizard). Thus, the word *dinosaur* literally means an *incredibly large lizard*.

In the end, scientists around the world have borrowed this word, but now it is known to every person on earth, including young children. Most paleontologists, though not all, include dinosaurs as reptiles. This is due to the similarity in the structure of their bones, teeth, skin and bone plates present in some found dinosaur remains. And although there is still no precise definition of who should be referred to dinosaurs, and who does not, there is still a general agreement on creatures that are called dinosaurs.

Of course, the content of some stories is pure fiction, as are traits and the properties that people endowed with dragons. Thus, a man tried to draw in the listeners' attention to the uniqueness of these animals and to emphasize the heroic qualities of hunters. Other stories seem not only implausible but generally fabulous or mystical. However, many legends deserve our attention and trust.

All available drawings, records, legends and other facts about dinosaurs indicate that people for many years lived in close proximity to dinosaurs: they saw them, drew them on rock stones, hunted them, used their bones, internal organs and enzymes for the preparation of medicines and so on.

IV. Names and Classifications

It is not known exactly how many varieties of dinosaurs there were. The figures range from 250 to 550 or more (one study led to a figure of 500,000). Some scientists classify dinosaurs on scant remains, others — only in the teeth, and still others — by the vertebrae.

Doing excavations and researching the remains of dinosaurs is very expensive. To date (to be exact, in 1981) at the disposal of mankind there are about 5000 fragments of skeletons of dinosaurs. There are three main groups of dinosaurs: **terrestrial dinosaurs** (such as the Brontosaurus, Apatosaurus and Tyrannosaurus), **waterfowl dinosaurs** (such as the Plesiosaurus) and **flying dinosaurs** (such as pterodactyl).

In Conclusion

Lord God created dinosaurs. Most of them died during the Flood. Only a few dinosaurs were saved, which were in the ark with Noah and his family. After the Flood, the dinosaurs were not rare animals, but over the years they became scarce since people hunted them.

By today, only some individual specials of dinosaurs have been preserved. The rest were either exterminated by man, or died out due to a sharp climate change, or forced out by civilization and forced to hide from the human eye.

With regard to extinction, in the last 350 years, scientists have documented the disappearance of 400 animal species. If even simple animals die and disappear from the face of the earth, then what to say about such exotic creatures as dinosaurs. Nevertheless, dinosaurs are still found in some hidden places. The largest amount of evidence about modern dinosaurs is collected in African swamps. Over the past 10 years, more than 40 expeditions have been sent there. There are many books written by the participants and leaders of these expeditions, who claim that dinosaurs still exist.

The material for the newspaper «Prisoner» was kindly provided by the the Biblical Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada <http://cogmtl.net/Articles/023.htm>

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

Rehabilitation and repentance – the way to a new life

I'm from a happy family. Mom, Dad, sister. I was properly educated and my parents invested heavily in me.

In third grade, after watching the guys from the senior classes I decided to become a criminal too, so to speak, a wise and balanced decision. From the age of fourteen I was brought to criminal liability. With my friends, I stole, robbed and did various dirty deeds. Soon I was sent to prison. At sixteen I already had two court procedures.

In prison I tried drugs for the first time, but I did not understand anything, I did not like it. After my release, I went to my friends who were drug dealers, and I had easy access to them.

I continued to engage in crime with friends and gradually began to get into a drug addiction. We went to major cities, engaged in lawlessness and controlled some drug dealers. There was a lot of drugs, and we thought that it would never end.

Then I again went to jail. After my release, when I was in an apartment with my friend, the police came there. I wanted to escape through the balcony, and the moment I was standing on the balcony railing, a huge policeman pushed me down. He could have dragged me into the apartment, but instead he just pushed me. The apartment was on the third floor, and I ended up falling on my back and fainting. The policemen visually examined me and decided that I was dead, went to deal with those who were inside the apartment. Only an hour later they called an ambulance. In the hospital, I received an X-ray and found a fracture of the spine. Before that, I hated policemen most of all in my life, and after this incident, my hatred for them became even greater.

My back was in extreme pain, so when I got home, I got even more dependent on drugs. The flow of drugs was like an IV in my vein.

Over time, I needed a good chiropractor, and my parents found me a specialist. He was the pastor of one of the communities.

But as soon as I started walking on my own, I went to where they were sold drugs. Not because I did not have drugs, but because it was my nature. Where else can an addict go? Since that time, I have become a stronger addict. My health catastrophically fell.

Over time, I had a blood infection of two kinds, an inoperable internal abscess on the lungs, thrombophlebitis, and bilateral pneumonia. Over the course of my life I had eight diseases that were life threatening. I started to lose my vision, and when I was put in the hospital, I thought it was the final moments of my life. My body wasn't able to accept any medication: no injections, no pills. My body shook from medicine injections and I felt sick to my stomach from the pills. My exhausted body refused to accept anything. I have already started saying goodbye to my friends. But even then God pardoned me. However, when I was discharged from the hospital, I did not come to Christ, but continued to do evil.

One of my old friends went through rehabilitation, believed in God and occasionally for several years suggested that I do the same, but I constantly refused, because I considered myself a believer.

I had a Christian grandmother in Belarus who somehow influenced my attitude towards God. She was always happy and kind. Even when I was doing bad things with our neighbor's animals and my parents had to pay for it, my grandmother covered my deeds with love.

Therefore, throughout my troublesome life and when I was in prison, when I committed different crimes and when I used drugs I always prayed to God. But it was my own made-up god that was created in my own image.

Once when I was in the prison, I got a hold of a New Testament, but when I tried reading it from the beginning where there was the genealogy in the Gospel of Matthew, I decided that this is the most boring book in the world, and put the New Testament aside. But this book was always with me, until I gave it to a friend in prison.

The time came when I finally decided to take a chance and go through rehabilitation. I took a lot of stuff with me including a TV, blocks of cigarettes, and drugs. When I arrived there, God clearly said to me: «You have three months to live», and it sounded very clear to me.

Going through rehabilitation, I could at any time go to a nearby store to get a drink of vodka or go home to get drugged. But that did not happen. God somehow Himself did everything. During my rehabilitation I started to look for God and read His Word. God changed my thinking, I began to think differently. God cut off cursing words from my vocabulary. God showed me that the whole world was deceived. He revived me to a new life.

Eventually, I got baptism, became a deacon of the church, and then a pastor. Jesus turned everything around in my life!

When I was asked to go testify and preach to prisoners, it was to a group of former policemen who are serving their sentence. I prayed to God, «What do I need this for?» You know how «I love» them! But I humbled myself and went. And God made a miracle. I began to go there regularly. Over time, I baptized several prisoners who turned to God. Now there is a church in that prison.

Glory to Jesus because He died for me!

Vladimir SKVORINSKY, Ukraine, <http://revival.kiev.ua>



When my mother was still alive, I heard the Gospel many times from her, visited the church several times with her, but practically did not understand anything. The drugs brought my mind into a fog through which nothing could break through.

When I got released from the prison, on my way home, I sat in the train with a woman and her young boy who told me about the gospel again. Deep inside, I mentally turned to God saying, «God, if You are there, if You are as my mother told me, as this woman tells me, what awaits me? Drugs and prison again? Prison again or maybe a grave?»

When I arrived to my city, I did not go to my lover, did not go to the drug dealers, but went through the whole city to the outskirts. Why did I go there? It was cold, dark... Early March.

But in one of the houses, on the first floor, there was a light. This house was a house of prayer, which my mother used to visit. When I entered through the door, a girl rushed to me saying, «Natasha, hello, we've been waiting for you!» Later it turned out that at that time there was a conference and one of the participants did not come. She was also named Natasha, so we were confused.

I told them who I was, where I was from, and I was allowed to spend the night.

Faith in God and my mother's prayers saved me

My story started before I was born. When my mom became pregnant with me, she wanted to have an abortion because she was forty years old and my father was forty-six. They already had two grownup children, so they decided that I would be extra.

The night before going to the doctor my mother had a dream where a child was carrying a loaf of bread. This dream stopped my mother from doing abortion. For purely human reasons, she decided that this would be someone who would give her bread in her old age. And she gave birth to me.

But it turned out the opposite, because drugs came early into my life, and it is a shame and unhappiness. There were constant problems with me. These problems led to the fact that my mother accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. She received bread, but it was bread from heaven that came to her through suffering and trials. Then she got baptized and soon after died when I was twenty-one.

Until her last day she prayed for me, but nothing could change me. A year later, after the death of my mother, I was sent to prison.

I realized that it was God who answered my questions that I asked while on the train. Then I repented. I suddenly realized that Calvary and the crucified Son was for me.

In the morning I went into the next small room, the walls of which were pasted with photos of the history of the church. All walls were covered with photos. I went to the first wall, looked up and the first thing I saw was my mother's eyes. From hundreds of photographs that were there, the first photo that caught my eye was where my mother was in white clothes looking at me and smiles. Then I decided to go to rehabilitation center. This was my way to God.

Natalia SUTURINA, Ukraine,
<http://revival.kiev.ua>

P. S. Natasha was rehabilitated, got baptized, a member of the church for a year and a half, works, serves God and people.

Thank God, who answers all those who are tired of themselves and are ready to change their lives!

Praise the Lord for His mercy to the lost!

My life was spent on the streets. I started to run away from home from early childhood because I behaved badly, and my father was a tough man and he always punished me. Sometimes it would be for half a year at a time that I did not live at home. I lived in basements, attics, and other such places. This way of living has led to the fact that at the age of seventeen I was put in prison for robbery and I was sent to the zone with reinforced regime.

In order not to steal from God's glory, it is necessary to share all of the details to understand what God pulled me out of, so I will tell you straight facts.

One of my «adventures» was theft in large amounts. I managed to rob from the department store in Ukraine, the one opposite from the circus in Kyiv. I took out four truckloads of goods and about a million rubles (about 14,810 dollars).

I have been imprisoned twenty-seven years total over the course of my life, of which twenty years were in a high security prison. I was one of those prisoners that got into even more trouble in prison.

I was not just a prisoner, but always in the spotlight and having extra security on me at all times.

From the age of seventeen I had only a year and a half at freedom. Most of my life passed in prison.

When I was released from prison for the last time, I was diagnosed with tuberculosis.

Tuberculosis was aggravated, I lost a lot of weight. I weighed about forty kilograms (80 pounds). I was skin and bones, and I could not walk by myself. Soon after I could not lift my head from the pillow. I could be filmed in movies about prison camps for I was so thin. When my mother came to visit me, she fainted when she saw me.

Doctors said that I could not survive one hundred percent. My

was forgiven and will live. Then I decided to go to the rehabilitation center.

Now I am finished with rehabilitation, got baptized, and work in the hospital. I go and tell the Gospel to tuberculosis patients.

The biggest miracle for me is that I work. I have never worked in my life. I was beaten up all the time in prison by the administration for constant refusals to work and was taken to the «detention». To work for me was unacceptable according to the principles of the criminal world.

I had never imagined that I would work! Now I cannot imagine how can you sleep and be late for work.

At first I tried to earn more money but my brothers in Christ warned me that with my health it is better not to chase after big money. Then I decided to be faithful to God in a small place and settled in a printing house where I worked for a hundred hryvnia (less than 4 dollars) a day.

Then God sent me a job as a seller of fish. The owner began to trust me with the goods and the cashier regardless of my twenty-seven years spent in prison for theft. And today, I'm more trusted than other vendors and cashiers. This year I was engaged with a girl from our church.

Praise God for His mercy to the lost!

Oleg YURCHENKO, Ukraine,
<http://revival.kiev.ua>



TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

A Beautiful Lady, Tanya, Gave Me A Chance To Start Life From A Clean Slate

My parents split, rather, my mom left for another man when I was two years old. I think that is when sin entered our family. My step-dad was a rough man and so my little brother and I would run away and stay on the streets where we spent most of our time.

We started stealing along with other boys on the streets. I left school. I began my grown-up life as an experienced thief; I bought an apartment and a decent car. However, the wealth that I acquired over other's tears and sorrow did not bring me joy. My soul lacked peace. I was constantly followed by fear. In order to numb this feeling, I started using drugs.

After some time, because of my drug usage, I «lost my qualification» and my entire fortune. Consequently, I ended up behind bars.

The prison in Izyaslav in the Khmelnytskyi region to some degree saved me. I didn't have the chance to inject myself with drugs. My younger brother's words would often visit my mind. He was a repented churchgoer by this time of my life.

I started to pray and ask God for freedom and He suddenly answered. I earned amnesty even though I only served nine months out of the expected three years. Usually you get let go if you serve over a 1/3 of your sentence. However, I was still unable to value this mercy from God. The first thing I did when I stepped out of prison was buy myself another dose. I did not have the strength to withstand the tempting powder.

I didn't have the chance to run around too long. Two months later I was convicted for 3 and half years



for storing drugs. I had a horrible withdrawal in prison. I remember lowering myself to the floor and crouching over my knees. I suddenly noticed something in the wall between the cracks of plaster. I thought it was a cigarette cinder. I reached for it but found a crumpled piece of paper. It had a printed prayer of a repenting sinner. I read it and I felt better. I would later read it every time I experienced the impossible withdrawals.

After that time, the Lord started to openly speak to me. He sent believers into my life. One of them gifted me with his Bible.

With time, I started attending a Christian church in prison which was located in the City Bila Tserkva. I really liked to socialize with these people. Other Christians would visit us from the «free world» away from these bars. Shortly, I repented and started to preach the Word of God. There was no trace of drug

addiction. My soul was full of such joy that I forgot that I was located in prison.

When the time came for me to leave prison, I had the decision to decide where to go — a rehab center or home. I chose the latter.

I thought that I could manage everything on my own. Yet, with time, I started attending church less and less often. At once satan took a hold of me. I was returning home from work in the evening and saw an attractive woman. At first we started talking and then I sinned with her. This was my fall. I started drinking again. I started injecting myself. I got a female cohabitant who left the church with me into the world. Nothing good turned out of this. Every day was worse than the day before.

In the end, I convinced myself that there was no forgiveness left for me. I decided to commit suicide. During my day shift (I worked as a taxi driver) I stopped the car and was going to dial the «needed» number to order a deadly dose of drugs. In that moment, I saw a beautiful young lady who was walking toward me. She smiled at me. Something within me hinted that I should walk up to her. Although I was thoroughly disappointed in women and more-so did not randomly walk up to them on the street, I still came up to her and offered to give her a ride. We subtly started talking. It turned out that she was in school her entire life, valedictorian with all the diplomas and medals— a goodie two-shoes. And me. Who was I? When she asked about me, I did not know how to respond. I told her that I was a believer but with a

dark past. I started witnessing about Christ.

After this encounter, I left to the rehab center and told the brothers everything and genuinely repented. While I was in rehab, Tanya (that was the name of the beautiful young lady) regularly called me and we would meet up. She herself became a church member. Over some time, we got married.

I now serve in the evangelical ministry in prisons and in the geriatric boarding house. I also participate in the media-ministry. My wife, Tanya, sings in the vocal group «Mahanaim». In 2010, we became parents to our daughter Milana and over time we had a son, Philip. Praise be to God for everything!

Dmitry MALINOVSKY,
Ukraine
<http://www.skinia.org.ua>



My Mother and Sister Led Me on the Rightful Path

Perhaps I was one of those kids who would rather spend time on the streets than stay in their homes. I cherished the streets more than my home sweet home. By the age of seven, I regularly smoked. When my father died, I was twelve. I tried to independently earn money. That's when I befriended older guys. By the age of fourteen, I tried heroin for the first time.

When it was time for me to join the army, I accepted it with hope, thinking that was my ticket from addiction. I served with the internal troops in Dnipro and it turned out to be even worse. Drugs were brought straight to us. The money for each dose was taken away from the soldiers. So I returned home from the army an even more addicted human. Thanks to my relatives, I was able to apply and get hired at a good job. It was a big company that delivered non-alcoholic beverages. However, I was kicked out of there only after a year. I started stealing from stores and once almost ended up behind bars.

The reason seemed minor — I borrowed a bicycle from an acquaintance and did not return it on time. The owner wrote a report to the police. The case was transferred to court and I was locked up for fifteen days. However, none of this was by accident. God knew that the days and nights that I would spend in confinement would force me to think about my life and remember the guidance of my older sister.

By that time my sister, Yulia, was already attending a Christian Evangelical Church. She would invite me a few times. But it was as if I did not hear or see anything. Yet, when I was behind bars I started repenting and lamenting over my sinful life. I made a promise to God and my relatives that I would change.

However, the moment I would walk outside, I would meet my old buddies and immediately forget all of my promises. Even so, the Lord started to act in my life.

After this, whenever I tried to steal something, I would immediately get caught. I was sent to the police station four times within two weeks. I was put on probation for two years. If I was caught within this time, I would be sent to jail. My mom was in horror and tried to buy me out. When all of her money ran out, she gave up her phone. I felt sorry for her...and so I decided to go to a rehab center with her. I was not sure I would stay there since I wasn't forced to go there. I am grateful to God that one person helped me make the right decision. He told me that he spent twenty years in jail. He used drugs for forty years and after that...he was able to gain freedom.

Praise be to God that I am a free man today. I am free from drugs and can testify about God's strength and His mercy.

Roman MURAVITSKY, Ukraine, <http://www.skinia.org.ua>



My father was a colonel and occupied one of the leading positions in the Academy of Border Troops in Khmelnytskyi. I was the only child in the family, surrounded by my parents' love and care. In school I was a straight A student up until 9th grade.

My life started to change in 10th grade when I started hanging out with a different crew. I started

1.5 years later, I got caught again and was sentenced to 2 years in prison. I was a malicious regime offender in prison and so they added another year to my sentence. Consequently, I got sick with tuberculosis and became a finished drug addict. When I completed my sentence and got out, I did not want to admit that I was in a desperate situation. For some reason I always thought that

saries gave me a result. At the age of 27, I was sentenced to die.

Yet, God had a different plan for me. Once, I had a dream at night — a cross with a crucified and bloody Person, Who looked straight into my eyes. I heard a voice, «This is My Son. He is the only way out for you. If you believe in Him, your life will totally change. If not, you will ruin yourself and your family.

Salvation From Addiction-Faith in God, True Repentance & Rehabilitation

smoking, drinking, and partaking in crime. After school, I was threatened with prison and that's when my parents gave me the condition — education in the Border Troops Academy or prison. Obviously I chose the academy. Yet, my life went downhill with more momentum. Out of the 3 years that I was at the academy, I spent 1.5 years in the guardhouse. I continued to drink. I spread and used marijuana. I was drawn to my «successful» criminal-friends. I wanted to live like them. I wanted to have a car, a house, and spend evenings in restaurants and night clubs.

I dropped out of the academy and started doing what I wanted to do. Yet, the «beautiful» life, that strongly encompassed drugs, could not bring me happiness. The clouds started to thicken and darken around me.

At the age of 19, I was under investigation for the first time. I spent around 9 months in jail but was able to get away easily with 2 years of probation. However,

I could stop on my own if I wanted to stop.

In short, drugs replaced everything in my life and became the purpose of my life. That is how I existed another 2 years. Everyone turned away from me except my mom who prayed about me to God. After my dad passed away, I was supposed to be her

I woke up in cold sweat and understood exactly what I needed to do. In the evening, I was taken to a church where I, a finished drug-addict, repented and confessed all of my sins. That evening I earned total freedom from all of the drugs and I gained forgiveness for all of my sins. I then completed a rehab course



support but I became an unbearable and heavy burden for her. This time, I got out of prison as a disabled man with active tuberculosis. I lost all interest toward life. I tried different methods of treatment but neither clinics nor narcological dispen-

in Kyiv. Then I got an x-ray for my lungs and it showed that they were completely healthy. Jesus healed me! God baptized me with the Holy Spirit and I made a covenant with Him by partaking in my water baptism. From that moment, my life totally changed.

Today I am a minister at a church and rehab center. I actively participate in a prison ministry. God blessed me with a wonderful wife, Veronika, and daughter Yevgeniya.

Dmitry KONONOV,
Ukraine,
<http://www.skinia.org.ua>

It would be useful if you wrote on the topic of what the word «holy» means. What is personal holiness? What is holiness in general? What is the fullness of sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23)?

By what criteria can a Christian determine whether he is truly holy? How can you know if you are growing in holiness? Is it possible to be in holiness without giving your body as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1)?

Why is Christianity right now unlike Christ, both in appearance and in spirit?

I will be sincerely grateful to you for the answer. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ always be with you!

With love, brother Roman.

What is holiness?

People interpret the meaning of the word «holiness» completely differently. If you ask different people to draw the image of a holy man, then these images will be many, and they will differ from each other, depending on the understanding of the concepts of good and evil and from the state of conscience of those who answer this question.

And it is possible that all these definitions of holiness will be good, but for us, Christians, the opinion and evaluation of God is important. We want to know what He calls holiness.

There is a difference in the concepts of «righteousness» and «holiness». Righteousness is measured more in the way of life and human behavior, while holiness refers not only to the external side of life and actions, but also to the motives of these actions and the mental world of man.

Righteousness is the fulfillment of God's law.

Deuteronomy 6:25 — *And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He hath commanded us.*

The word «holiness» means moral and spiritual purity, non-participation in evil.

Holiness is a state of union with God and the possession of His qualities.

This is the state in which the creature is in harmony with its Creator.

2 Peter 1:4 — *...that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

1 Corinthians 6:17 — *But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.*

The process of separation from the world and transformation into the image of Christ is called sanctification. It begins in a Christian at the time of birth from above (repentance and conversion to God) and ends with a transition into another world.

Revelation 22:11 — *...he that is holy, let him be holy still.*

God calls people to be holy, just as He is holy.

Leviticus 11:45 — *For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.*

Leviticus 20:7-8 — *Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you.*

Hebrews 12:14 — *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

To make it easier to understand how sanctification takes place, we turn to the Old Testament and see how this process was carried out on the priests who were consecrated to the ministry.

The process of consecration included several aspects:

- Separation from the rest,
- Purification,
- Sanctification.

The sequence of the old covenant dedication of priests for ministry is a prototype of the process of sanctification, occurring with believing people today.

1. Separation

At the dedication of the priest to the ministry, the candidate had to be separated from the general environment and stay in the temple for seven days. The separation itself is not yet a cleansing, but only after it subsequent purification is possible.

Exodus 28:1 — *And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.*

Thus, Christians on the road to holiness, living in the world, must get out from under the domination of the devil's system of this world and give themselves into the ownership of God. We should not be pursuing an easy and rich life, popularity, but the desire to fulfill the will of God, which He has for each of us personally.

2 Corinthians 6:17 — *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*

Luke 14:33 — *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

1 Corinthians 7:17 — *But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk.*

2. The Old Testament purification was a type of repentance and the abandonment of the old way of life

During the purification the men who were to become priests were bathed in water.

Exodus 29:4 — *And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacles of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water.*

The Word of God has wonderful properties of washing our conscience from previous sins and ennobling it. Reading the Bible and reasoning

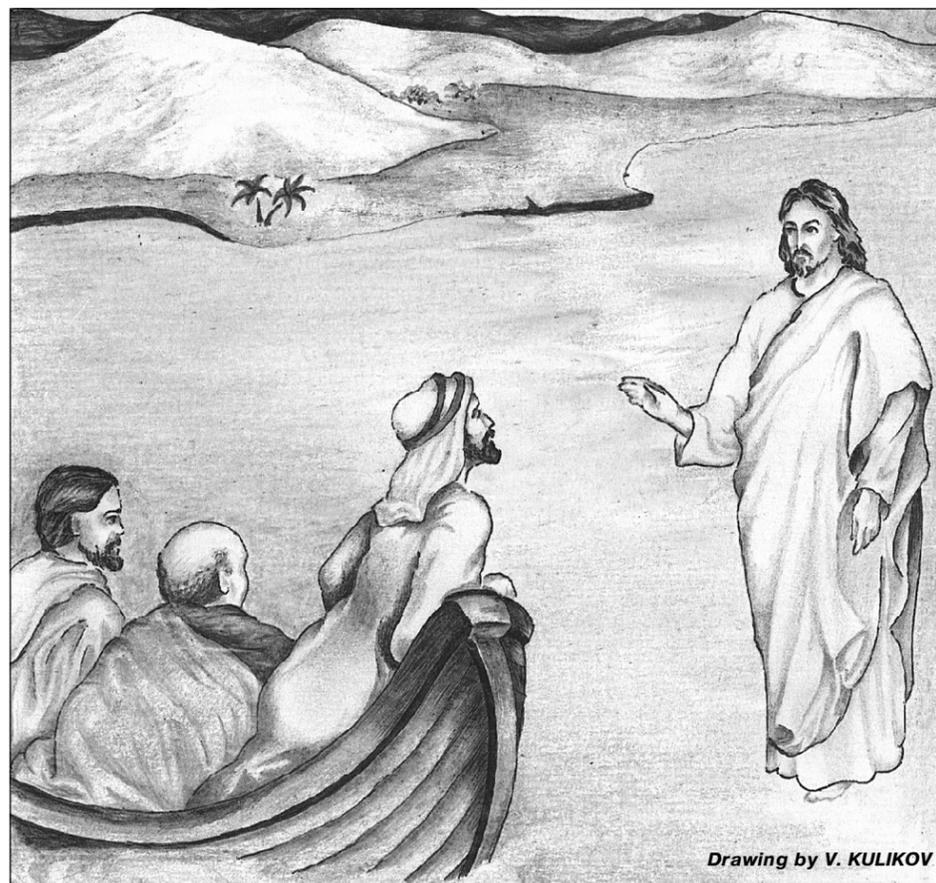
contrary, causes delight, because you begin to realize how great God's love is if he loves you the way you are. And then the heart overflows with the desire to at least somehow thank God. And as a result, in a grateful, pardoned heart there is a desire for a holy life.

1 Peter 1:22 — *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*

1 Thessalonians 5:23 — *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ?

HOLINESS



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over it, listening to spiritual conversations and preaching, the Christian is sanctified.

Where we direct our thinking, so we become. The thinking process is a mechanism that embodies the information received in practical life. He transforms a person according to what he hears and reads.

Proverbs 23:7 — *For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...*

Isaiah 32:8 — *But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and be liberal things shall he stand.*

The Bible advises us that our thoughts and minds should be loaded with pure and God-pleasing thoughts. Then our actions will be right.

Ephesians 5:26 — *That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.*

Hebrews 10:22 — *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

3. The anointing with sacred oil was a type of New Testament sanctification and baptism in the Holy Spirit

Exodus 40:13-15 — *And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And thou shalt bring his sons, and clothe them with coats: and thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.*

The first time baptism with the Holy Spirit occurred was on the 50th day after the resurrection of Christ, and it continues to this day. As Christ promised that God will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask of the Heavenly Father, so He does today.

When acting on a person, the Holy Spirit denounces him about sin (John 16:8), pointing to the aspects of his life that do not correspond to God's holiness. This is a very sweet and pleasant experience, which can be accompanied by tears of emotion and joy. Everyone who experiences the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit, looking at God's holiness, begins to feel their own imperfection and inconsistency. And it doesn't cause discomfort, but rather, on the

The Results of Consecration

• In the process of sanctification, the impurities of the dilapidated, sinful nature are removed.

All people have sinful inclinations from their very birth, which accompany them through life. Many people do not worry much about this, because they reassure themselves that all people are the same. When a person begins to be consecrated, it changes everything radically. It is already difficult for him to remain the way he was, because he feels foul-smelling and dirty.

Psalms 37:4-5 — *For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.*

Psalms 40:12 — *For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.*

Matthew 15:19-20 — *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.*

The spiritual growth of every Christian is directly proportional to the level of personal enlightenment and the ability to recognize the carnal and to choose the spiritual.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 — *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification...*

Revelation 22:11-12 — *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

• The ministry of a consecrated Christian has great spiritual power and influence.

2 Timothy 2:21 — *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.*

• By means of sanctification, God's nature, lost in the fall, is restored in man to help him become more and more like Christ.

Romans 8:29 — *For whom he did*

foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

• Sanctification leads to a better understanding of God and His will.

John 9:31 — *Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.*

Proverbs 15:29 — *The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.*

Matthew 5:8 — *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*

1 Thessalonians 4:3 — *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification...*

• Without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Only people who are sanctified will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Hebrews 12:14 — *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

Acts 26:16-18 — *...for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

It is interesting that, on the one hand, the Bible calls everyone to holiness, and on the other hand, we see in the Epistles of the Apostles that they called all believing people saints, regardless of their level of holiness. Especially if you pay attention to the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where in the first verses of the first chapter, the apostle greets the Corinthian church and calls its members holy.

1 Corinthians 1:2 — *Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord...*

And the third chapter already shows a sad picture of their relationship with each other, which is very much not inherent in holy people.

1 Corinthians 3:3 — *For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

In order to avoid misunderstandings, it is necessary to divide holiness into several types:

- Holiness by vocation,
- Practical holiness.

Holiness by vocation, or positional holiness, a person receives during birth from above, at the time of conversion to God. The unregenerate human spirit cannot be sanctified.

Romans 8:30 — *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

Hebrews 10:10 — *By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Holiness by vocation, or positional holiness, is the phenomenon of God's special grace, designed to justify every man who comes to God with sincere repentance. And even if the life of such a person, repentant and reconciled with God, is immediately interrupted, then Christ's holiness extends to him. He is already like the twig that at the time of death was grafted to the Vine — Christ. Even if he did not have time to bring any fruit other than the fruit of repentance, which is also significant, he still repented, so he was saved in Christ.

But if after a certain time this branch remains barren, then it becomes a candidate for being cut off the Vine. In other words, practical holiness must be manifested, which is evidence of correct inculcation to the holy Vine. There must be changes in character, actions and decisions of the believing person. This is what is called practical, or practiced, holiness.

Practical holiness is that which is acquired and manifested by the believing person in everyday life.

Romans 6:22 — *But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

There is no holiness outside of God. He is the standard, and therefore the state of oneness with Him is holiness. A saint is one who thinks, speaks and does what God wants. And this is only possible for a person who is in God.

Let us pay attention to this verse from the Bible:

Leviticus 20:7-8 — *Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you.*

From this text it becomes clear that God expects something from the man himself to achieve holiness.

But in order to achieve this state, you must abandon yourself. This is the answer to another of Brother Roman's questions: «Can we remain in holiness without giving our body as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1)?»

The answer is no, it's impossible. And this is why. A person who does not give himself up as a sacrifice to God belongs to himself. And Christ said that it's impossible to be saved with your own effort. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to act properly and accept God-pleasing solutions. But even if a person does everything impeccably in his life, his motives will still not be correct. And this is inevitable.

On the one hand, without the participation of a person, holiness cannot be achieved, and on the other hand, only the Holy Spirit can reproduce God's holiness in man.

Luke 18:27 — *And he said, the things which are impossible with men are possible with God.*

Can you determine the level of your holiness?

It's more like surrounding people will notice your practical holiness than you yourself.

This is the paradox: that on this path of sanctification, the more a person sees himself as an unworthy sinner, the holier and humbler he becomes!

The consecration of man starts from the inside and goes to the outside. At first, thoughts and feelings are consecrated, and as a consequence the holy life manifests itself.

Means of Achieving Holiness

1. God's side of the process of sanctification

A. The Word of God

John 15:3 — *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

John 17:17 — *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

B. The blood of Jesus Christ

Hebrews 9:14 — *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

Hebrews 13:12 — *Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

C. The Holy Spirit

2 Thessalonians 2:13 — *...God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation...*

1 Peter 1:2 — *...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.*

1 Peter 1:22 — *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently...*

D. God's Education

Hebrews 12:10-11 — *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but frivouous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

E. The Church

Church communication is designed so that those who believe can serve each other with the talents that God has given them. The ministry of the word and the manifestation of the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit are used by God for the sanctification of His people.

Matthew 16:18 — *...and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Matthew 18:19-20 — *Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*

Hebrews 10:25 — *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

2. Humans' side of the process of sanctification

Practical sanctification occurs with the conscious participation of the person himself.

Leviticus 20:7 — *Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God.*

Here are some stops along this path:

- ☉ Awareness of the need for sanctification
- ☉ The decision to go through sanctification
- ☉ Willingness to pay a price
- ☉ Prayer life
- ☉ Application of practical efforts

I would like to end our reasoning about holiness with a beautiful text from the Holy Scripture:

1 Thessalonians 5:23 — *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Aleksandr BORISENKO.

QUESTIONS FROM A READER

Hello, dear brothers and sisters in Christ! First of all, I want to thank all those who are involved in this beautiful Christian newspaper «Prisoner»! Dear children of God, I thank you very much for your work. May our Lord always be with you!

I have many questions that I would like to receive answers to. I hope that God will place the heart of the one who has the gift of the Holy Spirit to be the teacher of God's Word and will give a detailed explanation to my questions.

1. How is it possible to worship in spirit and truth? What does «in the spirit» mean and what does «in truth» mean?

2. How can a sinner receive the Holy Spirit to be spiritually born again?

3. How does spiritual birth by faith in Jesus Christ take place — instantly or gradually? And is it true that only baptism by the Holy Spirit indicates that the believer has experienced a spiritual birth?

4. If the heart of a Christian is not completely obedient to God, can such a Christian be baptized with the Holy Spirit?

5. Verse 1 Cor. 12:13: Does it mean that only through baptism by the Holy Spirit that the believer joins the Body of Christ (the church)? How do I correctly understand this verse?

6. If a Christian believes that he has in his heart the love of God, but does not have such qualities of love as described in 1 Cor. 13:4-8, can he still keep considering

that he has God's love in his heart?

7. Grace — how should we understand this word? Christians are told to grow in grace (2 Peter 3:18) — how should this be understood?

8. If a Christian goes to preach the Gospel, but does not have the full blessing of preaching the gospel (Romans 15:29), will his work be fruitful?

9. What does it mean to carry your daily cross (Luke 14:27)? How can you know that a Christian is really carrying his cross?

I will be very grateful to you for answering my questions. Be blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ!

Roman KOSTYSHIN,
Vynnytsia, Ukraine.

Is there a crossable boundary after which hell is guaranteed?

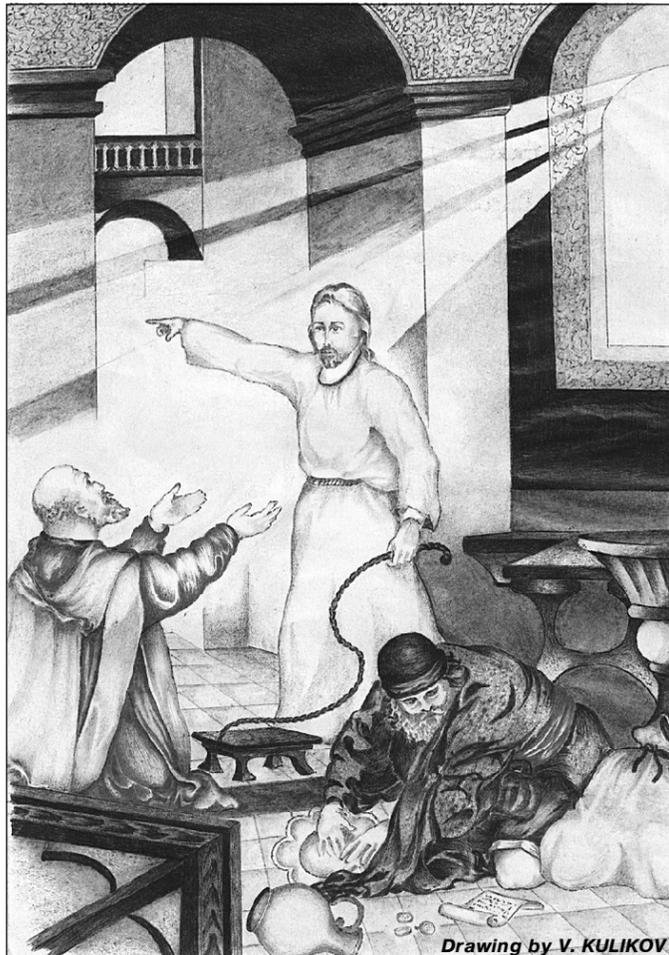
The question of whether there is a line of sin, after crossing which, the soul is guaranteed to go to hell, is set incorrectly. This is the same as asking how many months it takes a corpse to work in the same enterprise to earn a paid vacation. The answer is obvious: the dead do not work.

The same applies to the issue of the boundary of the Fall. The fact is that every person is born into this world already sinful and worthy of hell, and during his life he only complements the measure of his sins. Whether he sins more or less does not really matter, because he was born already doomed to eternal torment in hell. Therefore, the question should not be about the boundary of man's fall, but about what man must do in life to avoid hell after death.

So, how can a person avoid hell? Man is born and automatically follows the path of life leading to hell. And only through repentance he can take the path leading to paradise (into eternal life). Repentance (from the Greek metanoia) is a radical change in the way of thinking. Repenting of sins means turning around 180 degrees: turning away from sin and hell and turning your face to God.

The Bible speaks of two kinds of repentance: (1) true repentance and (2) simple regret. Sometimes in the Russian Bible the word repentance is translated as sadness. **2 Corinthians 7:10** — *...godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

Salvation from hell is guaranteed in the identity of Jesus Christ — the God who came in the flesh to the earth, to pay with His precious



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blood for the sin of man. The one who by faith accepts this substitutionary sacrifice of Christ and turns to God with a request for forgiveness, the Lord forgives and frees from punishment in hell.

And a person who rejects the sacrifice and teaching of Jesus Christ, condemns himself to eternal torment in hell. This was testified by Jesus Himself: **John 8:24** — *«I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins; John 3:36* — *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*

Is it a sin to be offended?

The Word of God equates the unwillingness to forgive to sin, for which punishment will follow. Read the parable of the evil slave. In it you will see God's attitude towards people who refused to forgive someone.

Matthew 18:23-35 — *Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened*

unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of the servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

This is what the Lord Jesus taught about the importance of forgiveness: *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses (Matthew 18:35).* And also in **Matthew 18:21-22** the following conversation between Peter and Jesus is written: *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.*

Knowing that sometimes it is very difficult and painful to forgive an offender, the Lord gives enough time for anger — until sunset: **Ephesians 4:26** — *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath...*

If it's hard for you to forgive your abusers, then perhaps this illustration will help you find the strength and desire to forgive. Remember Jesus Christ. He died on the cross to pay with His death for our sins. In committing sin, we trample the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. But nevertheless, He forgives us our sins, when we turn to Him with repentance and a request for forgiveness. But our sins hurt the Lord and hurt Him much more than the pain that our offenders are causing us.

How can you determine if you have forgiven your offender or not? If you still want to take revenge or say something offensive to the offender, then most likely you have not yet forgiven him. Ask the Lord in prayer to give you strength for forgiveness, and He will help you.

Is man really free?

(Can it be that I do not want to live, but I was created, that I do not want to suffer on this earth, but I live? It would be better if I had never been born)

Thinking about earthly life and suffering, one should not forget that initially man was not created for suffering on earth. The Lord created man and placed him in paradise in the Garden of Eden, where he could live forever in joy and God's love. But man sinned, breaking the only commandment of God, and for his sin the whole earth was cursed: **Genesis 3:17-19** — *And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.* Ever since then, people are born into suffering.

Do you suffer? You are not the only one who suffers in this world. Look at how people who were born without arms and legs live, or those lost them in war or as a result of an accident... Do you suffer? Do you want to end this suffering? Come to Christ. He Himself came to earth to suffer for us, and by His suffering and death on the cross to open for us the gates of paradise, where we will no longer have any disease, pain or suffering. About those who will spend eternity with God, the Bible says: *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Revelation 21:4).*

Yes, a person does not have a choice in such a question as whether to be born or not to be born. The person also does not choose relatives. But you can choose friends, God, and also you can decide where you will spend eternity. Life on earth, with its sufferings, is a small period of time, and life after death is an eternity: *...the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Romans 8:18).*

If you were put before a choice: to be born on earth or not, then, knowing that on earth you will suffer, you would surely choose the option «not to be born». And if you had a choice: to live a happy or unhappy life, then you would surely choose the option «to live a happy life». It is in front of such a choice that each of us stands today. We received the gift of life to make a choice: to spend eternity with God in heaven or without God in hell. **Deuteronomy 30:19** — *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life...*

<http://cogmtl.net/q.htm>

Blessings Came into My Life and My Life Has Really Began to Change



My whole life I was sure that I was the one that was planning my destiny. I dreamed of a good family, home, and wealth. In search of a beautiful life, I began to engage in robbery and extortion; I did not disdain anything that could bring me money. Therefore, there were expensive cars, alcohol, and drugs. It seemed to me that I had achieved a lot, but the time came to reap what I sowed. Those whom I considered to be friends began to disappear from my life one after another: someone was missing, someone was killed, and someone was jailed. I saw that my life was coming to the same logical conclusion and it was impossible to stop it.

I spent twelve years of my life on drugs. A huge non-healing wound appeared from regular injections in my leg. I was practically rotting alive, and the doctors were powerless to help me...

Once, my friends and I went to visit a religious woman in a village and, accidentally, I met a religious church group. There were three of us, but she turned to me and offered to pray for me saying that I have problems. I was surprised and angered. However, I agreed. What happened during the ten minutes of prayer shocked all of us: the rotting wound dried and became sixty percent smaller on the leg. Then the woman looked at me

intently and said: «You must stop doing evil! Otherwise, you will lose your first leg and then the other». Then she showed me which leg I will lose first. I was very frightened, but I was able to hold out without drugs for only a week. Then everything happened as the Lord said through that woman!

A year passed. I was hospitalized with swollen and rotting legs. The words of the doctors sounded like a verdict: «There is a threat to your life. First we amputate this leg, and then, perhaps, the other». The prophetic words of the woman came in my memory immediately. Among these words I also remembered a very important phrase: «God loves you!» I did not want to die and regretted that I did not listen to God's words! In the hospital, I, then, made a promise to the Lord that I would never return to the life that I had, and I will obey him. I said: «God, if You hear me, put my life in order!»

The Lord heard my prayer. I felt better and I went home on my own feet. But I deceived God! A little time has passed and I again plunged into drugs and criminal activities. Mom was very worried about me and tried to help. However, all of her attempts failed. Then, she had only one hope — Jesus Christ! She went to church to pray for me, but that was when she herself received salvation and a hope for eternal life!

Since then, believers started visiting our house. Brother Igor was a frequent guest. He wanted to talk to me, but I avoided him. If he was going to come at five o'clock, I was leaving at three o'clock. Though, I could not walk far from home for some reason. I looked at the windows thinking that they were praying for me. Once I could not stand it and came back. Igor told me about rehabilitation center in Kyiv and offered to take me there at any time. I ignored his offer. Instead, I stole money from my brother a few weeks later and spent it on drugs. I could not go home because I was very ashamed. I spent my time in the basement several days and soberly assessed my condition at a certain moment. Soon I called Igor, and asked him to send me to the rehabilitation center. Five years have passed since then. The Lord has completely changed my life.

Analyzing my life, I can say that disobedience to God could lead us eternal death. I addressed all my difficult situations to the Lord, and He hearing me has always helped. After learning how to thank Him, my life has started to change. When I began to hear and listen to God, obedient to His word, blessings came into my life. «**To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams...**» (1 Samuel 15:22).

Today, my life is very different. God has entrusted me with prison ministry, blessed me with a wife and three daughters. The foundation of my life and the life of my family is Jesus Christ and obedience to His Word!

Vyacheslav KOGUT, Ukraine, <http://skinia.org.ua>

Dear readers of «Prisoner»!

The publication office requests that you enclose your postal address with your material (testimonies, sermons, articles, etc.) for publication in «Prisoner». If you enclose photos with your material, we will be glad to publish them.

And for those of you just on the way to God, it's time to turn to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with a short prayer:

«Lord Jesus, I believe you are God's Son; You died for my sins and rose again for my salvation. I accept you as my personal Lord and Savior. Please forgive all my sins and grant me eternal life. Amen!»



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A prideful wind

The wind extinguished the candle and became prideful:
«I can extinguish everything now! Even the sun!»



A wise man heard him, made a windmill and said to the wind:

«The nights can extinguish the sun. You try and stop the wheel of the windmill».

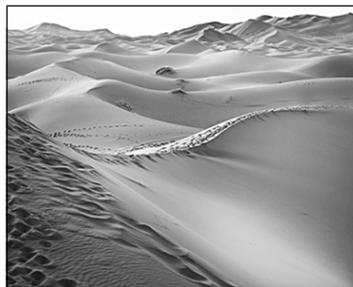
And with all his strength, the wise man spun a large heavy wheel.

The wind blew once, blew harder, but the wheel did not stop. On the contrary, the more it blew, the more the windmill spun. Flour flowed into the bags of the wise peasant. He began to live well-off and did not forget the poor.

And where is the wind? Some say that the wind is still blowing the wheel of the windmill.

The Monk's Hunger

One Monk came to complain to an old man that every day from 9 a.m. he feels a strange hunger. Although in the monastery where he lived before, he could easily spend several days without food.



«Do not be surprised at this, my son», the old man replied. «There is no one in the desert who would witness your fasting and who would support and nourish you with praise». Formerly, vainglory served you as food in the monastery. The pleasure that you experienced, standing out among others with your abstinence, was sweeter than dinner for you.

The Powerful King

The king turned to a hermit: «Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you!» The hermit said: «Give me an immortal life, eternal youth, inexhaustible wealth, and joy that no sorrow will ever cloud». The king replied: «I cannot control such things». «Then leave me alone», the hermit said. «I will ask the One who is able to give me all this».

<https://pritchi.ru>



ATTENTION!

Dear readers, today the newspaper «Prisoner» has the status of the two languages: Russian and English. «Prisoner» is printed in the Ukraine and in America. However, the newspaper is published and distributed exclusively by voluntary donations. For all those wishing to contribute to the success of «Prisoner» all the requisites are indicated in the last column of the newspaper. For those in America who wish to donate to the newspaper «Prisoner» and support the prison ministry, there is a tear off form, where you can donate and specify what you want the donation to go for. God bless you!

Our main focus is ministering to inmates in jails and prisons.

Hope of Freedom
P.O. Box 4053
Everett, WA 98208



Hope of Freedom

That you may say to the prisoners, «Go forth», To those who are in darkness, «Show yourselves» (Is. 49:9).

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