



PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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

(John 8:32)

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«You have heard that it was said, «An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth». But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. «You have heard that it was said, «You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy». But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect» (Matt. 5:38-48, NKJV).

Probably many Christians who have been born again or been in the faith many years have read these instructions (commandments) of Jesus Christ a lot of times. Perhaps of all the words the Lord said, these passages of Scripture are most difficult to understand. For how can you love those who do evil to you, and still bless them, do good to them, and pray for them?

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Without a doubt, many Christians stumble at this saying of Jesus Christ, while attempting to comprehend this love. Everything seems to be said very clearly, but how to find that kind of love for your enemies and oppressors in yourself? It remains a great dilemma. Why? Because human pride does not allow us to forgive others. It is much easier to love those who love you, or to give to someone who is giving to you. Often Christians tell others to follow the commandment to love their enemies but, unfortunately, not many of them practice such love personally. It is too difficult to get over their own pride and turn their left cheek after the right cheek, or to give their enemy their cloak after he took away their coat. Not to mention, after all this, to do good to, bless and pray for their offender. Reading these lines, try to compare yourself to Jesus Christ and

answer the question, whether your lifestyle fits the standards which the Lord has commanded us? And if it does not, the reason is, of course, in yourself. Is it not?

Maybe it is easier to love our neighbor than our enemy? But what if this neighbor suddenly offended you in word or deed! How then you will show your love? Are you ready to get over your pride immediately and forgive your brother?

Our Lord, in the heart of the Gospel, laid down two main commandments as the foundation — to love God and your neighbor. For without this foundation, man will never be able to build within himself a spiritual temple for the Holy Spirit. If within the human nature there is no true love, this temple is closed to God. Despite the fact that the first and great commandment says that you must first love God, without the ability to love one's neighbor,

this commandment will remain for such a person just out of reach. Scripture clearly says: **«If someone says, «I love God», and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?»** (1 Jn. 4:20). It turns out that if we do not truly love our neighbor, then all the talk about loving God is nothing but noise.

Even if all Christians are doing well regarding the love of God and neighbor, do they have the same love for their enemy? Why is it much harder to love your enemy than the one who loves you? And why has the Lord left us this commandment?

First, the commandment of love is given to us in order that we might conform to the image in which God created us. For God Himself is love (1 Jn. 4:8). Second, all faith is based on these commandments because

without love this world cannot exist at all. Third, the commandment to love our enemies was left for us as a test, so that we could examine ourselves to see whether we have become humble before Him who created us, died for our sins and was raised for our justification. **«He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked»** (1 Jn. 2:6). And how did the Lord act towards his enemies? Did He even have any enemies? The Bible clearly answers this question: **«But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us»** (Rom. 5:8). And even after all the humiliation He endured, Jesus Christ was crucified, He asked the Father to forgive His enemies: **«Then Jesus said, «Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do»** (Lk. 23:34).

Maybe it is not easy to accept the commandment to love your enemies, but the Lord Himself calls us to this perfection. It is because of sacrificial love that each of us can change, if not the world, at least the hearts around us.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us all, in all our prayers, ask God that He would teach us all to love everyone as He loves. For if we do not have this perfect love, we will never be able to fulfill these commandments of God, to love sincerely not only our neighbors but our enemies as well. And it would not be like what the Lord God did for all of us: **«For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life»** (John 3:16).

I. GORIK.



YOUR LETTERS

Thank you so much for your inspiring and positive newspaper!

God's peace to you, dear editors of «Prisoner»! Thank you so much for your inspiring and positive newspaper; everyone who reads it finds spiritual food, compassion, mercy and the love of Christ. I read it with great pleasure. God bless all of you and your loved ones! Let your work be a joy for you and the glory to God!

I wish that many more people would find in this beautiful newspaper, «Prisoner», a lot of benefits for their souls!

Sincerely, with great respect, your grateful reader —



OKSANA, Canada.

* * *

My name is Oleg Mayba and I'm 25 years old. I was born in Lviv, Ukraine. At this time I am in King County RJC, in Kent, Washington. It may sound strange, but I'm glad to be in prison because being free I lived on the streets and ruined my life with drugs. I am happy that I can finally change

my life, come closer to God and make Him the most important thing in my life both in prison and when I go out to be free. I want to tell you that the newspaper «Prisoner» was a great blessing for me and many others in this prison. Please continue this work of God.

Thank you for all the encouraging words and stories that we read in the newspaper. I also would like to ask you to pray for me. I apologize for my poor handwriting. I really hope that you will read my letter. May God bless every day of your life!



Oleg MAYBA # 213025519,
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* * *

Seeking missing persons

Shalom, dear brother Igor and all the staff of the newspaper «Prisoner»! My name is brother Igor Yakovlev, and I am serving life in prison in IK-18, in Kharp.

I ask you in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives in your heart, please, help me to find my older brother, Oleg Petrovich Yakovlev, born in 1972. He was registered and resided in Turinsk Sverdlovsk region. Around 2009-2010, he was arrested for murder. He committed this crime in Turinsk and I believe that he is serving his sentence somewhere there, in the Sverdlovsk region.

I am sure that the newspaper «Prisoner» is read with much love in correctional facilities of the Sverdlovsk region, so perhaps some of the readers know my brother or his location at the moment. Tell me, please, the address of my brother Oleg! I am sincerely grateful to you all in advance! God bless you!

I would also like to take this opportunity to ask the help of your readers to find my American classmate, Nikolai Dmitrievich Vedernikov, for communication. He is from Fabrichnoe, Turin district of the Sverdlovsk region of Russia. His family consists of believers in God; in the 1990s they moved from Russia to America to visit relatives. I appeal to the brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, perhaps the Vedernikov family serves our Lord Jesus Christ in your community. Tell me, please, their address. I will be very grateful for it! Also I would be very happy to receive a letter from my brothers and sisters in Christ from the Sverdlovsk region and the city of Yekaterinburg. I hope in the Lord that He, by His Spirit, will encourage your good heart to write me a letter. With the love of Christ to you, brother



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* * *

Hello, dear members of the newspaper «Prisoner»! May the grace and peace of Christ be with you! I would like to express my gratitude for your spiritual support, for sending me this newspaper. If you can, please, help me to find my sister Oksana Mishchenko, a believer in Christ.

She has recently been released from prison in the Dnepropetrovsk region.

I am sincerely grateful. May the Lord bless you and keep your newspaper and your families!

With the love of Christ, brother



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Unfortunately, many people, shortly after they become believers, become disillusioned with the faith and start blaming God in their thoughts for all the bad things that He «purposefully» allowed in their lives, and because there is nothing they can change since their life's story had been fore-ordained by God and is now their destiny. Quite often those thoughts are way over the top, especially when former Christians start throwing angry accusations about their unhappiness with God in His face. Why and what is the cause of this type of aggression? Is it actually possible that God is able to cause pain and suffering? We all know from the Bible that **«God is love»**.

To be able to answer correctly, we need to ask ourselves some questions. First of all, we need to answer honestly, what was the initial reason for us to seek God? Second, it is very important, how

be able to do His work through that person's life.

The Bible defines faith very clearly. It is written: **«Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen»** (Heb. 11:1). The evidence of things not seen allows us to have a loving relationship with our living and powerful God. Jesus said, **«Blessed are those who didn't see and yet have believed»** (John 20:29). There is one more verse left for us for our encouragement: **«Now the just live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him»** (Heb. 10:38).

Many people at this time have or will have a momentary desire to come to God. After all, sooner or later, people become weary of this immoral, nonspiritual world. Yet not all of them are ready to leave their old sinful lives behind and follow Jesus as He wants them to. Jesus said: **«Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy**

WHATEVER A MAN SOWS, THAT HE WILL ALSO REAP



open was your heart to God? Would He be able to control your life completely? Third, without being deceitful, a man should admit to himself, what exactly did I do in my life that was so important that God should care for me, protect me and help me?

Many of those angry people probably didn't even notice what the Bible says about some of them: **«Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet, you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God»** (James 4:1-4).

It is obvious that all the people who try to blame God in all their troubles are actually very far from Him. They say that He doesn't hear their prayers and doesn't answer their requests. Yet they refuse to look deep into their souls and seek the reasons for it within.

Today there are a lot more visitors in churches than during the Communist regime. It is very sad, but true, that just because all these people are in churches doesn't mean they are all saved or have given their lives completely and openly into God's loving hands. Many of this kind of visitors look first for their prayers to be answered, not for them to be pleasing to God and ask Him what is His will for their lives. It's obvious why that person cannot get what they want from God. It is because their faith is very weak, it is more an illusion of faith than actual faith. Most of their thoughts are divided and do not have the one solid foundation they need. And last, most of those people are «consumers» not servants who look how to serve others and please God by sowing good seeds in good soil. The result is not what they expected, because all of their efforts to be «liked» by God were for nothing. Because God doesn't need superficial faith, He needs the one that has a completely open heart and mind for Him to

laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light» (Matt. 11:28-30). Our Lord calls everyone, and to everyone without exception is promised peace in his or her soul, if that person will follow Him with all his or her heart. Why is it that only some Christians manage to follow God with a righteous heart? The answer is simple: because it is almost impossible to follow God with an open and trusting heart if your faith is barely alive and you still love the temptations of this world. But most of all, the main reason that brings some people back where they started is their unending selfishness and greed.

A lot of people instead of throwing themselves into serving God and others, wait until all the blessings and pleasures they think they should have are falling on them. But the Bible says: **«God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble»** (James 4:6). Because pride is one of the elements of selfishness, proud people are very self-centered. That is how it turns out: whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. And why blame God in your sorrows while you are the one who walked away from His grace? Didn't God say: **«If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me»** (Matt. 16:24). Concerning those who come to faith, but when problems arise return to this world, saying bad things about God and Christianity, the Apostle Peter said this: **«For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: «A dog returns to his own vomit», and «a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire»** (2 Peter 2:21-22).

In the end, on the basis of the Holy Bible, I can say with all the confidence that God is never mocked. Therefore it is never wise to curse His holy name and throw angry accusations in His face, because as the Bible says: **«For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap»** (Gal. 6:7).

I. GORIK.



Pastor's Word THOUGHTS

Unlike any other creature of God's creation, a person has creative ability and abstract thinking. Using and improving mental images, a person can create them on a mental level, without using any physical materials. The mental world is the region from which originate all of our human life decisions and the corresponding developments in our lives.

All ideas and their coordination happen in our mind. The Bible indicates the existence of important patterns — the dependence of actions on thoughts.

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

WHAT A PERSON THINKS TODAY, HE WILL SPEAK TOMORROW AND WILL ACT UPON IT THE FOLLOWING DAY

Unfortunately, advertising companies are aware of this fact, unlike many Christians. In order to sell a product, advertising companies appeal to the mind of potential buyers. For this reason, people have invented billboards along the roads, commercials, sound and visual effects. Advertised items must be associated with something pleasant and memorable. If clothing is advertised, then it is worn by the most beautiful and slim people. If furniture is being advertised, it is usually pictured with satisfied and happy people owning and enjoying it. However, if you purchase the advertised clothing, it will not make you look like the model: beautiful and slim. The purchase of the advertised furniture will not bring your family harmony, understanding and happiness, as appears on the faces of the people pictured. After seeing a commercial, on a subconscious level, we desire to own what we had seen in the ad. And if we allow ourselves to dream about our desire, it can take over our will.

The devil advertises sin in a similar fashion, presenting it as tempting and attractive in the beginning. Those who dream and think about it become completely powerless to resist when caught off-guard, one-on-one with sin that enthralls them.

Initially, on the mental level, the moral defense begins to crumble. This is followed by circumstances in which the enthralled person is no longer able to resist. Sometimes friends and acquaintances of the morally fallen person wonder how such a thing could have happened to such a decent individual? Even the victim is confounded: I did not mean for this to happen. It all started first in the mind, when the person did not hurry to stop thoughts from entering and dwelling; thus, they took over the will of the person as a result.

Therefore, it is very important for Christians to strive to keep their conscience clean, resolute and not to indulge in thoughts that rob, defile and leave one depressed, unhappy and empty.

With the invention of television and the Internet, the problem of unclear thinking has become a serious issue. Nowadays, we experience massive attacks aimed at the destruction of all moral and ethical standards, and at the destruction of the institution of the family. Millions today are the victims of unclear thinking and reap the bitter fruits in their lives.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DIRECTION OF OUR THOUGHTS?

We ourselves are. Our life will go in the direction in which we direct our thoughts. Our future depends on where we direct our thoughts today. Any rational person has the power to direct their thoughts. If we do not put in effort to fill our minds with pure and holy thoughts, it will be filled with filth. Sometimes it is necessary to stop your train of thoughts and direct it in the right direction, where your thoughts will be beneficial and will make positive changes within you.

The Bible speaks about this:

Proverbs 23:19. **«Listen, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way».**

Proverbs 2:1-5. **«My son, if thou... apply thine heart to understanding... then... find the knowledge of God».**

Isaiah 55:7. **«Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon».**

The directions our thoughts take dictate who we become. The thought process is a mechanism to translate this information into practical life. It transforms the person according to what one hears, reads or sees, whether it is good or bad.

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

Isaiah 32:8. **«But he who is noble plans noble things, and on noble things he stands».**

The Bible advises us to keep our thoughts and minds filled with clean thoughts which are pleasing to God. Then our deeds and actions will be good.

Phil. 4:8. **«Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things».**

Joshua 1:7-8. **«Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful».**

It is natural for every person to think about their future and the present. Sometimes the devil uses this brainpower, sending panicky thoughts about the future. These attacks are especially difficult when a person is at a crossroads trying to make important decisions in his life or during a terminal illness. During this time, people experience so much worry, pain and anguish due to thoughts that come and are not stopped or redirected.

To avoid all of this, there is one ancient and reliable way: to live according to the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). In this way of life, the person gives his future and himself fully to God and His leading. To fully give ourselves up to God's leading we cannot allow ourselves to think about our future, but we need to wait on God's wise leading. The process of waiting and searching for the Lord's guidance is accompanied with difficulties, but the result is well worth it. We have two choices with two very different results. The first one is to keep thinking about our future. This brings us stress caused by fear about things we think may happen, although they may never happen to us. This ends up leading to weakness, loss of faith, feelings of being lost, and sadness. The second choice we have is to follow God's leading, striving to understand His will and follow His guidance. Not allowing ourselves to think about our lives or our future. This leads to spiritual growth, peace, tranquility and joy.

1 Pet. 5:6-7. **«Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you».**

TEMPTATIONS THROUGH RECURRING THOUGHTS

There are those times in our lives when thoughts are so tormenting and exhausting, it seems, any disease in the body will not bring as much anguish as these thoughts experienced at the level of the mind. One cannot get away from them. These can be thoughts of hopelessness or a bleak picture of the future... Many people experience this. A French philosopher Michel de Montaigne said about this: **«My life has been full of terrible misfortunes, most of which never happened».**

Job, who endured much suffering, said these words: **«When I think my bed will comfort me and my couch will ease my complaint, even then you frighten me with dreams and terrify me with visions,**

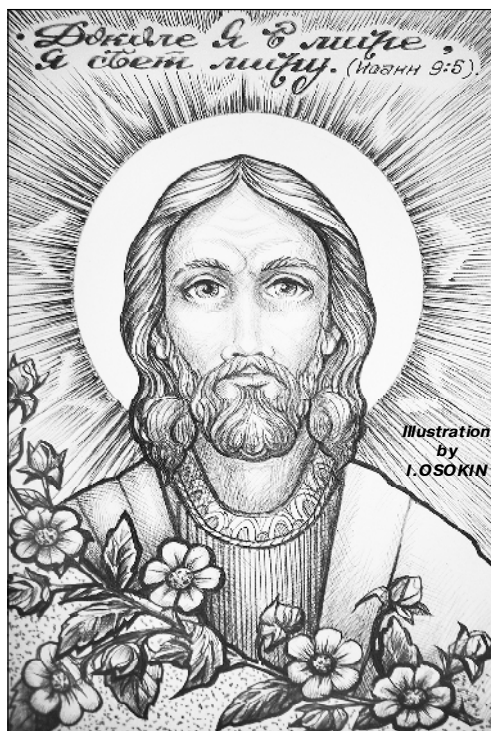
so that I prefer strangling and death, rather than this body of mine. I despise my life; I would not live forever. Let me alone; my days have no meaning». **«When I lie down, I say, «I will arise once?», And the evening lasts, and I toss and turn until dawn to the full», «When I lie down I think, «How long before I get up?» The night drags on, and I toss and turn until dawn»** (Job 7:13-16, 4).

Where and what is the root of our mental suffering? And how can we avoid it? The magnitude of the pain experienced is directly proportional to how much it concerns us. Will we lose sleep upon hearing that someone after an injury will never be able to walk again? If it happened to a stranger, then I think not. But if we are talking about someone close to us or about ourselves, it is quite a different matter. In this example, we can see that things concern us more

when they have something to do with us. Here's a second example, let's look at two scenarios. Scenario 1: Someone crashed your expensive car and neither you nor the person who crashed it had auto insurance. Scenario 2: Someone crashed the expensive car after you sold it and had already received the full amount of money for it. In which scenario would you experience more pain from the loss? Certainly in the first scenario, since it is your loss, and after the sale it is no longer your problem but the stranger's.

We can reduce the pain of our experiences by giving God right over ourselves and over whatever may concern us. If we devote ourselves to God and now are His children, then we need to allow God to worry about us and take care of us. Our task is to seek to do His will. If we remain in this kind of relationship with God, then we will be much calmer and our lives will be easier.

Aleksandr BORISENKO.



TOUR OF A GERMAN PRISON

The life of Russian convicts in German prisons

More than 1300 criminals from 57 countries are serving sentences in Tegel, including about 100 from former Soviet republics. This is a report by Nikita Zholkver from the largest high-security prison for men in Germany.

«Well, is it really so hard for you to visit a prison?» remarked my publishing editor sarcastically when I asked for the umpteenth time to delay making this report. Believe me, it's not easy for a journalist to get into the Berlin prison without committing a crime. First, you have to get an agreement in principle from the Ministry of Justice. Then you have to get the agreement of the prison officials themselves.

«You want to talk to a Russian-speaking prisoner? ... I'm not sure any of them would agree to meet with you», mused the prison official on the other end. Then came an unexpected question, a trap perhaps. «Maybe you mean someone in particular?» he asked quickly, apparently suspecting I was an accomplice of one of the criminals serving time in Tegel. When I replied in the negative, he seemed upset that he had not uncovered a criminal conspiracy to organize an escape.

Seventeen soccer fields

My impressions following my phone conversation, however, proved to be wrong. The correctional staff were surprisingly polite and friendly — more responsive than some of the saleswomen in the German supermarkets or



Cell block in the old building

agents in the passport offices. The guards at the entrance showed, I thought, a fair degree of deference, asking me only to leave my mobile phone in a special room while lazily looking into my bag containing a voice recorder and camera. They didn't bother to search me; I could have easily snuck in a Kalashnikov rifle under my large jacket.

Rafael Galejev, a talkative man who has worked 19 years at the prison, guided me on a tour of the prison grounds. At first he worked as a guard, but now he works in the social education department.

«Tegel», said Galejev, «is the largest high-security prison in Germany for adult male criminals. However, almost a third of the staff, including the guards, are women».

The detention facility, enclosed by a wall 1500 meters long, could accommodate 17 soccer fields. The feeling of being locked up is really only felt in older buildings constructed in the late nineteenth century. The new buildings look like typical urban dwellings; were it not for the bars on the windows, they could pass for apartments. In fact, that's what they call them here.

Craft Club

Next to each apartment building is a spacious area, enclosed by a low wire fence, for daily two-hour walks.

In their section buildings, inmates can move about in their free time, visit each other and cook food in a common kitchen equipped with a stove and a refrigerator which has individual lockers for every two inmates.

«Generally speaking, all prisoners should work», said Galejev, «but we do not have enough jobs. Our situation reflects what it's like on the outside». As a result, some of the prisoners remain locked in their cells until the other prisoners return from the workshops. Free time starts after 3pm.

In the evening, my guide says, there are sporting events, a literary group, a Craft Club, pottery workshop, treatment for drug and gambling addictions, and group therapy in which the prisoners are taught to cope with uncontrollable outbursts of anger. At night, the cells are locked at 10:00 p.m.

Lifestyle and menu for prisoners

The prison can hold 1,325 prisoners, and only about 50 cells are empty. All the cells are identical, having two cabinets, a shelf, table, bed, separate bathroom, sink and mirror. Showers are shared on each floor, and they are always open.

There is no common dining room. «We do not consider it advisable to form large clusters of our «guests», explained Galejev. «You never know what might happen,



Prison entrance

so it is better not to risk it». Staff deliver individual daily meals on a cart, and every prisoner takes his meal to his cell.

Next to the duty room on a glass door I saw the menu for the current week. Food is offered in five categories: regular, without pork, vegetarian, low calorie, and for diabetics. In creating the menu, the prison staff also take into account the fact that about a third of the prisoners are foreigners, coming from 57 countries. About 100 prisoners come from Russia and other former Soviet republics.

A city behind walls

Behind the walls is an entire city, cut off from the outside world: there are cell blocks, which except for the bars on the windows look like apartment buildings; a church, assembly hall, gymnasium, sports field, office buildings, a food service kitchen, bakery, confectionary, print shop, workshop, school, and vocational schools.

The prison staff consists of 796 persons, of whom only 484 are guards. The inmate population is international, with more than a third of the prisoners (36%) being citizens of other countries. About a hundred prisoners in Tegel converse with each other mainly in Russian. One of them is 27-year-old Umar Kachkarov of Karachay-Cherkessia.

Nanny-Killer

Umar is short and burly, with long curly hair, neat beard, and attentive eyes. Like all inmates at Tegel, he is dressed in civilian clothes — a sweater and jeans.

Rafael Galejev explained to our correspondent that the administration at each German prison has the discretion to set the rules for dress. At Tegel, they did away with prison uniforms long ago. Consequently, it is not immediately possible to make out who is coming towards you across the prison yard — an inmate, or one of the prison staff. Galejev shook hands with Umar Kachkarov, and then left us in a small room with a round table in the middle.

Umar came to Germany at the end of 2009 via a program called «Au-Pair», and began living with a family to look after their children. At first he attended German language courses, then later planned to continue studies to become an ecologist, which he had begun in Russia. But very quickly, the young man from the Karachai-Circassian hinterland «went crazy», as he put it. «My brain», said Umar, «could not handle the abrupt change of lifestyle». In the spring of 2010, Kachkarov was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 12 years in prison.

What is taught in prison

In prison, Umar Kachkarov is going to German school, and after receiving his diploma he plans to study media design. He has time enough to study: of the 12 years received for manslaughter, he has served only two.

For attending school, Umar receives 250 euros per month. «In principle, it's enough to get soap and toothpaste, notebooks and pens, an occasional something to eat, and even a movie from the catalog».



Umar Kachkarov

He is allowed to have three electric appliances in his cell. Kachkarov has a TV, DVD-player and tape recorder.

«Salaries for working prisoners and stipends for those taking classes vary, depending on the circumstances, from 8 to 15 euros per day, plus overtime for weekend work», related the director of one of the sections, Lars Hoffmann, to our correspondent. «It's not much», he added, «but when you consider that one is not required

New prison building number 5



to pay rent and utilities, and that prisoners receive full board, then such an income is quite livable».

Tegel teaches not only media design. Here you can learn 11 different professions from mechanic and specialist in typographic machinery repair, to cook and painter. Upon completion of training and after passing the relevant examination, prisoners receive a standard certificate with the seal of the Chamber of Commerce of Germany. Looking at this document, it is impossible to tell that its recipient earned it while in prison.

Hoffman, however, acknowledged that merely learning a profession in prison does not guarantee success in the reintegration of a former prisoner into society. «Success», he added, «is when our «graduate» finds a job in their profession after release». Only in these cases is the probability of relapse reduced significantly.

Prisoners and guards

Umar's one-man cell is located in building number 5. The people here, he said, are serving long sentences or even life sentences. Among these prisoners, who are allowed to spend a significant amount of time interacting with each other, no real problems arise. «Here, the relationship between people is calculated», said Umar. «Everyone thinks before saying something to someone else, Would he be offended?» The guards are careful and almost polite with the residents of building number 5. They understand that many of their charges have nothing to lose, so it is better not to take risks.

Umar has developed a trusting relationship with some of the prison staff. From time to time he invites one of the guards into his cell to talk «heart to heart». And so that they are not interrupted, he hangs a sign on the door: «Please do not disturb». For the rest, Umar prefers to talk with Russian-speaking prisoners. «There are different types», he says. «There are Germans resettled from Kazakhstan, some from Latvia and Lithuania, and from Russia, too. We are closer in our way of thinking».

But he hasn't noticed tribalism or hostility between different groups of prisoners at Tegel. «Of course, the



Church on the grounds of Tegel prison

Germans prefer to talk with other Germans, the Turks with Turks, and Russians with Russians», says Umar. «But I might be cooking something for dinner, for example, alongside a Turk, or a German. There's one stove in the kitchen for everybody in our section».

«Common fund» and «Thieves in the law»

A somewhat different estimate of the Russian-speaking inmates is taken by deputy prison director Lars Hoffman. Although he does not speak Russian, he knows what is meant by terms such as «common fund», «thief in the law», and «authority». «Russian prisoners», said Hoffman in an interview with Deutsche Welle, «are a special group that requires special attention. We try to make sure that they are not all in one building. We split them up in different buildings and sections».

«Otherwise», he says, «there is a risk of isolation, of breaking off all contact with prison staff. Russian prisoners tend to want to solve all their problems among themselves». But unlike some of the prisoners in the south of Germany — Stadelheim, Straubing, Darmstadt — at Tegel, according to Hoffman, «there are no crime bosses or «thieves in the law» who don't work and live at the expense of other inmates». He knows about the centuries-old Russian and Soviet prison traditions which their adherents followed in the German reformatories. Such traditions are heard of at Tegel, but overall Hoffman assesses the situation as «relatively calm» and explains this situation by the fact that «these people are no longer a homogeneous mass, one cohesive group. There are Georgians, there are Kazakhs and Lithuanians. Besides language, they do not have much in common anymore. They don't consider themselves Russian».

By the way, no one is forced to work in German prisons. «In Germany, we remember the past and do not want to be accused of using forced labor», explained Lars Hoffman. «But those who don't work, don't get paid. And this is a strong incentive for prisoners to work». Salaries at Tegel are from 8 to 15 euros per day plus overtime.

Nikita ZHOLKVER, Berlin.

Based on materials from Deutsche Welle.

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

Matt. 5:27-28. «Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart».

There are two types of adultery that are written about in the scriptures.

Adultery in the flesh: this is where a spouse violates their fidelity in marriage by having a sexual relationship with another person.

Adultery in the heart: this is where a person looks at another person with the desire to have sexual relations. Jesus says that this is already adultery.

A person that has committed adultery in the heart is not differentiated from a person that has committed adultery in the flesh, as both people receive retribution for this sin. Retribution for the sin of adultery is outlined by the following 29th and 30th verses.

«A dirty thought can be very small, but it's capable of tarnishing the entire human body and ruining someone's life».

«Either a person dominates the dirty thoughts, or the person is dominated by them».

THE ENEMY USES FEELINGS AND SENSATIONS

Sacred Scripture warns us that the desires of the flesh lead a person into sin.

Gal. 5:19. «Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness...»

Jam. 1:14-15. «...But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death».

Sexual desires arise in nearly every person. They reach their peak in adolescence and gradually decrease. Satan can

«When you're being attacked by desires to commit a sexual sin, then you need to loudly confess passages from Sacred Scripture that speak about what fornicators, adulterers and their kind reap».

THE ENEMY USES EROTICISM

The word «eros» already speaks of eroticism. In Greek mythology, Eros is the name of a god of love. In general, the word «eros» denotes sexual instinct (sexual attraction, sexual desires). The world today has advertised eroticism everywhere: on television, newspapers, billboards, packaging, public transportation, etc.

The enemy uses some people so that through them other people enter into sexual sin. Some of these people wear transparent, tight clothing or clothing that expose intimate parts of the body and become «bait on the enemy's fishing rod for catching the foolish fish». Those people who are

THE ENEMY USES PORNOGRAPHY

Video porn and pornography are the strongest spiritual instruments for directing people into debauchery and all sorts of sexual sin. Porn always has an impact on those who touch it.

«Porn is so dirty, that when touching it, it is impossible not to get dirty by it».

If a person touches porn (encounters porn): the person will either commit adultery in the heart, adultery in the flesh, give in to masturbation, violence, fall under the influence of spirits, perversion; then the person will be haunted by these things and be further pushed into them. This is due to the fact that there are special demons tied to porn.

«A person who watches porn is already part of it, even if the person doesn't acknowledge this».

«Porn cannot draw anything except horror from a righteous person, because these are no

honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge».

They do not receive an inheritance (success, prosperity, ministry): **Eph. 5:5** «For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God».

They do not inherit the kingdom of God: **1 Cor. 6:9** «Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...»

They do not inherit eternal life: **Rev. 22:14-15** «Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers,

ADULTERY

Matt. 5:29-30. «And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell».

The punishment for adultery is very serious. A person has only three choices:

1. Protect the eyes and hands from adultery.
 2. Pluck out the eye(s) and cut off the hand(s) so as to not be found in hell.
 3. Ignore the words of Jesus and be wholly cast into hell.
- Considering how severe the second option sounds and how tragic the third option sounds, the first option is the only one left.

The enemy tries to entice as many people as he can, knowing what the punishment for adulterers is. For this, there are several methods that the enemy uses:

1. The enemy uses thoughts.
1. The enemy uses feelings and sensations.
2. The enemy uses eroticism.
3. The enemy uses pornography.
4. The enemy uses delusions.
5. The enemy uses thoughts.

THE ENEMY USES THOUGHTS

In Sacred Scripture we find examples where Satan sends thoughts.

Mk. 8:33. «But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men».

Jn. 13:2. «And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him».

Acts 5:3. «But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?»

A person can receive any thoughts from the enemy including thoughts of adultery, dirty sex and sexual fantasies.

use this domain and tempt people.

1 Cor. 7:4-5. «The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that

not self-controlled, and are morally and/or spiritually weak, fall because of this into self-satisfaction and adultery.

Matt. 5:28. «...whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart».

Some people look at the sexual parts of the body and then these sexual desires arise

longer people, but demons under their skin».

«Those who do not keep their eyes away from porn today will follow the same tomorrow».

THE ENEMY USES DELUSION

To break down the fear of divorce and adultery, the enemy introduces his own program into society. This program is built on lies, which

and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie».

Their fate is the blazing inferno: **Matt. 5:29-30** «And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell».

WHO AM I? WHERE AM I? WHERE AM I GOING?

These are precisely the questions that need to be asked by oneself and need to be answered truthfully by oneself, because these questions are regarding eternity.

Causes for examination:

— some people have violated the commandments of Jesus about divorce and remarriage and, at the moment, are in adultery, and so they reap like adulterers;

— some people cannot control their eyes and hands and fall into adultery in the heart and even in the flesh;

— some people fight with dirty sexual thoughts and desires, because before this, they touched pornography;

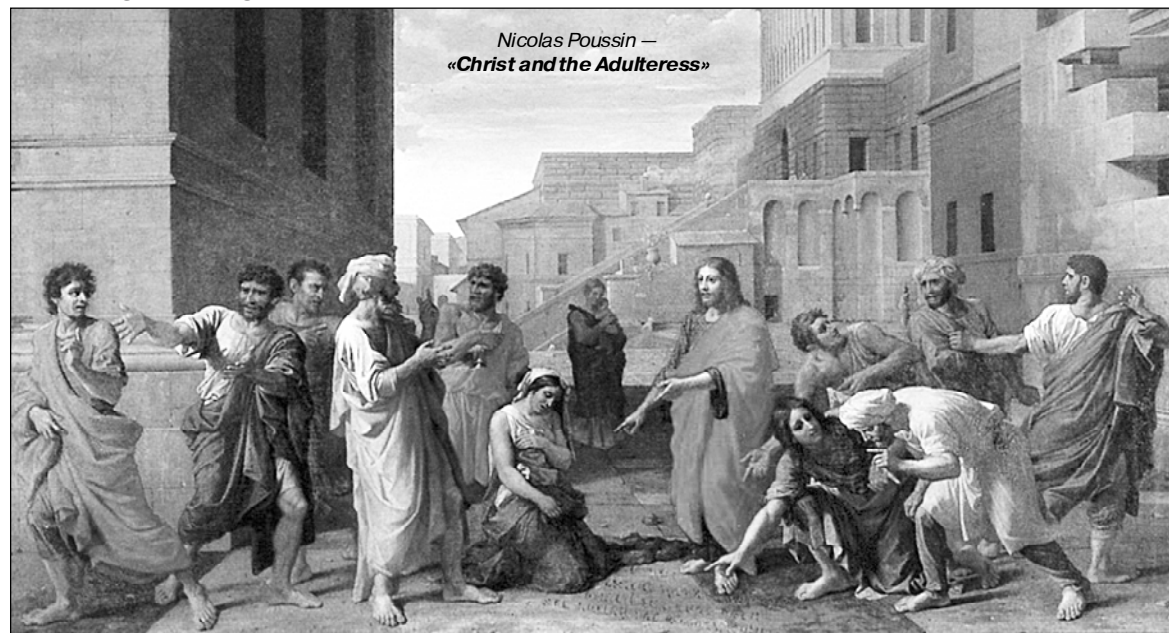
— others that are unmarried, divorced or widowed, experience attacks from the enemy in the sexual realm. The enemy is trying to break you, so that you would sin.

If you belong to any of these categories of people, then you need to know the following:

— God sent this Word today for you, that you would realize the truth and be freed from these sins. He Himself tells us this, and this is your chance today not only to repent, but to receive freedom in the name of Jesus Christ;

— if you truly repent in your heart and call on His mercy and forgiveness, then He will forgive you. He will cleanse you and redeem you from the power of Satan and his demons.

www.imbf.org/shkola-onlajn/preljubodejanie.html



Satan tempt you not for your incontinency».

Just like the enemy can tempt spouses, he can tempt everyone else who cannot control his or her sexual desires.

1 Cor. 7:8-9. «I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn».

A similar kind of temptation can be felt where there is a group of these sorts of demons. These are in hotels, beaches, resorts, staying close to fornicators, etc. These spirits can be felt by ministers that partake in exorcisms. When getting close to a person, they get a «strange» feeling; when they get away, everything returns back to normal. After exorcising «sexual» spirits, this effect no longer occurs.

«Sexual attraction is like drugs: the more you inhale it, the faster you'll find yourself under its control».

in them. But it needs to be noted that those who stimulate sexual desires in others are guilty as well. This is how demons take advantage of Christians to seduce and to drive them into sin.

Sacred Scripture warns that it's going to be sorrowful for those through whom this offense comes.

Mk. 9:42. «And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea».

Matt. 18:7. «Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!»

A lot of people are against eroticism in the community, but they themselves demonstrate it.

«If eroticism offends some, then it is unsafe for all».

«He who keeps his heart in purity does not look at things that don't belong to him».

are perceived as good and even useful: cohabitation, sex before marriage; sexual skills (taught to children in school); divorce (to find true happiness); homosexual marriage; etc.

A lot of people believe these lies, and the world is being defiled at a fast pace. Even Christians teach this, justifying themselves with the lies of the world. This «Program of Delusion» penetrates into Christian churches, and Christians break the commandments of Jesus about divorce and remarriage, and become adulterers and fornicators.

«To get divorced, a person may give hundreds of reasons, but Sacred Scripture accepts only one circumstance for divorce: proven adultery».

«Adulterers easily get what they want, but this costs them eternity».

WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY ABOUT ADULTERERS AND FORNICATORS?

God Himself judges them: **Heb. 13:4** «Marriage is

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

Impurity is in the list of «the works of the flesh» (Gal. 5:19) and has been mentioned many times in almost every letter of the Apostles. Let us quote from the letters of the Apostles:

«Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness...» (James 1:21).

«...those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity...» (2 Cor. 12:21).

«But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints» (Eph. 5:3).

«Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry» (Col. 3:3).

Since this is a word unique to the gospel, language scholars do not have direct explanations for how it is used; we will derive the necessary explanations from the following texts of God's Word.

«Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy...» (Rev. 22:11). Therefore, everything that makes one impure should be called impurity.

«For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity...» (Rom. 6:19).

The quote describes the lifestyle of a person before repentance; how much impurity was there? The impurity appeared in speech, thoughts, desires, conscience, works — literally in everything. It is understandable why the Scriptures call such people «the wicked». Everything that cannot be called pure is impurity, with its wide definition from the very large things to the smallest.

For those who have believed in Christ, the Word advises: **«But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth»** (Col. 3:8).

It is similar to dirt that sticks to the shoes when one enters a room, unless they are first cleaned. Impurity is

IMPURITY



«For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness» (1 Thes. 4:7)

spiritual dirt that will not come off at repentance unless one puts it away completely.

Note that impurity comes right after adultery in three passages: Gal. 5:19, Eph. 5:3, Col. 3:5. Adultery is also impurity, but it is a coarse and sharp form of lawlessness. Impurity should be understood as various evils which are somewhat smaller if compared with fornication. However, these evils stain our souls and the white robes with which Christ clothed us on the day of our repentance.

The full catalog of evils associated with impurity is not given in the Bible. But it warns us: **«But nothing unclean will ever enter it (the kingdom of God)...»** (Rev. 21:27). Therefore, our conscience, born and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, should control our every thought, work, desire, intention, word and deed and determine if it is holy or

impure. **«For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness»** (1 Thes 4:7).

«Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord» (Heb. 12:14).

«That no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal» (Heb. 12:16).

It is important to note that the birthright can be lost not only by a fornicator or ungodly man (one who practices any kind of impurity). We usually think of an impure man as an unbeliever; however, God's Word says that any Christian can become an impure person if he or she does not keep proper purity. This is why the following warning is necessary: **«For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God»** (Eph. 5:5).

The warning is made because there were people from the beginning who believed in Christ but they never cared about their purity and tried to keep both the faith and the impurity that brought some comfort in their lives. But it is incompatible according to the Word.

Some people think (and I thought so in the past) that staying pure means confessing evil actions before God consistently and in a timely manner. Of course, people do need to confess their evil before God — this is the very first step. But true purity happens when we overcome our impurities, i.e. **put them away** (James 1:21, Col. 3:8, 1 Peter 2:1). We need to **«kill» the sins so that «the body of sin might be brought to nothing...»** (Rom. 6:6).

«And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure» (1 John 3:3).

Purify itself means putting away all impurity and keeping proper purity.

«For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness» (1 Thes. 4:7).

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MAGIC

Magic is in the list of «the works of the flesh».

Magic is a large, dark field of various forms: fortune-telling, fabulous fictions, communication with the dark forces of hell and even personally with the devil in many different ways. It is not necessary to discuss all the details about it. It is important to understand that Christians are prohibited to use the services of magicians. The following is included: divination from diviners, gypsies and soothsayers, contact with spirits in any form, services of healing ladies, etc. We are not going to investigate whether magic is helpful or not, but we will emphasize the idea that God's Word prohibits God's people to practice such things.

There is a story in the Bible telling about Ahaziah, king of Samaria, who was very sick and sent his messengers to Beelzebub to ask whether he would recover from the disease.

The messengers run into Elijah who said unto them: **«Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Beelzebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore this is what the Lord says: «You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!»** (2 Kings 1:1-7).

It is possible that the king might have recovered, but since he consulted the devil (not his God), he was punished with what he feared most — death.

There are people who did not know God and were using the services of the magicians, and they were not punished because they did it in their ignorance. However, when people who knew God tried to practice magic, they were punished. The Israelites were forbidden to go to magicians upon penalty of death (Lev. 20:6).

While Saul was walking in the fear of God, he sent away all magicians and diviners from the land (1 Sam. 28:3). In contrast, Mannaseh chose a sinful lifestyle which encouraged the emergence of magicians (2 Kings 21:6). The magic that is in the list of «the works of the flesh» is characteristic of apostates.

In order to better understand why God prohibits practicing magic, let us analyze an example: A father keeps secret from his children some things that are harmful for them to know. But what if the children go around their father and communicate with their neighbor, an enemy of their father, to find out those secret things? Will it please their father? What shall the father do to his children after that?

The Lord leads His children through various experiences and difficulties that are intended to serve us for good (Rom. 8:28). But if we try to get through those difficulties using the services of the devil, who is an enemy to our God, will it please God? Moreover, is it logical that the plan of God that He had planned for us should be mixed up with the services of the devil? Is it appropriate to seek help from God and the devil at the same time?

I recall a sad testimony from real life. Some young parents who were Christians became very concerned with the sickness of their first child, and, contrary to the voice of their conscience, they came to a healing lady. The recovery from the sickness was as follows: the child survived, but his mind remained like that of a child forever. Later, doctors diagnosed the condition as «infancy residue».

Moreover, the infancy residue was noted to be exceptional: as a 20-year old (with a child's mind), he was not able to do what is good and helpful, but he had exceptional skills to do what is evil. The parents understood their mistake that they had come to the healing lady, but it was impossible to return the past, and they had to bear the cross that they had made

with their own hands. This is the way the devil «helps»! This is the «help» from magic.

If there are Christians with little faith who choose to use the services of magicians and later justify themselves as having been forced to do so by their sorrow, then we need to speak to them with



the following words: **«Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Beelzebub, the god of Ekron?»** (2 Kings 1:3).

«However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting» (Matt. 17:21). Fasting and prayer — these are two actions that we should practice at hard moments in our lives. But if one's faith is too small, and he or she runs to the devil for help in the difficulties that the Lord has allowed to happen, how can God lead him to sing: «And lead us always in Your wise paths to the source of good!»

It is not an accident that people who had used to practice magic, after turning to Christ, gathered their books and burned them. And the total value of the books burned was fifty thousand drachmas (Acts 19:19) (equivalent to 30 dollars in gold). This is what people did with their magic after they met Christ!

Faith in God and magic are incompatible. **«Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God»** (Gal. 5:21).

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LASCIVIOUSNESS

Even though the examples described above may not be associated with Christians, let us discuss some forms of lasciviousness that can affect them.

It is written: **«I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak»** (Matt. 12:36).

If one listens carefully to our speech, we may not swear. However, dirty words (Matt. 4:29), vanity, jesting (Eph. 5:4) might be found. And is there a practical reason for them?

If there is no practical need, then it is lasciviousness.

If one looks closely at our thoughts, feelings, desires, will he or she find lasciviousness?

Even though a thought is not an action, when Ananias let the devil put a thought in his heart, the thought grew up and became an action that led to death. Feelings of envy and hatred against his brother led Cain to certain actions. Cain became the first murderer on the Earth.

Base desires gripped the soul of David and resulted in unforgettable consequences (2 Samuel 12:1-16). Some people might say that these are too extreme examples. Well, they might be extreme or might not be extreme, but everything that is not needed for life in regards to thoughts, feelings and desires is lasciviousness.

What about your personal life, your marriage and what is kept in private? Are there occasions of lasciviousness as weeds in wheat?

What about our service to God, our prayers? The Lord said: **«And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases»** (Matt. 6:7). Do we keep track of our prayers and do we

care that there is no «empty phrases» in the prayers? Because these «empty phrases» are a sort of lasciviousness.

If we analyze our relationships with people around us, believers and non-believers, do we notice some forms of lasciviousness such as jokes, falsehood in our words or other unjustifiable words? Yes, my friends. If we look closely, if we analyze carefully, then we will notice lasciviousness around us, and much more of it at times when we are not paying attention to it.

As we read the Bible, the Apostle Paul was worried about his entrance to Corinth as he had to mourn over many of those **«who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity... and sensuality that they have practiced»** (2 Cor. 12:21). The Corinthians were Christians, but they did not clean the dirt of impurity and lasciviousness from off their feet. What about us, Christians who are born by the Holy Spirit?

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TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

Dear «Prisoner»!

I'd like to share with the readers of the newspaper a short testimony of my life, as well as the word which the Lord has put on my heart.

My name is Yaroslav, I'm forty years old. It so happens that 17 out of these 40 years, I've been serving a sentence for a crime I did not commit. Although it sounds wild, it's true. My conscience and my hands are clean from what I was charged with, and later on, illegally sentenced for. But now I do not



Beloved of the Lord, brothers and sisters, I want to encourage each of you that despite any situation you might find yourself in, no matter what trial you are going through now, remember that in the most difficult times of your life, Jesus is with you like never before! He does not forget about you, He is right by your side! Jesus said, «I'll be with you always». Therefore, no matter what crisis you are experiencing now in your life, there is no moment when Jesus is not next to you! The main thing is just to

I gave my youth but my future

I was born in 1971 in Artemovsk, Donetsk region. I did not experience any special problems till the second grade; we were all very prosperous and happy together. But once there the problem came — first, my father started having problems with the law, and later, my mother. My father was convicted and then my mother was denied the right to engage in trade. She was then forced to leave to work on Kamchatka. I and my sister Irina remained under the care of my grandmother. My grandmother could not cope with such a restless boy as myself; I used to disappear for days wandering the streets.

In the region of Donetsk, there are 19 correctional facilities; three of them are prisons: in Mariupol, Donetsk and Artemovsk. No other region of Ukraine has such a concentration of correctional institutions. Once on the street, all left to my own devices, I began to learn to survive. I was constantly fighting and stealing. I thought that was freedom.

By the age of 11, I had been through three schools and three orphanages. No educational institution in my hometown could cope with me, so I was placed in a orphanage in Amvrosievka Donetsk region.

That was a shock: although I had living parents and relatives, I was in an orphanage about 200 kilometers from my hometown. It's terrible when instead of a mother's love, warmth, and good deeds, you see around you only fights and swearing. Children who live in the orphanage from their first day are like little cubs, and it is very difficult for them to survive.

Several times I ran away from the orphanage, already well knowing where to go and how to find food outside of its walls. In my repertoire, I had some touching stories to tell drivers and conductors, by which I could move freely in Ukraine. I ran away because I was not in the right place. I had a family, although it was dysfunctional, but it was my family. In December

1982, I was assigned to a special school in Gorlovskaya for difficult teenagers. This was a kind of prison for children. There was a tower on which the guards controlled all entry and exit. Because of bad behavior I would frequently get sent to a detention room. At the end of the day, drunken fighters in boxing gloves used to stop by... A lot of guys that passed through these special schools became even more embittered.

Later, my mom took me out of the orphanage to Kamchatka, and sent me to study in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsk. After a year and a half, I started having some behavior problems again. The institute taught me teamwork. And if you work in a team, you have to obey the elder, the leaders, and I would not do that. Looking back, I realize that I was rebelling against everything. I wasn't happy with anything because in the very beginning, I learned how to disobey. I lived the way the street and its leaders were teaching me. Everything had to be the way I wanted. Now I understand that behind all that, there was a power whose only goal is to destroy! There was a lot after that: I was taught, corrected, beaten up, cut up, shot at, but nothing could stop me. The more one tried to bend me, the stronger and cooler I saw myself.

I was offered to transfer to a different institution. I didn't stay there for long. At one of the meetings I was told that either I leave or I will go to jail.

Having come back to Ukraine, I became a member a criminal organization which specialized in burglaries. Soon I got my first sentence — four years. Then, a second and third. The sentences only strengthened my confidence — I was sure I was good and everyone else was bad. Turning back, I remember with sadness that I gave up all my youth to the devil. In 1990, I started using drugs: taking shots and pills.

The longest break between sentences was between 1993 and 1998. I got married during that time. My son Daniel was born. It was the best moment of my life, but I could not live in the family. It wasn't for me. I wanted «freedom». I continued doing illegal things. In 1998, I was sentenced to two years. Then I was freed in 1999. But in the beginning of 2000, I was sentenced again to four years for theft and fraud. It was my last sentence. In all, I spent in prison about 13 years; I was sentenced four times. During my last prison term, God started knocking on my heart.

In 2004, about a month prior to my release from prison, I experienced a time of disappointment with everything. When you hear about the criminal world, about how cool it is, everything seems very romantic. However, when you start going through all this: punitive sentences, collapsed families, the tears of loved ones — there comes a realization that it's all a deception. There is a song that says: «in a vicious circle you are running, you are running». That's how it was with me and that's what happens to deceived people.

One day, shortly before my release from prison, there came a group of believers from an evangelical church called «Great Commission». I went to the prayer room to listen to the keyboard playing. The same day, I experienced the touch of the Holy Spirit and repented. From that time, every night after everyone went to bed I would pray to God as best I could. The Lord



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Look only at Jesus and you can overcome the impossible

want to talk about that. I want to tell everyone that in spite of everything that happened in my life, I'm happy that I am a Christian. And I thank my Heavenly Father for always being with me.

My parents were and remain Christians, and I grew up in a house where we talked about God's Word. The lives of my father and mother were the most convincing sermon to me of all that I have heard and seen. Their life was the best evidence to me of what they taught me.

I remember well how they have repeatedly told me: «Son, never take your eyes off Jesus and do not focus on the circumstances no matter how difficult they might be. While you look at Jesus, you can overcome any obstacle and go through any test ...» My father is 64 years old now, but he still repeats the same words to me each time we meet.

Analyzing the lives of my family,

I realize that if my parents' views were not focused on the Lord Jesus Christ, if their hope were not completely grounded in God, and if their faith were not genuine, they would never be able to surpass and overcome the things they did. The same I can say about myself. If the Lord Jesus in my life was not the One Whom I trust and Who I focus on, then I just wouldn't be alive... So I know that as long as I see the Lord, I can walk with Him without fear through anything.

One day Jesus demonstrated a similar lesson to His disciple, Peter. In chapter 14, Mathew tells the story of how during a storm on the Sea of Galilee, Peter saw the Lord and started walking to Him on water... Peter was the same as all the other disciples, but at that moment he realized that while his gaze was directed at Jesus, he could walk on water with no problems.

keep your eyes on Jesus. For as long as you look at Him, you will not drown, and never go to the bottom. Looking at Him, you can go through anything. And most importantly, Jesus will do the impossible for you!

In the prison where I am, a Christian prison ministry has been taking place for several years. Convicts whose lives have been changed by Jesus Christ come to these services. Almost every week we go to these meetings, where, through fellowship with God in prayer and reading His word, we increasingly come to know His will. I believe that the last word is always with the Lord! Look only at Jesus, and you will be able to overcome the impossible. God Bless you!

My wish for you: trust God, who will change your life

My name is Andrew. I will be 30 years-old this year. Twenty-six of those years I have not lived as a Christian. But God in His mercy and love for me drew me to Him and gave hope for eternal life. There are six of us in my family: three brothers, two sisters and myself. Of all my brothers and sisters, I was the bad and rebellious one. I always wanted to grow up quickly, and I would often run away from home in order to live my own life.

When I was 11 years old, I made friends with some guys from a dysfunctional family. They loved to drink and steal. So I started drinking, smoking, and then stealing. At the age of 12, I already had a police record, and the police often took me to the detention center.

At the age of 14, I was first convicted of theft and I received a suspended sentence of one year. At the age of 17, I was again convicted of theft and sentenced to three years in prison. While in detention, I often thought about how I could change my life. I had often heard that without God, one cannot change, but I argued that if I changed my circle of friends, my life would go differently. And then came the day of my release from prison. I stopped drinking and did not return to my friends. I got a job and it looked like my life changed somewhat.

After about two months, I made new friends with whom I started drinking again. I was not even ashamed to be drunk in front of their parents. After ten months I was again caught stealing and then was sentenced to a year and six months' imprisonment. While in detention, I again began to



think what I should do in order not to get in jail anymore. Changing my circle of friends did not help because I myself had not changed; therefore, I found the same social circle, albeit with different people. And then I decided that I would find a girl and start a family with her and that my family could help me.

One month after I was released from prison, I started living with a girl who had a child. Everything happened as I dreamed. After a year and a half I started drinking again and making friends with the those similar to myself. After two years and four months, I was caught again stealing and then I was sentenced to four years and six months in prison.

During my imprisonment, I met my fellow countryman. He was a Christian from The Church of Evangelical Baptists. He would often invite me to church, but I would only make promises. For

several months, he consistently invited me to church. And then, finally, I made up my mind to go there. That was the place where I heard God's Word for the first time. The preacher spoke about God and salvation. Seven months later, the Lord delivered me from smoking, drinking and all sinful habits. In January 2011, I repented before the Lord, and on July 2, 2011, I was baptized. To this day I serve the Lord, I am out of prison, and I feel great joy. Only now do I realize that no change in the circle of friends, no family and nothing else can change a person's life. And even if they can, it isn't for long.

My wish for you: trust God, Who can change your life, too. Do not seek to change it yourself; it's useless, I have already tried. With love to you in the Lord,

Andrew CHUYKIN,
Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy, Odessa
region, Ukraine.

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

to the Devil, is the Lord's

opened my eyes to my life. Knowing that God is able to change everything, I wrote letters to my wife, full of repentance. I said that this time everything will be different because I am now a believer. We went through a lot together: I was shot at in front of her eyes, she saw how one after another of those I called friends were dying. However, she continued to believe and wait.

All my plans were shattered the very first day of freedom. In the morning, remembering the «accomplishments» of the night, I realized that there was no going back. I came home a different person. From that day, my life went downhill again. Over the next four years, from 2004-2008, having divorced my wife, having lost my son, having lost a relationship with my sister, being sunk in my sins and drugs, I found myself on the very bottom.

I thank God that in His mercy He saved me. In 2008, I was in a «place of abundance» (my friends and I guarded a drug field). Having woken up that day from drug intoxication, I knelt down and cried to the Lord, «God, help me! I'm tired of this life». At that time there was a huge void in my heart, I had nothing more to lose. The next day, I met my friend Roma, and he asked: «Aren't you tired of this kind of life?» And then he offered me to change everything. I agreed.

On December 8, 2008, I came to a church service in the city of Kiev. God's Word touched me and the Lord granted me repentance. I could not believe that having such a strong drug addiction, I could tolerate the withdrawal. But the Lord was good to me even then — since the first day of my stay at the Christian rehabilitation center, I tried to work, to be a part of the group. The Lord blessed me so much that I only occasionally noticed that I might not be feeling well. At the age of 38, having come to Christ, I realized that everything I had gathered up to that moment (authority, knowledge, status) — was vain. Nothing but the love of Christ can change a person. No power, no force, no physical restraints, no psychological interventions, no medication, no adaption can do that.

Only the Love of Christ can change a person, his heart, his worldview, his mind. I am sure of it! Jesus said: **«whoever comes to me but does not hate... his own life, cannot be my disciple»** (Luke 14:26).

I had that desire in my heart. I wanted to change. God's grace touched me, I heard the testimonies and I was ready to go to the Lord. Now my brothers often remember with a smile how at the end of the debriefing at the Rehab Center, they knew that the door would open and there I would be coming in to repent. To stand up in front of everyone, ask for forgiveness or to make peace with someone was difficult for me. But the Lord was giving me grace; He was simply doing His work in me.

In three years, I have progressed from being a rehabilitation center client to a rehabilitation center minister responsible for rehabilitation.

The Lord has blessed me with a wonderful wife, Svetlana, a rural school teacher. But these are not all of God's miracles in my life. I restored my relationship with my son, Daniel. In the summer of 2011, the Lord restored my relationship with my sister who I lost contact with many years ago.

My son found Irene, my sister. We didn't know anything about each other for 14 years. Knowing my lifestyle, she didn't expect to see me alive. We called each other and she could not believe that it was me. She checked. She said she would not believe till she touches me and sees me with her own eyes. Irene came and she saw my family, church, rehabilitation center, the orphanage. She saw our relationship with each other. It had a strong impact on her. Leaving, she said: «I always knew that you are a conman, you can stage anything, but here I saw something which you would not be able to stage. You cannot play that. It's not under your control. It's not from you. I can see sincerity, I can see love between you».

I have a huge gratitude to the Lord for the church, for brothers and sisters who have served me at the right time. They support and guide me now. Everything I have now: my family, children, ministry, was given to me by the Lord. I understand very well that if for a second there will be something between God and me, such as sin, pride or anything which is against the Lord, His flow of grace will stop and everything can be ruined. That's why I treasure everything the Lord gives me in a special way. I experience difficult times sometimes, but I thank the Lord for the freedom I have now in my heart, for grace and God's peace which is greater than anything else. There are no other alternatives. And I thank the Lord for His great work which He is still doing in my heart.

Sergey GOCHUA, Ukraine.

«God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise» (1 Cor. 1:27)

I was an unruly child. My father was an alcoholic, and my mom worked in three shifts to survive financially. Most of the time, I lived on the street. In kindergarten, I started smoking cigarettes, and when I turned 13 years old, I got addicted to heroin and other drugs.

I lived on my own.

After the first grade, I did not attend school regularly. I became a criminal, a homeless teenager, and when I turned 15, I was put on probation. After almost one year, I was sentenced for six years in prison. Half of this time, I was sentenced to live without hope in a correctional facility for minors. In this place, I encountered a lot of cruelty and violence among the imprisoned teenagers. My young heart turned hard, and eventually it became like a stone. The correctional unit for adults was worse. My «friends» betrayed me more than once, but I did not want to change my life.

Three months prior to my release from prison, my heart was broken, and since then my life has changed. I decided to visit one of those Christian outreaches. They brought fruits and sweets (it happened on the occasion of Thanksgiving). Many prisoners had come for lunch there. We began to eat together, and our guests prayed for the meal, took a guitar, and praised God in praise and worship.

I asked myself, Why are they doing all that? I concluded that they are motivated by the love of Jesus Christ. I felt ashamed for myself and the other inmates.



Since then, I began to attend the prayer meeting at the prison. I heard the Word of God preached often, and understood my life does not conform to the commandments of Jesus Christ. It touched my heart.

On one of those days, I repented, and the Lord has absolutely changed me. At that time I was not able to write or read, but since I became a believer, the Lord has totally transformed me from within. So many miraculous changes have occurred within my life. God made me to be His minister. I am convinced that the following Scripture has come to pass in my life:

«For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God» (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

God has granted me a blessed wife and a multitude of brothers and sisters to whom I minister. My wife, Nelya, and I are raising our daughter and son. These children, given by God, make us so happy! We currently live and minister in a Christian rehab

center «The Lord's Transfiguration», located in Puchukiv village, in Zhitomir region.

After experiencing God's love and blessing in my life, I won't be a passive observer on the sidelines anymore. Should Christ come today, He would go to seek the lost and those who are destined to slaughter. Jesus would not make a name to Himself, nor would he achieve a special social status, neither would He strive to achieve the world's recognition. He would go to seek the lost prostitutes, those hopeless people. Jesus would surely become the sinners' friend. I am certain about that!

It might sound harsh, but today many believers wish to take advantage of others, but not be doers of the Word; those who want to impress others more than being real Christians. Today many needy people come and leave the rehab. When I see this happening, I pray: «Lord, why do people not live under Your grace? How come they are not falling in love with You, for You have not changed?»

At the present time, we pray and fast with the brothers, asking God to raise new ministers for the harvest! Lest we forget Christ's call in the last days — to save those who are destined to death!

In concluding my testimony, I would like to emphasize that I cannot imagine my life without Jesus Christ — the purpose and essence of my life! God delivered me from the path of wickedness, gave me a new birth, and granted me to know His true way. Only God gives me the strength to carry on. Amen!

**With Love,
Brother Andrew NOVIKOV,
Ukraine.**

God answered my «weak» faith!

I was born and raised by good parents in Kiev. My relatives taught me the best moral values. But when I grew up, I realized that morality in this world is an unsteady idea.

I decided for myself what would be my moral principles and values.

My «friends» were criminals and drug-dealers. When I became 18 years old, I began using drugs, and became a member of a large criminal group in Kiev. In the event that we had trouble with the police, we hired lawyers that got us out of the police station.

I felt very strong on my feet. But the reality was absolutely different. Drugs filled my life. My «friends» abandoned me, and nobody would advocate for me before the police. I was sentenced three times... every time I was released from prison, but I had no power to start a new life. I finally asked myself: «Will this situation ever end?»



Once upon a time, believers visited our prison, and when I came into their meeting, I met one of my old «friends». He has become a totally different man; I saw real life in his eyes! We talked a lot, and he told me for the first time in my life that only the blood of Jesus Christ can deliver me.

In November 2004, I was released from prison, and joined a rehab center. I could hardly believe that someone is still able and willing to help me. But God reached out to me with my «weak» faith. In the first days of my stay at the rehab center, the Lord cleansed me from all drugs, and granted me a new vision for life. Afterwards, I started to minister to other people like me. Today I am leading a house prayer group for needy people. In 2007, I got married to Pattie, and now we have two children. Praise God for all his mercies!

**Yevgeny KRASNOYARSKY,
Ukraine.**



WE ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

Depression is a typical result of modern life in this world, saturated in sin. Today, millions of people across all nations are suffering from different stages of depression. American sociologists reported that about 15% of Americans are suffering from chronic depression; the percentage increases every year.

REMEDY FOR DEPRESSION

When people are asked what depression is, their descriptions will range from disappointment with their favorite soccer team to a deep sadness, resulting in suicide.

One dictionary definition is: **«Depression — a dejected, suppressed condition; a breakdown»**. Often, depression is described as an emotional state (state of the soul) where a person is immersed in sadness, disappointment, and despair.

Depression is one of the most common and one of the most ancient ailments of the soul. Its headwaters start at the Fall from grace. After Adam and Eve sinned against God, He expelled them from the Garden of Eden; they probably experienced depression.

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

Characteristic symptoms of depression are: apathy, loss of interest in former hobbies; disruption of appetite and sleep cycles; dejection, loss of concentration, melancholy, chronic tiredness, intensified sense of guilt and sense of worthlessness, and, as a result, negative thoughts about self, life, and surrounding people, and in some cases thoughts of suicide.

People often compare depression to a deep darkness. Somebody called depression a burial alive. Charles Spurgeon called depression a **«terror of God's forgotten soul»**.

The Bible doesn't define depression, but it describes people in a state of depression. Job is the biblical example of the «man of suffering». Here's how the Bible illustrates Job's state, **«As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome. My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope. O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good»** (Job 7:2-7).

David describes the dejected state of his mourning soul in his psalms, **«I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long... I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart... My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me»** (Psalm 38:6, 8, and 10). See also Psalm 51.

Other biblical illustrations of people in a state of depression:

- The prophet Jonah (Jonah 4:1-3 and 8-9).
- The prophet Elijah. **«But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers»** (1 Kings 19:4).
- King Saul (2 Samuel 16:14-23).
- The prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 15:18 and 20:7-8).

CAUSES OF DEPRESSION

The main causes of depression are physical illness, biochemical imbalance, betrayed hope, stress, idleness, a sense of guilt, and, in some cases, demonic influence, as with King Saul, **«And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well»** (1 Samuel 16:14-16).

Let's look at the causes in more detail.

Physical Illness

A human being is a complicated creature with both physical and spiritual components. All parts of human nature are intertwined and influence one other. For this reason, physical illness has a negative impact on the state of a person's soul and their disposition. Similarly, a person's disposition has an impact on his physical wellness. The Bible states, **«A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones»** (Proverbs 17:22).

Biochemical Imbalance

Lack of sleep and rest, lack of physical movement, vitamin deficiency, and unhealthy diet might trigger biochemical imbalance, which in turn might cause depression. Biochemical imbalance might also be a side effect of medical treatment.

Betrayed Hope

Betrayed hope might cause depression. The Bible says, **«Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life»** (Proverbs 13:12). That's why it is very important to pay attention to our thoughts and feelings, so that unjustified hopes would not grow into grievances, and then turn into a bitter root that will trouble the soul, **«looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled»** (Hebrews 12:15).

Stress

Stress is something that you cannot take off like a jacket or a backpack. Stress is a state into which we drive ourselves when we try to keep up with the modern world.

God knows that when a person runs after a «bird of luck» and after the riches of this world, he or she will definitely end up in depression. That is why, when on this Earth, Jesus Christ said, **«But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you»** (Matthew 6:33).

Idleness

Idleness, or laziness, is often a reason for depression. Laziness has the opposite effect of stress on a person. Stress, through work and hurry, drives a person to a state of hopelessness; idleness, on the other hand, relaxes a person to a state of laziness, inactivity, and indifference. This leads to a biochemical imbalance and the loss of interest in life.

Sense of Guilt

Unconfessed sin and a sense of guilt for committed sin might be one of the most frequent causes of depression.

David, the king of Israel, suffered from depression until he confessed his sin to the Lord, **«When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer»** (Psalm 32:3-4).

David got through his depression as soon as he confessed his sin to God and asked for His forgiveness, **«I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, «I will confess my transgressions to the LORD», and You forgave the iniquity of my sin»** (Psalm 32:5). That is why David says that a person who is freed from the sense of guilt is blessed, **«Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit»** (Psalm 32:2).

God gave us a promise in the Bible, **«If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness»** (1 John 1:9). David's humble prayer written in the 51st Psalm is a great example of the prayer of repentance for each one of us (Psalm 51:1-14).

It is important to note that depression in itself is not a sin, but it might be a consequence of sin or it might lead to sin.

HOW TO BATTLE DEPRESSION

Every person has his own way of battling depression: some use antidepressants, some use alcohol or other drugs, some overeat, and some try to find a way out through finding new friends or buying things. Nevertheless, all these are not able to cure depression. On the contrary, they often add more problems. What should one do to break away from the tenacious paws of this ailment of the soul? Here are several tested recommendations from the Bible. Use them and you will forget about depression.

Recommendation 1: TRUST GOD AND HIS WORD

When in depression, trust God and rely on Him with all your heart, **«Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in the Lord; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God»** (Psalm 42:11).

God is able to console as well as give strength to overcome any trials, **«He gives power to the weak, and to those**

trust; He expels depression from the heart and instead gives harmony and peace: **«Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus»** (Philippians 4:6-7).

Recommendation 2: DO NOT ALLOW YOUR FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS TO CONTROL YOUR LIFE

It is not always easy to trust in the Lord. It is much easier to trust our feelings. But feelings are exactly what lead a person into depression. Therefore, it is better to trust in God and His unfailing Word than our delusive and fast-changing feelings.

The Bible encourages us to rejoice always, regardless of the circumstances, **«Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!»** (Philippians 4:4) and, **«Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you»** (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

James pleads with all Christians, **«My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials»** (James 1:2). Notice that James does not say, «feel the joy», but he calls us to receive trials and problems with joy. This means that in every situation we need to make a decision to approach it with a positive attitude.

The prophet Habakkuk describes such an attitude, **«Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls — Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills»** (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

Recommendation 3: AVOID LONELINESS

If you feel that you are getting depressed, do not seclude yourself. First and foremost, strive to draw near the Lord; then, strive to socialize. Do not avoid people; avoid loneliness.

Even the Lord Jesus, when mourning, asked His disciples to support Him in prayer, **«Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, «Sit here while I go and pray over there». And He took with Him Peter and the two**

sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, **«My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me»** (Matthew 26:36-38).

As Christians following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, we should not avoid the helping hand of our brothers and sisters in the faith because God's Word encourages us to **«bear one another's burdens»** (Galatians 6:2) and **«not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching»** (Hebrews 10:25).

Recommendation 4: PRAY AND SING

God's Word encourages us to pray, especially in difficult situations, **«Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms»** (James 5:13).

Music has the ability to lift a depressed spirit as well (1 Samuel 16:14-23).

It is important to spend as much time as possible praising and thanking the Lord in



who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint» (Isaiah 40:29-31).

The Bible teaches that God will not allow more trials than a person can endure and that He will always give a helping hand, **«No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it»** (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The Bible urges us not only to believe in God and trust in His Word, but also to rest all troubles upon the Lord, **«Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you»** (1 Peter 5:6-7). The Lord rewards such

WE ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

prayer, **«Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you»** (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) and **«Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's»** (Psalm 103:1-5).

Recommendation 5: REMOVE THE REASON FOR DEPRESSION, NOT ITS SYMPTOMS

Often people who try to get rid of depression wrestle with the symptoms and aftermath of depression, which only aggravates the problem. It is important to recognize and address the reason for the depression. In order to do this, it is important to be very honest with oneself because a person will need to investigate his own heart and understand the reason for the heartache. One needs to ask the Lord for help to investigate his heart, **«Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting»** (Psalm 139:23-24).

Recommendation 6: DO NOT WAIT FOR DEPRESSION

Do not wait for depression and then fight with it. The best way to conquer depression is to prevent it. The Bible tells what one needs to do, **«Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths»** (Proverbs 3:5-6). Live with this rule and you will never have to fight depression or suffer from this scary illness.

Recommendation 7: DO NOT WITHDRAW INTO YOURSELF

When in depression, many people become unsociable and, in doing so, they give an opportunity for the devil to get hold of their soul and make them go in circles: problem — worry — loneliness — worry — problem. In difficult times, when alone, try not to withdraw into oneself. These steps will help you elude such problem:

A. Try to read the Bible as often as possible. It has many examples of people who lived through suffering. It has the ability to comfort an afflicted soul. Let the Lord console you with His Word.

B. On a quiet night, go outside, look at the starry sky and think of God's majesty. The Lord, Who created all of this, loves you. He has the ability to calm you and puzzle out all your problems.

C. Find a project to work on and work on it for God's glory; write poems, draw Christian comics, compose Bible crosswords, give presentations, write stories for children, etc. It will not only help you avoid depression, but will also help you stay ready in adverse circumstances.

D. Shake off the thoughts of depression and remember that somebody might need your help, concern, support, or a kind word. Do not stay in the darkness of your depression, but be a light to other people, **«Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven»** (Matthew 5:16).

E. God wants each of us to have happiness and to have peace in our hearts. He doesn't want us to fall victim to depression. Full harmony and peace is only in Jesus Christ, **«Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light»** (Matthew 11:28-30).

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I. LONELINESS

In six days, the Lord God created the heavens and the earth, all vegetation and animals, including humans. At the end of every day of Creation, God attentively examined His progress and saw that everything that He created was good: **«God saw that it was good»** (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25).

Man was the crown of creation. The Lord created man very good, in His own image. According to God, it was not good for Adam to be alone: **«And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him»** (Gen. 2:18).

From this we can see that loneliness is not good for a person. In the Book of Ecclesiastes it says, **«Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken»** (Ecc. 4:9-12).

The Lord God didn't create people for loneliness; He placed in people a need for love, understanding, friendship and communication with their Creator and fellow man. When this need continues to be unfulfilled, then a person begins to feel miserable and lonely.



THE BIBLE ON LONELINESS

1. What is loneliness?

The Oxford Dictionary gives us the following definitions: **«Loneliness — the fact of being without companions; solitariness. Lonely — sad because one has no friends or company»**.

In our view, **loneliness** is a kind of inadequacy, the lack of close relationships, socialization, understanding, loving, caring, etc. This in itself is a kind of insulation (spiritual, physical, moral).

2. The causes of loneliness

Loneliness doesn't come upon us suddenly, in a day. It may be the result of life or due to the person's character. It may be a consequence of some event or injury experienced by a person. Sometimes we do not even suspect that some actions, even our own actions, drive us into the dead end of loneliness.

A. Upbringing. Some people tend to be alone because of certain events and circumstances that occur in their early childhood. For example, a child whose parents didn't express their feelings or, conversely, were overcritical of the child's statements, can form complexes which adversely affect the child's ability to interact with others in the future. Some of these children will not learn how to communicate normally and how to have friendships with peers. In others, this can form a sharp and aggressive character that will scare and push away their associates. Others will be doomed to loneliness due to their overly low self-esteem, and the fear of being rejected by society. Loneliness can become a way of life for those who have not managed to develop interpersonal skills and abilities, such as communication skills.

The Biblical example of a person with a sense of underdeveloped interpersonal skills is the contentious woman, about whom the book of Proverbs says the following: **«It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house»** (Prov. 21:9); **«It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman»** (Prov. 21:19).

B. Social factors. There are a series of social factors that play into the hand of loneliness. We live in a century of scientific and technological progress, where a person can easily get along without the help of other people. Today we can do many things without leaving our homes. Television and the Internet have replaced relatives and friends. Due to the increase of crime, many elderly people are afraid to leave their homes and suffer from loneliness as a result. Often, busyness at work or frequent moving may damper the development of close, friendly relationships between people.

C. Circumstances. Loneliness can also be a result of life's circumstances. Single, divorced or widowed people are more prone to loneliness due to their circumstances. However, even married people can suffer loneliness which deprives family relationships of understanding, love and intimacy. Students learning abroad can fall prey to life circumstances that cause loneliness; so can specialists who travel frequently on business, elderly persons whose children and grandchildren have moved far away from them, as well as the sick and disabled. In addition, so-called «workaholics» and worker in certain professions (for example, computer programmers) may be victims of loneliness. All of these people belong to this risk group that can become lonely due to life's circumstances.

D. Habits and vices. In some instances, people become lonely thanks to their own bad habits or vices. For example, alcoholism, drug addiction, greed or financial carelessness (gambling) contribute to one's loss of friends and family. In addition, lonely people often exacerbate their loneliness by vices such as alcoholism, drug addiction, etc. Today we have a substantial growth of gangs, sects and cults, largely due to the increased number of people who are not able to get out of their lonely situation any other way. One of the most popular causes of loneliness is selfishness. Egoists love to abuse their relationships with those around them. They often start with having friends and family, but soon they are left without them, alone. Then, they start mistreating their acquaintances and neighbors. Soon even their acquaintances and neighbors turn away from them. Often egoists remain alone because they don't like to ask for help for anything, and they do not like to thank anyone.

E. Economic reasons. The following illustration supports this point: **«Those who are fed cannot understand the hunger»**. It's not a secret that when a person becomes impoverished (or loses their fortune), many people refuse and turn away from them, thus condemning them to solitude. At the same time, we know of cases where rich people, despite the strength of their position in society and vast fortunes, committed suicide because of their loneliness.

3. The negative effects of loneliness.

A. Loneliness may encourage a sinful relationship. A relationship with other people is the complete opposite of loneliness. This is why, for a lot of people, intimate relationships with members of the opposite sex are an attempt to free oneself

from loneliness. In other words, when attempting to run away from loneliness, people engage in sinful relationships. However, these people do not realize that physical intimacy cannot satisfy and satiate the desolate and lonely heart. Sexual intimacy can only momentarily distract a person, but it is incapable of eliminating the problem of loneliness.

B. Loneliness can adversely impact our finances. In some people the symptoms of loneliness can be manifested as an impulse to go to the store to make unnecessary purchases to achieve momentary peace and to receive an emotional lift. However, this «high» does not last very long and generally hurts the wallet.

C. Loneliness can alter our self-esteem. One of the most dangerous consequences of loneliness is low self-esteem. People with low self-esteem believe in their own uselessness and worthlessness. They can consider themselves unneeded by God and other people, and may even doubt in the necessity of their own existence.

D. Loneliness can lead to disease and suicide. Our bodies and emotions are interrelated. The hurt of loneliness can lead to anger and depression which can later lead to physical illness and in some cases, even madness.

In addition, many people who fall into depression have a tendency to also fall into gluttony: they begin to eat to momentarily forget about their problems and to experience an even more temporary emotional lift. This «high» does not last long and generally has a negative impact on the health of the overeating person.

In some cases, loneliness can even lead to suicide. This happens when a person does not see any other way out of a situation, except for taking their own life.

II. FIGHTING LONELINESS

Some people advise lonely people to join some kind of club or to spend more time traveling. These are not bad suggestions, but it is important that we remember that these do not lie as the solution to the problem of loneliness. The following advice can help people break out of the vicious cycle of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors leading to loneliness.

1. It needs to be understood that the feelings and state of loneliness are inherent in every person and that it shouldn't be permanent.

Think of your loneliness as a temptation: **«There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man»** (1 Cor. 10:13a). Other people go through similar temptation and trails: **«Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world»** (1 Peter 5:8-9).

2. It is necessary to recognize the problem.

Only after you admit to yourself and to God that you are suffering from loneliness, can you truly start the fight with your loneliness and isolation.

3. It is necessary to recognize the cause.

In the light of the facts listed above, it necessary to examine your life and the causes of loneliness, and identify those that apply to you.

4. It is necessary to remember that God is always near and ready to help you get rid of your loneliness.

«There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it» (1 Cor. 10:13).

The Psalmist asks himself this question: **«Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?»**, but here he answers his own question **«hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance»** (Ps. 42:5).

This next verse from the Bible can help you establish this truth: **«But I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me»** (Ps. 31:14-15).

The Lord calls on us to rely on Him in everything, and in turn, He promises to give us peace and quiet: **«Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus»** (Phil. 4:6-7).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10.

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

The history of our love was a movie story

The desire to rebel, as a rule, originates from a person's childhood. And of course, not from a good childhood. My father was an alcoholic, and my parents divorced before I was old enough to go to school.

My mother tried as hard as she could to raise me to be a good person. She sent me to different sports clubs and tried to protect me from bad influences, but my interests quickly changed. I became a bad student and was famous for bad behavior. When I was fifteen years old, I started smoking marijuana and doing drugs. In 1999, after heavy drinking, my companions and I committed a violent crime — the murder of a drug dealer. One companion was convicted for fourteen years; others were convicted for fewer years. I got five years in a maximum security prison in the village of Martusovka.

It sounds sad, but I did not have even a shadow of remorse for this action. On the contrary, I was proud. In prison, I tried to establish myself in the thieves' system to earn some credibility as the enemy of the prison rules. I did not attain anything special, only suffering from sitting in the solitary punishment cells located below ground level, with severe restrictions and poor nutrition.

After a while I realized that suffering for the thieves' ideals is self-deception. At the same



time I started to observe the prisoners who believed in Jesus Christ. These people told me about the love of God, and I realized that I wanted such a life and such

friends. After three and half years in prison, I had a desire to read the New Testament. My life began to be transformed from that moment. The words of Christ showed me who I am and what will be the end of my wicked way. I began to attend prison church. I became a new person. After my release, I went through rehabilitation, and now for almost ten years have been serving the Lord. I married a nice Christian girl, Anna. The history of our love was like something out of a movie.

In the church, I was assigned to children's ministry. I started working with homeless children and adolescents, telling them about Jesus and that God can change the lives and thoughts of every person who has faith. Anya worked near me. Her life was not similar to mine; she graduated from high school, enrolled in college and came as a student to

church. Friends, thinking we would make a wonderful couple, tried to make us pay attention to each other. We did not see how many similarities we had; we just did the same work. The feelings came suddenly. At some point, we realized that we could not live without each other.

Our daughter, Margaret, was born in December, 2009. After the birth of the baby, we moved from the village Pochuyki to Kiev, where we served as missionaries for two years. When our church was formed, we became its members and continued ministry with children. I now oversee the work of the Sunday school, kindergarten, teenage group, two shelters and the children's branch at the hospital. Anya is responsible for the rehabilitation of women and women's ministry in the church.

Damian NAZARENKO, Ukraine.

CONCLUSION. Continued from page 9.

5. Reconcile with the fact that you cannot change certain things.

The death of a close friend or spouse, moving away from friends and relatives to another country; this is something that's already happened and is beyond our control. This is what needs to be reconciled with. The Holy Bible teaches us **«And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose»** (Rom. 8:28). In other words, the Lord is able to change your situation for the better. All that we need to do is to stop holding on to the past, and to move forward towards the future, as the example of Apostle Paul: **«Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus»** (Phil. 3:13-14).

not have time to be alone with God. If you are single, then you have a huge advantage over other people in this area.

D. Try to make friends.

I recall an old nursery rhyme:
*I went to look for friends
In this world, there are no friends
I decided to become a friend
Now everywhere I go, I meet my friends.*

So, in search of friends, try to follow this rule: if you want to have friends, be a friend.

Many lonely people today do not have the courage and perseverance to make new acquaintances and friends. They first need to overcome their shyness and/or the fear of being rejected by others. If you belong to this group of lonely people, then try to establish and develop friendly relations with other people. Try following these principles:

- Try to find acquaintances who will be able to share your interests.
- Don't be afraid to take the initiative: do not hesitate to call them on the phone. Who knows, maybe they, like you, are searching for new friends as well.

longer alone, God himself is with you and in you!

Before leaving the earth, Jesus Christ promised His disciples that He would not leave them orphans, but would send the promised Holy Spirit to be their Comforter and Teacher. **«If you have love for me, you will keep my laws. And I will make prayer to the Father and he will give you another Helper to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of true knowledge. That Spirit the world is not able to take to its heart because it sees him not and has no knowledge of him: but you have knowledge of him, because he is ever with you and will be in you. I will not let you be without a friend: I am coming to you»** (John 14:15-18).

Allow God to comfort you during your loneliness. Share your thoughts and feelings about your situation and state of mind. Leave bitterness behind and forgive those who have offended you, refused to understand you, or neglected you. Follow the example of the Apostle Paul. Everyone at the court left him, but he forgave them; he knew that

who have knowledge of your name will put their faith in you; because you, Lord, have ever given your help to those who were waiting for you».

Psalms 23:4. «Though I go through the valley of deep shade, I will have no fear of evil; for you are with me, your rod and your support are my comfort».

Psalms 25:15-16. «My eyes are turned to the Lord at all times; for he will take my feet out of the net. Be turned to me, and have mercy on me; for I am troubled and have no helper».

Psalms 27:9-10. «Let not your face be covered from me; do not put away your servant in wrath; you have been my help: do not give me up or take your support from me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother are turned away from me, then the Lord will be my support».

Psalms 68:4-6. «Make songs to God, make songs of praise to his name; make a way for him who comes through the waste lands; his name is Jah; be glad before him. A father to those who have no father, a judge of the widows, is God in his holy place. Those who are without friends, God puts in families; he makes free those who are in chains; but those who are turned away from him are given a dry land».

Psalms 42:5. «Why are you crushed down, O my soul? and why are you troubled in me? put your hope in God; for I will again give him praise who is my help and my God».

Lamentations 3:19-25. «Keep in mind my trouble and my wandering, the bitter root and the poison. My soul still keeps the memory of them; and is bent down in me. This I keep in mind, and because of this I have hope. It is through the Lord's love that we have not come to destruction, because his mercies have no limit. They are new every morning; great is your good faith. I said to myself, The Lord is my heritage; and because of this I will have hope in him. The Lord is good to those who are waiting for him, to the soul which is looking for him».

John 14:15-18. «If you have love for me, you will keep my laws. And I will make prayer to the Father and he will give you another Helper to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of true knowledge. That Spirit the world is not able to take to its heart because it sees him not and has no knowledge of him: but you have knowledge of him, because he is ever with you and will be in you. I will not let you be without a friend: I am coming to you».

2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 16-18. «Troubles are round us on every side, but we are not shut in; things are hard for us, but we see a way out of them; We are cruelly attacked, but not without hope; we are made low, but we are not without help. For which cause we do not give way to weariness; but though our outer man is getting feeble, our inner man is made new day by day. For our present trouble, which is only for a short time, is working out for us a much greater weight of glory; While our minds are not on the things which are seen, but on the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are for a time; but the things which are not seen are eternal».

Revelation 3:20-21. «See, I am waiting at the door and giving the sign; if my voice comes to any man's ears and he makes the door open, I will come in to him, and will take food with him and he with me. To him who overcomes I will give a place with me on my high seat, even as I overcame, and am seated with my Father on his high seat».

Material for the newspaper «Prisoner» was kindly provided by
the Bible Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada
<http://cogmtl.net/Articles/091.htm>

THE BIBLE ON LONELINESS

6. Try to change what can be changed.

Most of the causes of loneliness can be eliminated. If you're avoiding people that have low self-esteem... if you're staying at home in front of the TV instead of going to some social church events or activities... if you or your best friend moved to another city or country, then you need to make an effort to take steps to change your state of mind. Instead of running away from problems and withdrawing yourself, you will need to meet the problem of loneliness head-on.

A. Work on your self-esteem.

- Stop lowering your self-esteem, constantly trying to convince yourself that you are not wanted and good for nothing.
- Look at yourself through the eyes of God. Read the Holy Bible, especially those passages that speak of God's sacrificial love that was revealed to mankind by the cross.
- Rejoice with the passages from the Word of God which are located at the end of this article.

B. Fill yourself and your time with helping others.

When people are not doing anything, people have time for self-pity, feeling unlucky, and regretting their loneliness. The Lord has prepared for us a lot of work and has ordained us for good works, such as the following: help the sick and needy, call a person and cheer them up and send them an encouraging postcard. There are surely people around you who are in need of your attention and care. If you pay attention to other's needs, then you will be so busy with helping others, that you will not have time for self-pity. Devote yourself to any particular cause. Volunteer to help a charitable organization, church or Christian mission. This will help you find friends while helping those who are in need. And in this way, the Lord will fulfill your petition and save you from loneliness.

C. What to do with loneliness?

- Try to spend less time at home. Do not miss worship services and other church events. Sign up for courses, etc.
- When you are alone, use this time with maximum efficiency. Seclusion (not to be confused with loneliness) can be beneficial. While in seclusion, you have the opportunity to reflect on your life, read and ponder the Word of God, and pray for your needs and the needs of neighbors. It's ironic that today many people are suffering because they do

- Give your friends time to evolve and mature. Under no circumstances should you overload your new acquaintance with your opinions and numerous problems. Learn not only to give advice, but to listen carefully to the other person.

E. Pets.

Many lonely people are advised to have a pet. If you live by yourself, then it shouldn't be a problem to take care of a pet. Of course, a cat or a dog cannot replace a person, but with them, it won't be as lonely. At the same time, pets can contribute to greater isolation and loneliness if you turn your pets into idols and sacrifice your time with friends and relatives for your pets. Therefore, if you get a pet, try not to do this, otherwise you will never be able to be freed from loneliness.

So, you can get rid of loneliness, but for this, you will be required to make efforts and certain sacrifices. Ask God for help and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and wisdom in the search for new friends. The Lord came in order to give us life with abundance. He knows how to make your life happy and fulfilling.

CONCLUSION

Loneliness is a painful feeling, which hurts, penetrating deep into the heart. Sometimes a person wants to tell someone about his loneliness, but he is afraid to even talk about it, thinking people might not understand him and the feeling will be more painful.

Human friendships tend to be unstable. Often friendships depend on the mood, feelings and emotions of people. Even close friends can grow cold towards each other due to problems at work or in the family. Friends may forget about you and even betray you. However, the Lord will never leave or betray you. The Lord said: **«I will be with you at all times»** (Hebrews 13:5). **«Let not your face be covered from me; do not put away your servant in wrath; you have been my help: do not give me up or take your support from me, O God of my salvation. When my father and my mother are turned away from me, then the Lord will be my support»** (Psalms 27:9-10).

Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, God proved His love and devotion to us. If you are reconciled with God through this sacrifice then you become friends with him. His Spirit lives in you and you are no

God did not leave him. **«At my first meeting with my judges, no one took my part, but all went away from me. May it not be put to their account. But the Lord was by my side and gave me strength; so that through me the news might be given out in full measure, and all the Gentiles might give ear: and I was taken out of the mouth of the lion. The Lord will keep me safe from every evil work and will give me salvation in his kingdom in heaven: to whom be glory for ever and ever. So be it»** (2 Tim. 4:16-18).

If you are suffering from loneliness, you should know that there is a way out of this problem. It starts with the realization that the root of human loneliness is spiritual isolation, far away from God.

The first thing you need to do if you are alone is reconcile with God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Invite Jesus into your heart, ask Him to forgive your sins and be your Savior. When this happens, the Lord will send the Holy Spirit into your heart, the Spirit of adoption. This is the first step that will lead you to a close relationship with your Creator and with your brothers and sisters in the faith.

When you become a Christian, you join a large spiritual family — the family of God. The second thing you need to do is to constantly attend church and all church activities. The Word of God calls Christians not to neglect their gatherings together. **«And let us be moving one another at all times to love and good works; Not giving up our meetings, as is the way of some, but keeping one another strong in faith; and all the more because you see the day coming near»** (Hebr. 10:24-25).

The third thing you need to do is to be more than just a church member, a guest at the church, but to serve the brothers and sisters with your gifts, that is, to be a minister.

If you do these three steps, you will get rid of the problem of loneliness.

WORDS OF COMFORT

Deuteronomy 31:8. «It is the Lord who goes before you; he will be with you, he will not take away his help from you or give you up: so have no fear».

Psalms 9:9-10. «The Lord will be a high tower for those who are crushed down, a high tower in times of trouble; And those

The discussion regarding «Predestination of Human Fate» continues. In the previous issue, inmate Andrey Yudin wrote an article on this topic. Here, Pastor Edward Korchemniy responds with a differing viewpoint on this subject. We

present our readers a contrary opinion on the subject. May the Lord bestow wisdom upon all to discern whose opinion on the subject is correct.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

A Response To:

«PREDESTINATION OF HUMAN FATE»

Dear brother Andrew! Your thoughts on «Predestination of Human Fate» left me with mixed feelings. On the one hand, it gave me feelings of sorrow and sadness due to the hopelessness found within your article «Predestination of Human Fate» (published in the third issue of «Prisoner» for 2014). You implied that there is only one path, which in any event will lead to only one destination. In this case, it is appropriate to quote from the words of Maxim Gorky's «Song of the Falcon»: «We fly or crawl, but in the end we know what happens: we all turn to dust, and end up buried in sand or soil...» However, the thoughts of Gorky do not surprise us, as he did not hope in God. But God's children have a hope and a future (Jeremiah. 29:11; Prov. 23:18).

On the other hand, your article made me outraged at the schemes of the devil, who uses methods of lies and disorientation to deprive people of this glorious hope and future that God offers free to all.

If a person has no freedom of choice, then he is only a robot who performs actions which he is predetermined for, and therefore he cannot be judged for his actions. He fulfills that which has been predetermined for him by God. It turns out that the cause of all evils is the one who sort of «planned» it in advance. Who, then, do we take God for? Does He even love mankind? That's enough! Let's stop with this terrible «logic». Maybe we do not understand everything correctly?

Let's try to figure this out. What basis do we have to question the free will and choice given by God to man? Does God's foreknowledge of future events contradict man's free will?

For example, we, as parents, may see bad tendencies in our child and warn him that if he does not change, then such and such awaits him. And if our predictions end up being correct, will this be accounted as our plan for our child? Who is then to be held responsible? Is it going to be our fault since we, as the parents, foresaw the result and warned our child of it, or will our grown-up child be held responsible since he ignored the warnings and got the predicted result?

Here's another comparison. What if you, an experienced driver, warned an inexperienced driver that the fuel in the gas tank of his car would not be enough for his

road trip, but he ignored your warning and his car stopped midway to his destination with an empty tank. Who is to blame for this? Are you guilty of it because you had already known the outcome?

Let us now look at the event where the Apostle Peter and his friends denied Jesus. Was there a possibility of Peter not denying Christ? No, there was not. Did Christ predestine this to occur? No, He simply predicted that this would happen. Did Peter have the right to choose? Yes. Why then did he deny Christ? It was due to his self-confidence and prideful nature. When Peter said, «Even if everyone else deserts you, I never will» (Mk. 14: 29), he made himself higher and above the other disciples, implying that they were capable of deserting Jesus, but he would never be capable of that. Peter and his friends were so self-righteous that they did not even ask the LORD to help them withstand this trial. Therefore, they disgracefully «failed» the exam. Was Jesus Christ's prediction just the unchangeable «predestination» plan for His disciples? Of course not. In this case, Jesus, as a loving father, taught his immature children that without the power of God, they would not be able to withstand a trial. Also, before His ascension, He warned them not to take on any spiritual labors until they were «clothed with power from on high» (Luke 24:49).

God is omniscient. One of the attributes of His divine nature is the fact that He is All-Knowing. And if God, in His love, shows to people what they can expect to happen to them on their chosen path, it is absolutely unreasonable to assume that God's foreknowledge deprives a person of the right to free will and freedom of choice. The whole Bible is filled with the Lord's warnings of impending danger to those on sinful paths and with pleas for people to turn to the path of life and light (Isa. 45:22; Acts. 26: 16-18; Matt. 11:28; Jn. 6: 37). Jer. 3:12 — «O Israel, my faithless people, come home to me again,

for I am merciful. I will not be angry with you forever». It is appropriate to ask the question: Will God require people to do what

longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing» (Mt. 23:37).

The Lord said, «I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live» (Ezekiel. 33:11).

«Who (God) wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth» (1 Tim. 2: 4).

«But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us» (Romans 5:8).

Maybe Christ, anticipating that there will be those who will distort the Scriptures with a view to shake the faith of Christians, said firmly: «For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day» (John 6:40).

The Apostle John said, «And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love» (1 John 4: 16). To grasp

is impossible for them to do?! Of course, this is excluded. Abraham the patriarch exclaims, «Will not the Judge of all the earth do just?» (Gen. 18:25).

Does not the following scripture below speak about the fact that a person has a free will and he is offered to make a choice between life and death? «I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them» (Deut. 30: 19-20).

What is the meaning of the tears of Jesus, when He grieves for the future destruction of Jerusalem, which followed as a result of the rejection of their Messiah.

«Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have

and believe in the love of God — this is the basis of our salvation. The devil intends to take away and destroy our faith. To achieve his intent he sends doubts about the truth of God's justice. Therefore, the Apostle Paul warns believers: «See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ» (Col. 2: 8).

Throughout my six decades of service to the Lord, such mental temptations and doubts have come to me, thoughts which questioned God's love. To escape from them a very simple and childish logic helped me: «Why do I have pity and compassion for people? God created me and gave me this ability — to love and have compassion for others. But, of course, my Creator has much more love and compassion than I! Jesus Christ died for all, and my doubts are from the evil one and are a manifestation of the pride of my mind...» Not in vain did Christ

say, «Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven» (Matthew 18:3).

We must remember that our finite minds cannot comprehend all of God's wisdom. David spoke on this topic: «My heart is not proud, LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me» (Ps. 130: 1).

Maybe you, brother Andrew, are familiar with the story of one of the so-called Church Fathers — Augustine. Its meaning is as follows. Sometime while walking along the seashore, he tries to understand God's wisdom, which for him, as for us, was not clear. Suddenly, on the beach, he sees a boy who has made a hole in the sand and is carrying handfuls of water from the sea to fill up his hole with water. Interested, Augustine asks him, «Boy, what are you doing?» He replies: «I want to move the ocean into this hole». Augustine laughs: «That's impossible! Don't you understand?» And the boy responds, «Why then do you want to contain the ocean of God's wisdom with your mind». Then the boy disappears. Augustine then realized that God sent him an answer to the questions that tormented him, and praised God. Don't all of us resemble this little boy when we, with our curious mind, want to penetrate into the depths of God's wisdom?

So Andrew, do not be troubled if you see lots of things in the Bible that are not entirely clear or appear contradictory and difficult to explain from spiritual experience. We need to know one thing, the most important thing: God loves me! He died for me, He wants to save me. No wonder God said, «whoever comes to me I will never drive away» (John 6:37). Praise Him for it! He is our loving Savior and now calls us all to himself, «Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light» (Matthew 11: 28-30).

May God bless you!

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Edward KORCHEMNIY
Colville, Washington, USA.



A Parable From Daily Life

Poison in the Heart

One morning the young woman went to visit a sorcerer who lived on the outskirts of the forest.

«What brings you to me, beautiful one?» asked the old man. «Do you want me to bewitch a man for you?»

«I don't need any other man. I love my husband, but I can't live with his mother!»

«Well then, what do you want from me?»

«Please help me. Give me poison that I can poison her with.»

«So this is the way to your happiness, young lady? Well, alright. I feel sorry for you. I'll give you a potion. Brew it every morning and have your mother-in-law drink it as tea. By the way, I also have some advice for you.»

«What advice? I will do anything you say to get rid of this evil snake of a woman as quickly as possible!»

«Well, in the village rumors spread quickly. Everyone will suspect you. In order to avoid suspicion, you must change your attitude towards your mother-in-law. Be sweet, friendly and smile

at her. You will not need to suffer long.»

And that is exactly what the young woman did. Even before the roosters crowed she would get up, knead the bread, heat the oven, cook some porridge, and of course, brew the potion for her mother-in-law. She would tenderly invite her «Mama» to try the miracle tea while listening to everything she had to say. Her husband was overjoyed at how close his mother and wife had become. The mother-in-law, of course, did not see into her daughter-in-law's motive, and so she responded with sincere love and care.

The young woman hurried back to the sorcerer and fell to his feet in tears:

«Grandpa, I beg you! I know you can do anything. Please, give me an antidote for the poisonous tea! I brewed too much for my mother-in-law. She'll die! I don't want her to die because she has become a wonderful mother to me.»

«My dear, calm down. I gave you aromatic herbs which you brewed for your mother-in-law to make a tasty and healthy tea. The poison was actually in your heart, but with God's help you are rid of it.»

<http://www.smisl-zhizni.ru/pritchi>



Once upon a time in a village there lived a girl. According to the ancient Slavic custom, after her wedding she went to live in her husband's home, together with his parents. But the young bride found it very unpleasant to live with her mother-in-law because she constantly lectured and corrected her.

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

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



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

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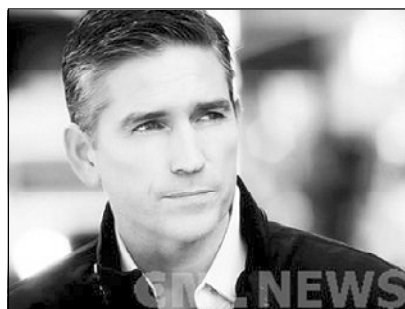
We are now a federally-recognized 501(c)3 organization, so you can deduct your donations to us from your taxes!

Christian News

«The Passion of The Christ» actor adopts children with cancer

Jim Caviezel, the actor who portrayed Jesus Christ in the film, «The Passion of The Christ», and star of the «Person of Interest» series, together with his spouse Kerri adopted two little children with brain cancer.

Everything started when Jim's friend (well known for his performances in defense of unborn children) said, «You stand up for life. You know what? If you truly believe in what you say then adopt a child — not a normal one, but one with serious problems».



Caviezel was deeply astonished, but in the depth of his heart knew that God was waiting for him to do just that. First was a Chinese boy named Bo. Right after his birth he was left on a train. Bo was raised in an orphanage till the age of 5. He was told that he never had a mother and that he was found in the dirt. The boy had a large brain tumor that was visible to the naked eye.

The actor shared, — I looked him in the eyes and although it sounds like sentimental silliness, I speak the truth — I heard in my heart how this boy called out to me, «Will you love me?»

The second child adopted by the Caviezels was supposed to be a healthy newborn girl. However, before the adoption was finalized, Jim and his wife Kerri met with a five-year-old girl who also had brain cancer. They knew that a healthy newborn would easily find a good family, unlike the sick five-year-old girl. Her adoption was a great blessing. Jim even says that since then he became a new man.

«Dennis Quaid (another Hollywood actor) told me that upon his son Jack's birth, he lived through emotions that he did not even suspect existed», remembers Caviezel, and adds that the same thing occurred to him. «It was something that captured me. I always thought that if we ever adopted, it will not be as strong a feeling as having your own biological children. Nothing of that sort!»

Bo and his sister lived through a few operations. Bo had a particularly difficult tumor treatment. Today he is 13 years old. He received an award at a gymnastics competition. His sister became a little ballerina. Their father feels more happy than he ever expected. «We chose the most difficult path. That's what faith is for me — an action. Like the Samaritan», says Jim Caviezel, emphasizing that he is sharing not to attract attention but rather to inspire others.

Information Agency CNL-NEWS from materials at Baznica.info.

Dear readers of «Prisoner»!

The newspaper 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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