

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!



PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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

(John 8:32)

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It just so happens that everyone celebrates the birthday of Jesus Christ in the winter. Some celebrate this day on December 25 and others on January 7. In both cases, it is only a tentative date. In fact, the exact date of the birth of Jesus Christ is not known. Either way, the birth of the Lord from the Virgin Mary was and remains undisputed. God the Father, out of His mercy and love for us, sent down His only begotten Son, thereby giving us a chance for salvation. **«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).

The birth of the holy and pure Son was God's plan, thanks to which we are given an example to follow, so that we can get as close as possible to holiness. For God said, **«You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy»** (Leviticus 19:2). How can we get closer to holiness, if we do not have as an example the One who is truly holy? And now it does not matter what day exactly our Lord was born. What is important is that Christmas happened and the whole world got a chance and hope for salvation. For One came into the world, who not only was for each of us an example of meekness, humility, and holiness, but who also took all our sins upon himself in his death on the cross. That way, through our repentance, He could justify us before the Father, and give us eternal life. It is hard to imagine what would have happened if God had not yet given to humanity the birth of His Son. It is through the birth of Jesus and His sacrifice for our sins that we may come to know the fullness of God's love for us sinful people.

The birth of our Savior and His time here on earth has left for us a whole storehouse of God's wisdom and everyday teachings. When He was on earth, Jesus taught His disciples and all who followed Him these holy doctrines. And today, this wisdom is left for us in His Holy Scriptures. Everything that was written by the prophets and disciples of Jesus Christ in the Bible was written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As it is written: **«For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit»** (2 Peter 1:21).

When you read the Gospel, you cannot help but be fascinated by everything said by Jesus Christ. The invisible power of the words of the living gospel not only fills your mind, but also makes your heart tremble. Every time you read one of the four gospels, you experience multiple

emotions at once: shame, fear and joy. You become ashamed of the fact that you brought pain and grief for so long to Him who died for your sins and rose again for your justification. Fear comes at the thought: **«What would have happened to me, if I never would have known the**

CHRISTMAS



Lord?» But at the same time, a feeling of joy fills you with the love that God gives through His Word. As if an echo from somewhere far away, the words of Jesus call out: «Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends» (John 15:13). And here you really begin to understand how great God's love is for us sinners. For Jesus is the first, and only one, who sacrificed himself for the sins of the entire world. Without question, the love of God is able to sacrifice and forgive all. The Lord, by way of the Gospel, clearly demonstrates for us these words: **«Love one another; as I have loved you»** (John 13:34).

Thank God that 2000 years ago, the birth of Jesus Christ took place. For together with the birth of the Lord

came light and love into the world. And what could be higher and greater than love! Would this world be able to exist at all if there was no love? Definitely not! Let us therefore not be self-centered, but at all times let us give thanks to God the Father for His gift of the holy birth of His Son. For with the birth of Jesus Christ the fullness of God's love came directly into the world. And we desire that every time we celebrate the birth of our Savior, mankind would approach the perfection of love more and more. The apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has left us all good directions on how to achieve this kind of love. After all, true love is an all-embracing emotion that includes in itself many composite feelings. It probably would not be excessive if we all together, once again, dip into the great wisdom of love:

«Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love» (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

In conclusion, I wish to add that we all have only one thing left to do — perfect our love. For He who gave us the birth of our Savior is certainly waiting for this gift from us.

I. GORIK.

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND



Once a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking on a sandy beach, and next to him was the Lord. The sky flashed scenes from his life, and after each one he saw in the sand two sets of footprints, one — of his feet, the other — from the feet of the Lord.

When in front of him flashed the last picture of his life, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. And he saw that often along the way of

life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that those were the most difficult and unhappy times in his life. He was greatly distressed and began to ask the Lord:

«Didn't you tell me, that if I followed Your way, You would not leave me? But I noticed that during the most difficult times of my life, only one set of footprints is visible in the sand. Why did

You leave me when I most needed You?»

The Lord replied:

«My dear, dear child. I love you and will never leave you. When grief and trials were in your life, only one set of footprints stretched along the road, because in those days, I carried you».

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PROVERBS

A young woman was sitting on a park bench and for some reason was weeping bitterly. At this time, a little boy named Ivan was riding his tricycle in the alley. He felt sorry for the lady, so he asked:

«Lady, why are you crying?»

«Oh, child, you cannot understand», the woman waved him off.

It seemed to Ivan that after this the woman began to cry even more. He said:

WARM-HEARTED ADVICE

«Ma'am, do you have something that hurts, and that's why you're crying? Do you want me to give you my tricycle?»

The woman began to sob even more from these sympathetic words:

«Oh, little boy», she said, «nobody needs me, nobody loves me...»

Ivan looked at her seriously and said:

«Are you sure you asked everyone?»



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Do you consider yourself a good person? Most people do. But each of us has our own understanding of what it means to be a «good person». The Bible says that God is good and that the Ten Commandments are the standard by which God will judge whether a person is good or not. That is why in order to examine ourselves and see where we stand, we need to look at the Ten Commandments. While reading the Ten Commandments, ask yourself which of them you are obeying and which you are disobeying.

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.

(Do you love God more than anyone and more than anything?)

2. You shall not make idols.

(Have you imagined for yourself another god who is more accepting of your way of life?)

3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

(Do you ever use God's name in an inappropriate way, such as by cursing someone?)

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

(Do you set apart one day in the week to read the Bible, pray, and fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ?)

5. Honor your father and your mother.

(Do you ever disobey your parents or say rude things to them?)

6. You shall not murder.

(God compares hatred to murder, *«You have heard that it was said to those of old, «You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, «Raca!» shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, «You fool!» shall be in danger of hell fire» — Matthew 5:21-22).*

7. You shall not commit adultery.

(*«You have heard that it was said to those of old, «You shall not commit adultery». But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart» — Matthew 5:27-28.* This commandment warns us to stay away from any form of sex outside of marriage and viewing of pornography).

8. You shall not steal.

(Do you ever take something that is not yours without permission? The price and the amount of what was taken does not matter. Stealing your employer's time or someone else's idea is a violation of this commandment as well).

9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

(Do you ever lie about anyone?)

10. You shall not covet.

(Do you ever feel jealous over somebody else's success? Or do you ever want things that belong to somebody else?)

The Bible warns that God will punish all killers, abusers, thieves, liars, cheaters and such like. *«But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death» (Revelation 21:8-9).* God will judge not only our deeds, but also our thoughts. Do you think that at the Judgment Day God will find you innocent of violating His Commandments?

Maybe you think that God in His kindness will ignore some of your sins. Precisely because of God's goodness and fairness, all murderers, liars, abusers, and other violators of God's Law will receive

God Himself found a way to be just and merciful. We violated the Law, but He came down to this world in a human body to pay for our sins. Jesus suffered and died on a cross to satisfy the claims of the Law. Thanks to His death, our Heavenly Father can forgive us and grant us an eternal life!

You might think that now you will be able to obey all of the Ten Commandments, but this is wishful thinking. Really, do the best and the most «righteous» among us never lie, steal, cheat, or hate? Do all of us love our neighbor like ourselves?

How can we live a godly life when we have already sinned against God? Maybe lies and theft are in the past... But we are still violators of the Law.



ARE YOU A GOOD PERSON

a full punishment. He wouldn't be a fair Judge if He ignored a person's sins.

Have you violated at least one of the Ten Commandments? The Bible says that a person who violates one of the Commandments is guilty of violating the whole Law, *«For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all» (James 2:10).*

The Bible also says that God's Law is perfect and it requires us to be perfect as well. *«Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect» (Matthew 5:48).* Are you a perfect person (in your words, thoughts, and deeds)? Do you think you will be able to reach God's Kingdom?

Maybe you will say that you are a good person. But God says otherwise, *«The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one» (Psalm 14:2-3).* It means that one of you is a liar, either you or God. The Bible says that God is unable to lie, *«God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?» (Numbers 23:19).*

Remember that the fate of all liars is in the lake of fire (*Revelation 21:8*). The Law of God demands fairness. The punishment for sin is death and hell, *«For the wages of sin is death» (Romans 6:23a).*

If you want to live, then, please, listen attentively.

THINK ABOUT IT

Would you sell your eye for one million dollars? Or would you sell two of your eyes for 50 million dollars? I don't think so. Your eyes have no price. Yet, they are only the windows of your soul. Then what is the price of your soul (your life)? *«What will a man give in exchange for his soul?» (Matthew 16:26).*

Then what is the price of eternal life? It is priceless! At the same time, based on our righteousness, we declare to God that we deserve life in God's Kingdom and that we have earned a place in paradise by our goodness.

Imagine that you decided give someone a brand new car. But the person replies, «I cannot accept such a pricey gift for nothing, here's ten dollars for it». This answer would probably offend you. Not only because ten dollars is so little for such a gift, but also because your gift is now considered a purchase.

When we talk about reaching Heaven by our good deeds and careful obedience to God's Commandments, we are giving God ten dollars for His priceless gift. To Him, who suffered so much for us! The only thing that is expected from us right now is to humbly repent of our sins and accept God's gift and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Almighty God demonstrated His love through the death of Jesus Christ, *«For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were*

still sinners, Christ died for us» (Romans 5:6-8).

When you depend on your goodness and righteousness, you proclaim the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross to be worthless.

The Bible says, *«For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God» (Ephesians 2:8).* We cannot earn or deserve a gift. We can either refuse it with pride or accept it with gratefulness.

Salvation and eternal life — these are God's gifts to people. We receive them through faith in Jesus Christ. When we refuse God's gift, we subject ourselves to God's wrath, *«He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does*

not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him» (John 3:36).

God doesn't want you to end up in hell. Who wants to end up in hell?

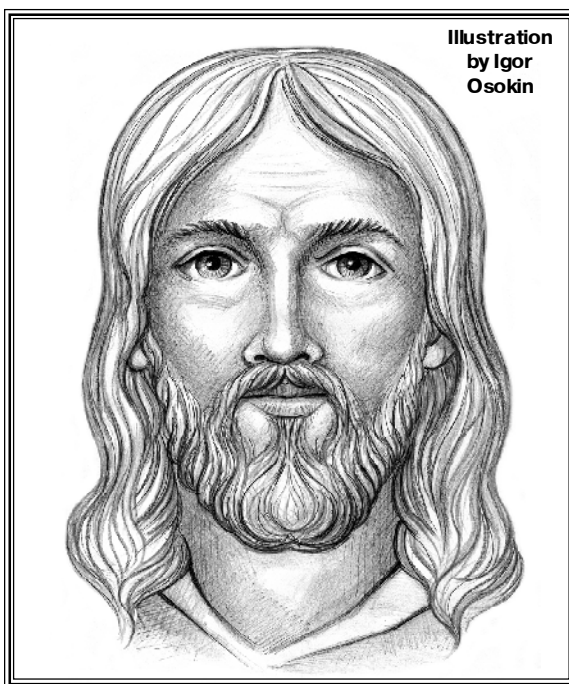
In this case confess your sins before God right now. Confide your life to Jesus Christ. And you will cross over from death to life, *«Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life» (John 5:24).*

Read the Bible every day and strive to do as it says, *«He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him» (John 14:21).* Obeying God will be the biggest proof of your love towards God. Believe in God and confide in Him and He will never betray or disappoint you.

Pray to Lord with these words, *«Dear Lord God, today I turn away from all my sins (list your sins). From today and onward I decide to believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. He is the only way of salvation for me. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. God, forgive me and change me and give me eternal life. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen».*

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<http://www.cogmtl.net/Gospel/good.htm>

Illustration
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Prison ministry, like all other ministries, entails serious responsibility before God, both for what we are doing and for those to whom we minister! If we think about prison ministers, we know that the minister should be born again, filled with the Holy Spirit, fulfill diligently God's calling in life, and love people. Every ministry should be based on God's love shared with those sinners who are called to repent. You cannot serve without love. As ministers we ought to express love which is poured onto our hearts by the Holy Spirit. If you do not have love, you would do best to stop your ministry, for it does not please the Lord and certainly nobody is going to benefit from it. In all ministries we must know our calling in ministry. God calls us to obey His voice, and do God's will and plan. It is very hard to identify the believer's calling and parameters for ministry. When God calls, He prepares you; the Holy Spirit melts our heart, changes it and our mindset, as well as directs us to the ministry God prepared for us. This process might take a while. Whoever's heart is open to God and whoever obeys the voice of the Holy Spirit agrees to God's will and begins doing the first steps led by God. The believer knows his calling, discerns the Lord's will for himself, and no one can ever stop him, lead him astray, or sow doubt... The believer definitely knows what his calling is!



MY DEVOTIONS PRISON MINISTRY

Knowing our calling, we should dedicate ourselves to this spiritual labour. Dedication means our wholehearted ministry and readiness to carry all the burdens of this hard labour: our sacrificial life, our heart which is given to others, trials of our faith, misunderstandings, often mocking, humiliation, protest and confrontation, tears, sleepless nights, headaches, and crying out to God. We will encounter challenges, hindrances, and sometimes dead-ends. Also, prison ministry shows us ourselves: our shortcomings, misinterpretations, the difficulty we have to understand and accept people as they are. It is no wonder that we may err, be wary, give up, fall and rise up again. Some people will try to stop us, rebuke us, and weaken us. In addition, our friends may leave us, even our relatives may turn against us. Moreover, in prison ministry, we will need to sustain financial losses, for we will be called to help out financially those prisoners who struggle materially.

When we will have more expenses than material resources, we may feel discouraged. At this point our faith is crucial to withstand all those trials. While nobody can run away from problems, we shall bring those to the throne of the Lord's grace. The Word of God encourages us: «Never be lacking in zeal». Our faith will be tested — have we trusted in God? We should remember that it's not our own ministry, but rather God entrusted us with this labor, and He will take care of our financial needs. The most important thing in prison ministry is perseverance, and to keep pressing on. Even if you run out of money and you cannot help out financially, move forward with faith! The Lord will provide you the necessary funds. We will be able to see the Lord's wonderful mighty hand and be amazed at his miracles.

For those who are starting in prison ministry, those who are called to do this ministry, they should listen to the advice of pastors experienced in prison ministry. It will help to avoid many needless errors. Familiarize yourself with the work of ministers who correspond with prisoners on a regular basis. Often they interact with prisoners more than by just visiting them a few times a year. What else can one do when the counseling time in the prison is so short and there are multiple issues to resolve with the minister?

Never be discouraged in the course of your communication with the prisoners. Be prepared to encounter different situations. Jesus once told his disciples: «Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation». It is very important to guard yourself spiritually in prayer and be alert! Remember those prisoners were traumatized, their hearts are broken, and they may suffer from mental issues. They are rejected, hated, and marginalized in society.

The task of the prisoner's minister is to reach out, explain that our Living God loves them, intercedes for them and forgives their sins, delivers and justifies them after their repentance: «**Produce fruit in keeping with repentance**» (Matthew 3:8).

Prisoners who have repented and received the Lord usually have many questions about the Bible. Answer their questions the best you can. If you cannot answer their questions, be honest and admit you do not know everything. If people start talking about denominations, arguments and divisions within the church — do not judge and do not rebuke other churches. Such unhealthy conversations may hurt the new believer. Remember that if even we struggle in our Christian walk with the Lord after hearing many sermons, how much more the prisoners who as new believers are isolated in the prison, enduring the hardship of loneliness among wicked and evil people under the devil's control.

Every prisoner can discern if you are an honest or false minister. Be honest and sincere, keep your promises, and express your love to each person. Remember that only love softens one's heart. Accept them as your brothers, support them with good words, prayers, and bring them an abundance of love. God's love prevails over everything!

Be encouraged, remember that when we minister to others, we cooperate with God, abide in His will, and fulfill His Great Commission on earth. We should rejoice about the ministry entrusted to us by the Lord! The day draws near when we will meet with the Lord, his church, and many of our prisoner brethren! No more walls, prisons, and doors. Our brothers will be freed, and together we will worship our God. What a wonderful meeting is it going to be! Praise God!

Prison minister
Sister LARISA, CA, USA.

It was a regular morning at the local clinic. An elderly man came to the doctor to have sutures removed from his finger. The man was in a rush and looked pretty worried. With a trembling voice, he asked when the doctor would see him, since he was afraid to be late for his next appointment at 9. The time was 8:30.

ABIDING LOVE

I answered him compassionately, telling him that all the doctors were busy at the moment and that the doctor would get to him in about an hour. However, when I saw a disturbing sadness in his eyes as well as his worried looking at the clock, my heart just moved inside me. I did not have any patients myself and decided to take care of this man. I saw that the wound had healed well, so it seemed OK to remove the sutures from the finger. I consulted a fellow doctor, and turned my attention to that patient. I began to converse with the man first:

— You are in such a rush, are you going to see another doctor?

— Not at all. At 9 o'clock I need to feed my ill wife. She is in the hospital now.

Out of medical interest, I asked, what happened to your wife? The elderly man said that his wife was suffering from Alzheimer's. Luckily, I finished removing the sutures on time. However, I was concerned that my patient wouldn't get to his wife on time. I asked him if his wife would be concerned if he was getting late to her. The man sadly nodded his head:

— No, she won't be worried. My wife has not recognized me for the last five

years. She does not even remember who I was for her in her life.

I replied to him in amazement: — And even though she does not recognize you, you keep running to see her every single day?

Then, the elderly man put his hand on my shoulder, smiled in a fatherly



manner, and answered me:

— Yes, unfortunately, she does not recognize me anymore. But I remember who she is for me. Only with her, I was happy all the days of my life.

I went to the window and gazed long at this elderly patient going down the hill. And only when somebody knocked at the door did I realize that I was crying. A shiver ran down my spine, and I said: «I always dreamed about such a love...»

My morning patient said that he was happy. His wife is also happy to have a husband like that. Not a mere passion or romance, but true love that is able to understand, forgive, and embrace — that's the true value that never ceases. We will be gone. But that love will live forever in somebody's heart.

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A LOST SON

It happened on the eve of the holidays. A young man returned from work in his vehicle. He looked forward to the rest he was going to have tomorrow! He wanted to sing aloud! It was a lovely day in spring.

Moms with their kids walked on the streets, teenagers gathered together, and the elderly enjoyed the warmth of the evening. Suddenly someone ran out to the road. The sound of a car striking something was heard. A young man jumped out of his car, and with horror he saw a child lying under the car. The whole world turned upside down for the driver.

One of the pedestrians who looked at the boy said that he is alive and must be taken to the hospital right away. It would take too long to wait for an ambulance to arrive, so the young man took the boy to the hospital in his car. At the hospital, the man ran to the doctor and promised to take care of the wounded boy. But the doctor was not in a rush. He invited the young man to the office and wrote down the amount of money he would need to pay him for the life-saving treatment. Then he would decide what to do with the patient.

— Fine, I will bring the money, but please, save the child, and I will be right back. I ask you, doctor. The child may die.

After a short period of time, the young man ran up the stairs to the doctor with the money in hand. But the doctor had not even cared to see the boy, who was left alone to suffer. Only one good-hearted nurse did her best to save the boy.

— Ok, let's see the patient now.

Tragedy was on the face of the confused doctor. A cry erupted from his chest. His heart was torn to pieces. It was his son dying. It was too late. Nobody could help the child.

The doctor's life ran across his eyes, and his hair became white. How many times had he taken dirty money from suffering people. Therefore, treat people as you would like to be treated.

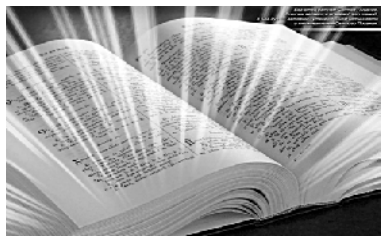
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PROVERBS

The Pastor's Word

HOW THE LORD SPEAKS



From the creation of man to the present day, God talked and talks with people. The Bible says this many times.

GOD SPOKE WITH:

1. **Noah** (Genesis 6:13-22; 7:1-4; 8:16, 17; 9:1-17).

2. **Abraham** (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-9, 18-21; 17:1-16, 19-22; 18:1-33; 21:12; 22:1, 2, 11, 15-18).

In two of God's conversations with Abraham, God anticipates further guidance which He intends to carry out in Abraham's life, thus obligating Abraham to listen to His voice. In both cases, God could have immediately indicated beforehand to Abraham what His will is, but each time He simply says he will talk to him about it later.

Gen. 12:1 The Lord had said to Abram, «Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you».

Gen. 22:1-2 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, «Abraham!» «Here I am», he replied. Then God said, «Take your son, your only son, whom you love — Isaac — and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you».

3. **Isaac and Rebecca** (Gen 25:21-23; 26:2-5, 24).

4. **Jacob** (Gen 28:11-16; 31:11-13; 32:24-29; 35:1, 9-13; 46:2-4).

5. **Joseph** (Gen 37:6-9).

6. **Job** (Job 6:10; 12:4; 23:12).

Job 6:10 Then I would still have this consolation — my joy in unrelenting pain — that I had not denied the words of the Holy One.

Job 12:4 «I have become a laughingstock to my friends, though I called on God and He answered — a mere laughingstock, though righteous and blameless!»

Job 23:12 I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily bread.

7. **David**
Ps. 77:6 I remembered my songs in the night. My heart meditated and my spirit asked.

Ps. 26:8 My heart says from You, «Seek His face!» Your face, Lord, I will seek.

New Testament:

Particularly in the New Testament, God took care to restore His relationship with people. For this purpose, the Holy Spirit is sent to counsel and guide the church as well as each of its individual members.

Eph. 5:24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Rom. 8:14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

Gal. 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Acts 10:19-20 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, «Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them».

Acts 9:6 Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.

THE LORD SPEAKS IN DIFFERENT WAYS:

1. Through dreams:

Acts 16:9-10 During the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, «Come over to Macedonia and help us». After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Job 33:14-18 For God does speak — now once, or twice — if one does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they slumber in their beds, He

may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, to turn them from wrongdoing and keep them from pride, to preserve them from the pit, their lives from perishing by the sword.

2. Through sickness.

People tend to remember God when they face pain. If in the past they never had time for Him, while on their sick bed they discover that they have lots of time to communicate with Him.

Job 33:19-26 Or, God might get their attention through pain, by throwing them on a bed of suffering, so they can't stand the sight of food, have no appetite for their favorite treats. They lose weight, wasting away to nothing, reduced to a bag of bones. They draw near to the pit, and their life to the messengers of death. Yet if there is an angel at their side, a messenger, one out of a thousand, sent to tell them how to be upright, and He is gracious to that person and says to God, «Spare them from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom for them — let their flesh be renewed like a child's; let them be restored as in the days of their youth» — then that person can pray to God and find favor with Him, they will see God's face and shout for joy; He will restore them to full well-being.

3. Through the circumstances in one's life.

Phil. 1:12-14 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

Jonah 1:4 Then the Lord sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.

Rom. 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

4. Through Unchristian people.

2 Chro. 35:20-24 After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Necho king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah marched out to meet him in battle. But Necho sent messengers to him, saying, «What quarrel is there, king of Judah, between you and me? It is not you I am attacking at this time, but the house with which I am at war. God has told me to hurry; so stop opposing God, who is with me, or He will destroy you». Josiah, however, would not turn away from him, but disguised himself to engage him in battle. He would not listen to what Necho had said at God's command but went to fight him on the plain of Megiddo. Archers shot King Josiah, and he told his officers, «Take me away; I am badly wounded». So they took him out of his chariot, put him in his other chariot and brought him to Jerusalem, where he died. He was buried in the tombs of his ancestors, and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him.

John 11:49-52 Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, «You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish». He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.

5. Through animals.

Num. 22:28-30 Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and

it said to Balaam, «What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?» Balaam answered the donkey, «You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now». The donkey said to Balaam, «Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?» «No», he said.

6. Through children.

2 Kings 5:2-4 Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, «If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy». Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said.

Mt. 21:16 «Do you hear what these children are saying?» they asked him. «Yes», replied Jesus, «have you never read, «From the lips of children and infants You, Lord, have called forth your praise?»

7. By casting lots.

Joshua 18:8 As the men started on their way to map out the land, Joshua instructed them, «Go and make a survey of the land and write a description of it. Then return to me, and I will cast lots for you here at Shiloh in the presence of the Lord».

Jonah 1:7 Then the sailors said to each other, «Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity». They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

Acts 1:23-26 So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, «Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs». Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

8. Through angels.

Joshua 5:13-15 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, «Are you for us or for our enemies?» «Neither», he replied, «but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come». Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, «What message does my Lord have for his servant?» The commander of the Lord's army replied, «Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy». And Joshua did so.

Judges 2:1-4 The angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bokim and said, «I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land I swore to give to your ancestors. I said, «I will never break my covenant with you, and you shall not make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars». Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this? And I have also said, «I will not drive them out before you; they will become traps for you, and their gods will become snares to you». When the angel of the Lord had spoken these things to all the Israelites, the people wept aloud.

Judges 13:3 The angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, «You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son».

9. Through viewing nature.

Rom. 1:20 For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse.

Job 37:2-3 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — His eternal power and divine nature — have

been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

Job 37:7 He seals the hand of every man, That all men may know His work.

10. Through the Bible.

2 Peter 1:19-21 We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

11. Through spiritual gifts.

To this day, God still utilizes His chosen vessels to speak His words through a prophecy, revelation, or vision. Use caution as there may be false prophets as well. Take it or leave it.

I recommend receiving an answer in your spirit before praying with a prophet. The prophecy should simply confirm what He has already told you.

Acts 11:27-30 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Acts 21:10-11 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, «The Holy Spirit says, «In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles».

12. Through the Spirit's internal desire and motivation.

Phil. 2:13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose.

Acts 20:22 And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.

13. Through an external voice which is heard by ordinary ears.

1 Sam. 3:4 Then the Lord called, «Samuel!» Samuel answered, «Here I am».

Acts 9:3-4 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, «Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?» He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him: Saul, Saul, do you persecute me?

14. Through an inner voice.

Sometimes this is a feeling, a soft nudge, or simply a thought. You know that it is the Holy Spirit speaking if you feel peace. If you ever feel fear, then it is the devil. His voice brings fear, confusion, anxiety.

Acts 10:19-20 Meanwhile, Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said to him, Behold, three men seek thee, Arise, and go down and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

Acts 16:6-7 Passing through Phrygia and Galatia, the Holy Spirit did not allow them to preach the word in Asia...

Acts 8:29 the Spirit said to Philip: Go near, and join yourself to this chariot.

15. Through Silence.

1 Sam. 14:37-38 So Saul asked God, «Shall I go down and pursue the Philistines? Will you give them into Israel's hand?» But God did not answer him that day. Saul

therefore said, «Come here, all you who are leaders of the army, and let us find out what sin has been committed today.

1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

16. Through Judgments.

When people who know right from wrong sin, God chastens them on earth so that they will not be condemned with the world. Through His judgments, He speaks to us. Whether at that moment He shows us where we went wrong or simply chastens us out of His love for us.

Heb. 12:6 because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as His son.

1 Cor. 11:28-31 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Is. 26:9 When Your judgments are made on the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

Job 37:13 ...He commands them (clouds) to go for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.

Ps. 119:7 I will praise You with uprightness of heart, learn Your righteous judgments.

17. Through undeserved mercy.

Is. 43:25 I am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and not remember your sins.

Is. 48:10 For the sake of My name defer My anger, for the sake of My praise I restrain it for you from destruction.

Is. 54: 8 ...with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you, say the LORD your Redeemer.

18. Through natural phenomena.

2 Kings 20:11 And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the Lord, and He brought the shadow back on the steps, where she descended the steps of Ahaz, ten degrees.

Job 38:1 The LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind...

Jonah 1:4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, and the ship was ready to break.

19. Urim and Thummim.

Num. 27:21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation.

1 Sam. 28:6 And when Saul inquired of Jehovah, Jehovah answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

20. Through many other ways. God has many other methods and means which He can use when He determines necessary.

Hebrews 1:1 God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways.

Revelation 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, «I am making everything new!» Then He said, «Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true».

Aleksandr BORISENKO.

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

Dear Readers of «Prisoner»!

Thank you for your letters and the questions that you ask in them. In this issue, we would like to address some of your questions in our column, «Topics for Consideration». We hope that these answers to your questions are instructive and practical. May the Lord endow you all with His wisdom.

From the Editor.

Have any of you considered where the roots of our first sins came from? What exactly was the starting point of our life of sin? We understand that we were all born with a sinful nature, since sin and death entered into the world through our ancient parents. The Bible clearly speaks of this: «Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned» (Rom. 5:12).

It turns out that every person has a sinful nature from birth, even though people only begin to understand the meaning of sin in accordance with their maturity and spiritual regeneration. Very few people trace the origin of their sin to their childhood. Generally people remember and analyze the sins of their youth, that period when the flesh is more capable of succumbing to enticements and temptations: some may remember their first cigarette or their first shot of vodka; some may also remember their first injection or inhaling of drugs; some might remember their first theft or act of fornication. And the more we try to trace the beginning of our sinful lives, the more our memory runs to our adolescence: to that period when a person not only imagines himself to be an adult, but is fully prepared to commit vulgar acts, offenses, and rebellion.

Many people say that in their childhood they were very obedient and polite, they even studied well in primary school without

any problems. What then happens to people, why is that by the time they're entering adolescence their sin appears in its full form? Is it really possible that out of obedient and good children there grows some kind of monsters, whose sin increases as their physical height increases? Is it possible that a good and obedient youth suddenly turns into a cad, a drunkard, a drug addict, and the like? No, of course not. In accordance with our sinful nature, sin especially takes shape in our childhood, the very period when children are popularly considered to be innocent and naive. And of course, there is an element of truth in this since naivety and



innocency are common in all children. Nevertheless, every sin in a person begins to form from earliest childhood.

Everything begins with the most harmless trickery of a child, when the child for one reason or another begins to deceive us. We, adults, may even find these seemingly harmless deceits humorous! Slowly but surely these children's tricks grow into lies, which at first seem to us to be insignificant and innocent. And the source of the children's deception and lying is often the parents themselves.

Probably many parents, without thinking about the consequences, have asked their children to tell a phone caller that they're not home. Or they have themselves told a caller that they are on vacation, while in fact they are at home. Such examples of lying

seem harmless, but children notice this and they suck it all up like sponges. There are no degrees of lying, just as there no degrees of sin. After all, a lie gave birth to the first sin in the Garden of Eden.

The Bible tells us, «Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil» (Gen. 3:1-5).

And here it is — the source of the first lie, when the devil cunningly told a «sweet» lie. He used trickery in his first question saying: «Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?» When he got his desired response from Eve, he immediately inserted his «sweet» lie, which Eve, unfortunately, was unable to resist. From this we see that the root of sin was hidden within a lie.

Every one who has even once analyzed their sin and its origins has seen clearly that a lie was involved to some degree or other. There are no sins in which there are no lies. Unfortunately, this vice is rooted within mankind from childhood: first, an innocent trick; later, brazen and blatant lies. If parents don't lead their child to God in due time, and do not pass down the knowledge of Him, then as a rule, the result is always the same: a deceitful, sinful life, which fully pleases

the devil. There's a reason that this is said about him: «He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it» (John. 8:44).

It's too late for handwringing and wondering what your son and daughter have become when they begin to be rude to you, drink alcohol and do drugs. For a life of sin does not begin on its own. It is formed from earliest childhood. It is not enough to expose the lies of your children, even in a timely manner. You yourself, first of all, need to be a good example and not to lie, because: «In the way of righteousness is life: and in the pathway thereof there is no death» (Prov. 12:28).

LIES

How painful it is when you hear The blatant lies of others... Alas, they lie, not understanding The injury is theirs. Lying is an infection of the masses, Practically everyone has lied: One lies for profit, Thinking only of himself... One, out of pity for another, Lies to hide the painful truth... But in so doing so he runs into The dead end of an opposing lie. If we at least did not lie to ourselves, Each one of us would discover his own lies. For to live by the truth, Unfortunately, not all people are able. The truth is not desirable to many, Because it brings light! Some may even find it strange, That the truth can bring so much pain. Therefore how needful is it by truth And faith for us to live for God! To lie is easy, it is not hard — For such is the whole kingdom of lies... Instruction on deception, We carry through the centuries... Those who say this is not so Lie to themselves and God.

I. GORIK.

I. DEFINITION

1. The terminology of the Old and New Testaments.

In the Old Testament, two words are commonly used to express the meaning of a «lie» or «deception»:

The Hebrew noun used in the Old Testament for «lie» is **sheqer**. **Zechariah 13:3**: «You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the Lord».

The Hebrew verb «to lie» is **kazabh**. **Job 34:6a**: «Should I lie concerning my right?» **Micah 2:11**: «If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, «I will prophesy to you of wine and drink», even he would be the prattler of this people».

In the **New Testament**, the word most often used in this sense is the Greek word **pseudos**. The meaning of this word is translated as follows: «to speak falsely», «invent (fabricate)», «make false statements». **John 8:44**: «When he [the devil] lies, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar and the father of lies».

2. What is a lie?

Definition: a lie is a deliberate distortion of the truth. However, it should be noted that a lie is not limited to words.

• An entire life lived for the sake of false principles is a lie; so also a life of hypocrisy.

• Idolatry is a lie.

• A false value system, and a worldview built upon such a system, is also a lie.

• Self-deception and delusion are common lies.

• False hopes and expectations are lies.

• Hypocrisy, flattery and a double life are also examples of lies.

• Denying the divinity of Jesus Christ is a lie. **1 John 2:22**: «Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son».

3. The origin of lies.

Lies are the opposite of the truth and never come from the truth. **1 John 2:21**: «I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT LYING

that no lie is of the truth». If no lie comes from God, who is Truth, then where did lies come from?

The origin of lies goes back centuries and is directly related to the personality of Satan, whom the Word of God calls a liar and the father of lies. **John 8:44**: «You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it». **Acts 5:3**: «But Peter said, «Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?»

The history of the Fall of Adam and Eve in **Genesis 3** is an illustration of the fact that Satan is not just a liar, but the father of lies. It is also the first example of a lie, the evidence of which was preserved for us in Scripture.

But this is not the only example of a lie in the Bible.

II. EXAMPLES OF LIES AND DECEPTION IN THE BIBLE

In the Bible there are many examples of lies. There are lies for good purposes and lies for evil. There are lies of the righteous and lies of the wicked. There are lies of men and women. We suggest you take a look at just some of these examples:

1. Abraham.

Genesis 12:10-13: «Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land. And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, «Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, «This is his wife»; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say you

are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you». **Genesis 20:2**: «Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, «She is my sister». And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah».

2. Isaac.

Genesis 26:6-7: «So Isaac dwelt in Gerar. And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, «She is my sister»; for he was afraid to say, «She is my wife», because he thought, «Lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold».

3. Jacob.

Genesis 27:22-24: «So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, «The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau». And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. Then he said, «Are you really my son Esau?» He said, «I am».

4. The midwives in Egypt.

Exodus 1:15-19: «Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiprah and the name of the other Puah; and he said, «When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live». But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, «Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?» 19 And the midwives said to Pharaoh, «Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them».

5. Michal — David's wife.

1 Samuel 19:11-17: «Saul also sent messengers to David's house

to watch him and to kill him in the morning. And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, «If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed». So Michal let David down through a window. And he went and fled and escaped. And Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, put a cover of goats' hair for his head, and covered it with clothes. So when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, «He is sick». Then Saul sent the messengers back to see David, saying, «Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him». And when the messengers had come in, there was the image in the bed, with a cover of goats' hair for his head. Then Saul said to Michal, «Why have you deceived me like this, and sent my enemy away, so that he has escaped?» And Michal answered Saul, «He said to me, «Let me go! Why should I kill you?»

6. David.

1 Samuel 21: 10-15: «Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said to him, «Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances, saying: «Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?» Now David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. So he changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard. Then Achish said to his servants, «Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?»

7. Rahab the harlot.

Joshua 2:3-6: «So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, «Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your

house, for they have come to search out all the country». Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, «Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them». But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof».

A lie is a distortion of the truth, or, in other words, a lie hides the truth. The purpose of hiding the truth from different people varies. The above examples show this to be the case. Of all the examples of lies, the midwives in Egypt and the harlot, Rahab, were justified in concealing the truth. In both cases, their lies saved the lives of God's people.

In other cases, a lie was used to cover weakness or sin. As for the lies of Ananias and Sapphira, described in chapter 5 of the Acts of the Apostles, the Word of God calls them, first of all, a sin against God. **Acts 5:3-4**: «But Peter said, Ananias! Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land? What, did it not yours if it was sold, not in your power? Why did you put it in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God». This lie has cost them their lives.

Scripture is replete with examples and illustrations of lies and their consequences. The Bible gives examples of different types of lies:

• In the case of the seduction of Eve by the Serpent, the lie is a half-truth (**Genesis 3**).

• The lie of Cain in **Genesis 4:9** is an example of an evasive answer to a direct question.

• Jacob's deceiving his father in **Genesis 27:19** is an example of a deliberate and premeditated lie.

(Continued on page 8)

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

My life is not much different from that of other children from disadvantaged families. My father drank, and my mother was sick (her kidneys didn't work well). I was the youngest of eight children and was left alone to myself.

Christians visited the prison. Among them I met an old friend whom I had not seen for almost 10 years. After talking with this man, by the hearing of faith, God changed me beyond recognition: I was freed from smoking, profanity, and my drug addiction.

NOW I SERVE THE CHILDREN

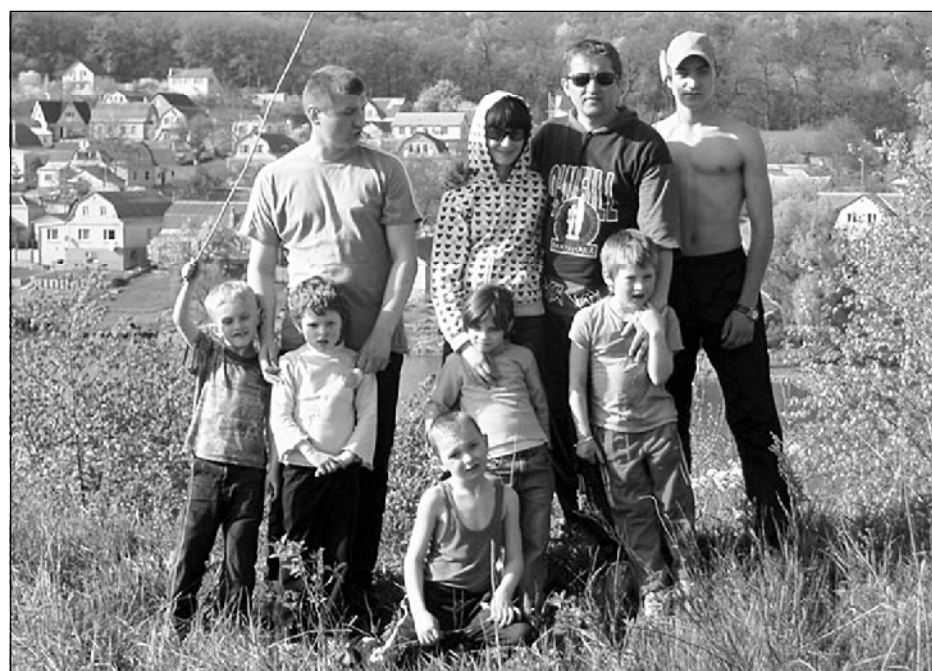
We lived in Novaya Kakhovka. I grew up on the streets. I started to smoke at the age of six, and when I was eleven, I experimented with marijuana. At the age of 16 I became heavily addicted to opium. After a few months I realized that I was totally addicted and could no longer break free by my own strength and will. After three years, I was charged for theft and possession of drugs and sentenced to five years.

After serving my time I was released, but still I wasn't willing to change my lifestyle. Therefore, soon after I received a six-year sentence. It was after my third conviction that I first began to seriously consider the meaning of life. God noticed this and began to lead me. In Olshanka prison I came to understand in my heart that I needed to repent, although I still led a criminal lifestyle. Soon a few

Miraculously, I was released a year and four months early. While still in prison, I had begun to serve God. I boldly went wherever I could and together with my friends we preached about salvation in Jesus Christ.

Now I am fully confident that God brought me out of jail. During the beginning of my term I committed violations that eliminated any hope of early release. But when I came before the parole board, these violations were not found in my case. All the violations had disappeared miraculously.

After my release, I went straight to Kiev to a rehabilitation center. At first I had doubts about whether I should stay there. I thought, «I have been a Christian for three years, why do I need rehabilitation?» But I stayed and had



no regrets. I soon became involved in the ministry of the church, helping children in orphanages. I was noticed and was offered a job in one of Kiev's orphanages. Six months later I got another job at an international charity organization called «Children's Rescue Service» as a tutor for teenagers. Then I met my future wife, Nadia. I graduated from school with a

diploma in social work.

Today I am working in community service for children in Kiev. I am also helping in the prison ministry together with other believers, visiting prisons, testifying to the prisoners about my former life and how it has changed through faith in Jesus Christ.

Gregory MAMASUYEV,
Ukraine.

I was born and raised in Kiev. My parents — quite decent people — more than once had to pick me up from the local police department. After finishing school, I supposedly gained common

another life, I partied (vodka, drugs, and promiscuity); and in between, I carefully planned burglaries and robberies. I regularly went to the gym and engaged in boxing. On the advice of friends I



sense. I enrolled in a private university to study law, which my parents took as a good sign. However, I wasn't ready to leave the criminal lifestyle. Together with my street buddies we engaged in illegal activities to obtain money. Our criminal group grew.

During that time I lived three different lifestyles: in one life, I was a student; in

moved from the university to the Police Academy. Seeing new opportunities, I asked to join the army in the sports division. I was able to take courses at the academy, and I had time to take care of my own «business». The pace of life I had chosen for myself left no time for rest. I slept but four hours a day, drank

AFTER PRISON I WAS AGAIN ADMITTED TO THE POLICE ACADEMY

regularly, and became an alcoholic.

Our gang was busted in 2001, after I had served in the army for six months and had just completed my 5th course at the academy. I had no luck bribing my way out.

Once in jail, at the age of 23, I first began to think about my life: «What if I die tomorrow?» This question repeatedly came back to me while in a prison in Volynsk region. One evening I was alone in the wood-working shop in the prison. I climbed onto one of the workbenches, and with my legs dangling, I stared long into the fire in the stove, thinking about my life. I thought how all my deeds and all my aspirations were only evil, how many people hated me, even my own brother. If only I could change! God, help me, I prayed!

The next morning I woke up in the prison barracks. I did not recognize myself because in my heart, instead of irritation and anger, I

experienced peace and quiet. After that, I started visiting the gatherings of Christians. After my release (two years early, by the grace of God!), I went to a rehabilitation center.

Today I am in the ministry responsible for the prevention of criminal behavior among young people (alcoholism, drug abuse, early sexual activity, etc.). I am also a deacon of the church and the head of the youth ministry. Eventually I finished and graduated from the Police Academy, which is almost impossible for someone with a criminal record. At church, I met my future wife, Helen. Now we are raising two wonderful boys named Ephraim and Elisha.

I want to reach out to all the guys who have now, as I once had, eyes burning with lust for easy money. Friends, you are going the wrong way, which is sure to lead to a fall. Stop before it's too late. No matter where you are now, only Jesus Christ

will be able to change your life.

Know that when God gives you something, He gives in full measure. When a hardened criminal who was thinking only how to deceive and betray and cash in on someone's trust, suddenly repents, the Lord forgives him or her. God no longer remembers the wrong deeds, but on the contrary, will abundantly bless a repentant man or woman. He changes a person's nature, and takes care of his spiritual and physical well-being. Is this just? «Yes!» says the Lord. «Good» people who do not consider themselves to be sinners try to satisfy their souls but can never get enough. After all, as it is written in the Bible, the only source of happiness is Jesus Christ in whom is all the fullness of life. And all you need to do to receive forgiveness is to come to Him in repentance.

Vladimir MIKHAILENKO,
Ukraine.

WHY WE ARE UNLUCKY IN LOVE

A certain young man was unlucky in love. Somehow he always came across girls that were unsuitable for him. Some he considered ugly, others silly, still others grouchy. Tired of searching for the ideal girl, the young man decided to seek advice from a wise man.

Having listened carefully to the young man, the old man said: «I see that your problem is serious. But tell me, how do you treat your mother?»

The young man was very surprised.

«What does my mother have to do with this? Well, I do not know, she often angers me with her foolish and intrusive questions,

complaints and requests. But I can say that I love her».

The wise man paused, shook his head and continued the conversation:

«Well, I will tell you one important secret of love. There is such a thing as happiness, and it is hidden in your precious heart. And the seed of your success in love has been planted by a very important person in your life — your mother. And how you treat her determines how you will treat all other women in the world. Because the love of your mother is the first love that took you into its caring embrace. This is your first image of a woman.

If you love and honor your mother, then you will learn to appreciate and respect all women. And then you will see that someday you will meet a woman who will respond to your attention with gentle eyes, a gentle smile and a kind word. You will not be prejudiced against women. You will see them as they truly are. Our attitude towards our parents is the measure of our happiness».

The young man bowed with gratitude before the wise man. But the old man gave him another piece of advice: «And secondly, look for a girl who loves and honors her father!»



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

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

CHANGE WITHOUT THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IMPOSSIBLE

I was born in the city of Khmelnytskyi and grew up in a happy family. My parents are still an example of a good family to me. Despite that, I was really drawn to the streets, to which I gave all my time. At 13 years old, I began to smoke weed. My buddy had a private house in the center of the city, and a garden where we grew the hemp. We organized its sale, money appeared — and partying started in night clubs and in discos. Then we wanted something new, and we switched to amphetamines.

After school I went to a university and wanted to major in the Humanities and Education. When I was studying as a freshman, I became addicted to heroin. A few months later, when the drug suddenly disappeared from the city, I switched to the local opium. I realized that I had become a drug addict, and I did not want to live that life. Hospitals, Chinese medicine, fortunetellers, lessons with a professor of psychiatry (incidentally, also my teacher) — it was all to no avail.

At 21, my health was ruined. I was wanted by the police for fraud,

all my friends turned away, and my parents were close to it. Then I grabbed another opportunity I was born in the city of Khmelnytskyi and grew up in a happy family. My parents are still an example of a good family to me. Despite that, I was really drawn to the streets, to which I gave all my time. At 13 years old, I began to smoke weed. My buddy had a private house in the center of the city, and a garden where we grew the hemp. We organized its sale, money appeared — and partying started in night clubs and in discos. Then we wanted something new, and we switched to amphetamines.

Once a guy called me with whom I had started using drugs. All this time he injected drugs into himself and became very debased. Imagine, at 24 years — two teeth in the mouth, many problems, parents who turned away, in debt to everyone, everyone was looking for him. He was given a term, but he managed to escape from the courtroom. For a while he was gone, and suddenly he was calling. He did not even testify about God, we just talked about life, but after this



conversation I saw the work of God. I felt in his words there is life, he rejoices. And I said, I do not care where he is: whether this is an organization, a sect or a church. I realized that I wanted to live like him. I want to have a life inside of me!

This was how I ended up in a Christian rehabilitation center where I was assigned to the men's hospital in the village of Pochuyki. During prayer I knelt and said a few words: «Lord, forgive me, because I am a sinner». At that moment I felt that I became clean and free, my life began with a blank sheet. God filled me with His peace. To change that way without the power of the Holy Spirit is impossible.

After a course of rehabilitation, I became a minister of the rehabilitation center. I graduated and became a missionary. God gave me a lovely wife, Oksana, and entrusted me a ministry in a church. Today I am a pastor in the church «The Voice of Hope», in the city of Bakhchisarai, and I thank the Lord for everything.

Konstantin MAMCHUR,
Ukraine.

HE CHANGED MY DESTINY

My name is Alexander. I was born in a happy family, was interested in sports, but I tasted the romance of street life really early in life. At 13 years old I was swallowed up by discos, alcohol, smoking of drugs, theft. Drugs demanded money, and I procured it through crimes. And only by the grace of God did I not end up in jail. I realized that something very bad was happening in my life, but consoled myself with the thought that I would go into the army and there take control of myself, but until then I would try everything.

In tenth grade, I was already involved in drug trafficking, and was obsessed with gambling. At 17 years old, I first injected drugs into myself, as smoking grass no longer satisfied me. I went into the army with severe drug and alcohol addiction. Of course, the armed forces were not able to change my human nature.



After the army, my lawless life started again. I tried different types of drugs, which damaged my mind and caused constant depression. Several times I tried to quit on my own, but all to no avail.

Now I understand that God kept me safe, inexplicably: I experienced several accidents — two cars and a motorcycle beyond repair, but I survived. People said that I was born blessed, but I thought I was just lucky. Although sometimes I turned to God, the way I had been taught as a child by my grandmother. Truth be told, I rarely thanked Him and instead I lamented and even accused Him because of my problems.

The path of sin led me to a crossroads: my relatives gave me the right to choose — a psychiatric hospital, a prison or rehab. None of the offers suited me, and I swore to quit on my own. The human will lasted for seven months. After my breakdown, I realized that it was either-or. I packed my bags to go to rehab.

On the way to Bucha my friends advised me to stop at Karyernaya, where I ended up staying. There I was captivated by the Pochuyki village, where God gave me freedom, gave me the birth from above and baptized me with the Holy Spirit.

I went through rehabilitation and began to help in the ministry, and a year later went as a missionary to Bakhchisarai. A completely different life began: I became a minister in a Bible School, helped the pastor of a newly formed church, and was responsible for the rehabilitation and youth ministry. When I returned to Kiev, something remarkable was waiting for me at my home church. The Lord had prepared a wonderful life partner for me. Julia does not have anything in her past such as I had experienced, but she truly loves the Lord and serves in the church as a translator for the brothers and sisters from abroad, as well as helping in the children's ministry.

I am very grateful to the Lord. I see His great blessings and powerful changes in my life. I believe that soon God will give an inheritance (service) in the church and later bless our family.

Alexander GERMASH, Ukraine, <http://skinia.org.ua/svidetelstva>

I was born and grew up in Lviv. Already at age 15 I decided to leave my home for an apartment and live independently. I thought that without parental care life will be better. At that time I already had something to be proud of: I was a silver medalist in freestyle and classic wrestling. I saw before me a beautiful future, full of victories and winning. But soon I was noticed by people from the underworld. I was hired as a driver for one criminal authority. We became friends, I joined his team. When the boss got hooked on drugs, I followed his example and became dependent for some long and terrible 12 years.

After learning about my problem, many times my parents persuaded me to go to the hospital, but an IV and cleansing did not help me. Once my mother said: «You need to break away from bad company, and change your

place of residence. Come to Italy». (She worked there for seven years.) I agreed. I arrived in a foreign country, in a strange city, but already

I COULD NOT ESCAPE FROM MYSELF EVEN IN ITALY

in 20 minutes I was offered to buy drugs there.

I could not escape from myself. I returned home even more dependent. The time had come when my the closest people in my life completely gave up.

My boss was shot dead, the money ran out, and my parents no longer allowed me to enter the house because I might carry out and sell the last of what was left. In the winter, in the cold, I ended up in the attic, completely alone, not needed by anyone in this world. I understood that that was all — there is no further way. I do not

remember how long I sat there in a daze, when suddenly I remembered a recent call from an old friend, a drug addict like me,

Slava Kohut. He said over the phone that God freed him from dependence, and he invited me to a rehab center in Kiev. This call proved to be the straw for which I tried to reach. My last chance became my salvation. It has been five years now since I was healed. God has blessed me with my beloved wife, Alena, who also had time to evaluate how sweet the taste of freedom from drugs is. We have two wonderful daughters — Renata and Elina. Glory to God!

Marian MIKHAYLISHIN,
Ukraine.

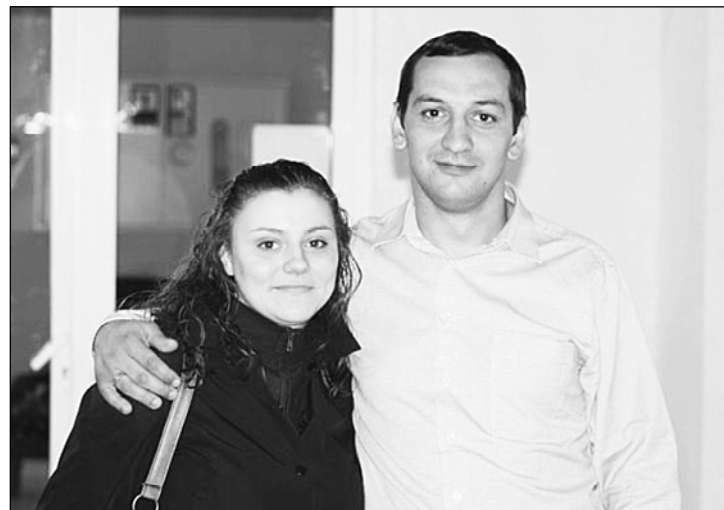
FIRST INJECTION AT 13 YEARS OLD

In my life, all the bad things began too early. My mom was engaged in drug dealing, my father drank, and they did not have time to raise children. My brother Valera and I were pulled into the streets, where at age 13 I first tried drugs.

A year later I made my first attempt at suicide, and at 16 years old I realized that my life was already coming to an end.

I used a psychoactive drug (methamphetamine). Older addicts who served in prison, said: «Girl, stop, or otherwise you will die or go crazy». But there was no stopping.

Despite all this, I believed since my childhood that there is a God. My mother told me about Jesus and said



that when we die, we all go to heaven (of course that is not true, because after death all sinners go to hell for eternal damnation). «And where will you go, Alena, a juvenile drug addict?» — This was the question I asked myself when I first began to talk with Christians.

When I could no longer bend my arms because of the injections and «blowing», I called a church minister, Damien Nazarenko, but

three times something prevented us from meeting. Then I overdosed, I felt that I was dying, and asked my mother to call the Christians to our home. After their prayer I fell asleep, and the next day I myself went to their church service. There I sincerely repented of my sins and determined to change my life. And God gave me that opportunity. Glory be to Him!

Alena MIKHAYLISHIN
(wife of Marian), Ukraine.

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

(Continued from page 5)

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT LYING

✿ The lie of Joseph's brothers when asked by their father about their younger brother (**Genesis 37:31-32**) is a prime example of the deep depravity of human hearts, which knowingly lie and deceive.

✿ Oftentimes even good people have given in to the temptation to lie. The story about Peter's denial is an example of a lie that was supported by an oath, since Peter swore that he did not know Jesus (**Matthew 26:72**).

III. PEOPLE WHO LIE ARE «FALSE»

In the Holy Scriptures, the word «false» is often used to describe persons who lie:

1. **False witnesses** (pseudo-martus).

False witnesses are people who swear falsely and give incorrect testimonies.

Matthew 26:59-60: «The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward». Providing false evidence was prohibited by the ninth commandment of God's Law. **Exodus 20:16:** «Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor».

2. **False prophets** (pseudo-prophetes).

False prophets are people who prophesy falsely in the name of the Lord God.

Matthew 7:15: «Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves». **Jeremiah 23:16-26:** «This is what the Lord Almighty says: Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord... How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies, and who prophesy the deceit of their own heart?»

3. **False teachers** (pseudo-didaskalos).

False teachers are people who teach incorrect, unbiblical doctrines.

2 Peter 2:1-2: «But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of».

4. **False brothers** (pseudadelphos).

False brothers are evil people who have crept into the fellowship of Christians and pretend to be brothers and sister in the Lord.

2 Corinthians 11:26: «On frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers».

Galatians 2:4-5: «This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you».

5. **False apostles** (pseudapostolos).

False apostles are people who pretend to be sent by God, but in reality they are false brothers, false teachers and false prophets. **2 Corinthians 11:13:** «For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ».

6. **False Christs** (pseudo-christoi).

False Christs are wicked people who declare themselves to be the Christ — the Messiah who was promised by God to be sent to His people. False Christs pretend to be intermediaries between God and man. **Matthew 24:24:** «For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect». **Mark 13:22:** «For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect».

IV. GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS LYING

Everything said above testifies that lying is a universal sin.

1. Lying is a universal sin.

Lying is a sin that of which all mankind are guilty. **Psalm 58:3:** «The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies».

All people without exception are guilty of lying. It is possible that you rarely speak lies and you do not like to lie to anybody, but this does not make you innocent of the sin of lying. During one of our discussions, a man claimed that he

had never lied. When he was asked: «Have you ever been in a situation where a person telephoned you, and you asked someone to tell the person that you were not home?», he smiled a guilty smile and said: «Yes».

Thus, we are all guilty of lying. It is a part of our nature from Adam. And a believer in Jesus Christ should get rid of lying. **Colossians 3:8-10:** «But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the

be found in their mouth; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid». **Ephesians 4:25:** «Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another».

✿ Have no respect for liars, and not seek their company. **Psalm 40:4:** «Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies». **Psalm 101:7:** «He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight».

✿ Pray for deliverance from the sin. **Psalm 119:29:** «Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously». **Psalm 120:2:** «Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue».

C. The wicked, according to God's Word:

✿ Love lies. **Psalm 52:3:** «Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness».

✿ Help those who lie. **Psalm 62:4:** «They only plan to thrust him down from his high position. They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse».

✿ Seek for lies. **Psalm 4:26:** «O ye sons of men, how long will you turn my glory in to shame? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?»

✿ Listen to lies. **Proverbs 17:4:** «A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips; and a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue».

3. The punishment for lying.

A lie is a sin. Every sin is punished. The Lord strictly punishes one for a lie. **Proverbs 6:12-15:** «A naughty person, a wicked man, walketh with a froward mouth. He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers; frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy».

Additionally, the Bible warns every liar that:

✿ Liars shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. **Revelations 21:27:** «And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but

they which are written in the Lamb's book of life». **Revelations 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, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosever loveth and maketh a lie».

✿ Liars will be thrown into the lake of fire. **Revelations 21:8:** «But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death».

✿ Liars shall be destroyed. **Psalm 5:6:** «Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man». The destruction will come from the Lord!

✿ Liars shall not receive mercy. **Proverbs 19:5:** «A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape».

✿ Liars are denied communion with the Lord. **Psalm 24:3-5:** «Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God their Savior».

We have seen that lying is a universal sin, and every person is guilty of it. Everybody says lies in childhood, in teenage years, as adults, and in old age. Everybody lies with reasons and without reasons. Everybody says lies on purpose and without purpose. Everyone knows that lying is not good, but lies are spoken anyways by every mouth.

It is very simple and clear in theory: Do not lie. However, it is much more complicated in practice. What should we do? We suggest you to try to create an environment where you could not say a lying word. A lie is the closing and opening ring in the chain of our sins. A lie either covers sins already made or is the first step to another sin. Try not to do those things that will make you ashamed before our Lord God, other people and yourself. That way you will not be put into a situation where you would feel inclined to lie. Try not to sin and do such things that you will have to cover with a lie later on.

Material for the newspaper «Prisoner» was kindly provided by the Bible Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada

<http://www.cogmtl.net/Articles/095.htm>

CONSCIENCE

How inescapable is your power, You are a thunderstorm to lawbreakers, a comforter to the innocent. Oh, conscience! You are the Law and the Prosecutor of our deeds, You are a Witness and a Judge!

V. Zhukovsky (1814)

Who is not familiar with that inner voice called «conscience», which either accuses and torments us from within or gives us a sense of gladness and satisfaction for what we have done? This is our internal controller and judge who is impartial and cannot be bought off. Even as a hungry man cannot convince himself that he is full, and a tired woman cannot convince herself that she is full of energy, so we cannot make ourselves believe that we have done good and right when our conscience tells us the opposite.



has been developed to some level». Social science dictionary: «Conscience is a moral understanding of what is good and what is evil».

I. WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?

1. Definitions from dictionaries.

Ushakov's Dictionary: «Conscience is an inner analysis, an inner realization of the morality of our actions, a sense of moral responsibility for our behavior».

Brockhouse and Ephron's Dictionary: «Conscience is a moral realization of a person, expressed as an evaluation of one's own and other persons' actions, based on one's own criteria of good and evil».

Vladimir Dal's Dictionary: «Conscience is a moral realization or moral sense in a person; an inner understanding of good and evil; a private place of soul where each action is evaluated and either approved or condemned; the ability to see differences in the nature of an action; a sense that leads to the truth and good and prevents from a lie and evil; involuntary love for good and truth; instinctive truth that

What the definitions above have in a common is the idea that conscience is a moral understanding of a human being. Thus, **conscience is that ability to discern between good and evil which motivates a person to make a conscious choice for good.**

2. The nature of conscience.

Some people refer to conscience as a natural instinct of a person. Others think of it as a part of the mind. Some describe it as a part of the human will, while others suggest that conscience comes from one's feelings and emotions. Are these ideas right?

A. Is conscience a natural human instinct?

If conscience was an instinct, it would make people choose only those things that are beneficial and pleasing, and which enable them to win the fight for survival.

However, it is well known that oftentimes conscience makes people choose things that are not beneficial and pleasing to them. In evolutionary terms, conscience is a human weakness. It does not make a person stronger; in fact, it guarantees a complete loss in the cruel fight for survival where only the strongest and fittest win. Moreover, the theory of evolution fails to explain the existence of conscience in human beings.

B. Is conscience the product of our mind?

A human mind by itself cannot distinguish moral from immoral actions. In order to do so, it must be led by the conscience. Without a conscience, our mind can only distinguish between smart and foolish actions, between appropriate and inappropriate, rational and irrational, advantageous and disadvantageous.

Only conscience makes the mind evaluate an action according to moral values, without regard to material benefits. How can conscience do it? Only with the help of moral principles acting on the mind.

C. Is conscience the product of human will?

Conscience plays a great role in making choices and influencing them. However, do not suppose that human will and conscience are the same. Human will is the ability to make a conscious choice. Being influenced by his conscience, a person understands what good behavior is (morally) in a certain situation. However, each person has a choice to behave according to his conscience or against it. If conscience and will were inseparable, then everyone would act according to his conscience. However, this is not what happens in real life.

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(Continued from page 8)

D. Is conscience the product of our feelings?

Conscience is not the product of our feelings and emotions. But, oddly enough, the conscience is able to cry out to our feelings, even as it appeals to our reason. How does this happen? Conscience prompts a person to do right and avoid doing evil, by accompanying good deeds with a sense of joy and satisfaction, and bad deeds with a sense of shame, fear, and mental torment, which all are often referred to as a *“guilty conscience”*.

In summary, we have shown that the conscience is a certain substance that can appeal to our feelings, emotions, will, and wisdom, and prompt us to act in accordance with what we believe is good and correct.

3. The origin of conscience.

If the conscience is not a natural instinct, then how do we explain its origin? The existence of the conscience bears witness to God the Creator, who when creating man made him in His own image and likeness (*Genesis 1:27*), putting God’s holy law (the ability to distinguish between good and evil) and the desire to do the truth in his heart.

But sin ruined God’s image and likeness in man. The conscience damaged by sin has become less sensitive, having lost the ability and power to act in accordance with the requirements of God’s inner law. And the more sin multiplied on earth, the weaker the voice of conscience sounded.

If man had not been damaged and corrupted by sin, he would not have needed God’s written law. He would have relied on his conscience, which would have guided all of his decision making, as the Lord willed. But a conscience that was spoiled by sin ceased to be the standard of morality, and man, led by his passions, cursed and did not heed the voice of conscience. Therefore, there was a need for the written law. With the assistance of the law, the Lord began to renew the human conscience, making it sensitive and capable of distinguishing between good and evil.

The law, however, was given until a preordained time of which the Lord spoke through the prophecies of men of faith. *Jeremiah 31:33* says, *“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people”*. (The same was said to the Jews in *Hebrews 8:10; 10:16*).

This prophecy relates to the time when the image and likeness of God will be restored in humanity, when the Law of God will be written on the heart, and when the conscience will once again be the Divine standard of morality.

II. BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF THE WORKINGS OF CONSCIENCE

1. The Old Testament view of conscience

The word «conscience» is not used in the Old Testament, but the concept of conscience is present. As a rule of thumb, the Old Testament associates a person’s conscience with the heart. For example, King David’s conscience convicted him and pushed him to repentance when he numbered the people. *“But David’s heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to the Lord, ‘I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly’”* (*2 Samuel 24:10*).

We are also inclined to consider the Old Testament expression, «the fear of the Lord», as nothing other than the Old Testament’s representation of a pure conscience which moves a person to live and act according to the moral standards of God’s Law. *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding”* (*Psalms 111:10*).

Consider the mutual connection between the fear of the Lord and the fulfillment of God’s law. This is why the Word of God calls a person to let God’s law influence the formation of their conscience.

“My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man” (*Proverbs 3:1-4*).

“My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart” (*Proverbs 7:1-3*).

The formation of the conscience is a

complex and painful process that demands time, strength, and humility.

2. The New Testament view of conscience

The New Testament uses the Greek word *suneidesis*, which is translated «conscience» or «consciousness».

When speaking of the conscience, the New Testament distinguishes between a clear and guilty conscience.

A. Clear conscience.

“I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers” (*2 Timothy 1:3*).

“So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man” (*Acts 24:16*).

“Keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander” (*1 Peter 3:16*).

B. Guilty conscience.

“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (*Hebrews 10:22*).

“To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted” (*Titus 1:15*).

“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron” (*1 Timothy 4:1-2*).

What is a seared conscience? The first time a person sins, he experiences remorse. If he continues to sin, this sin destroys the conscience within that person — that particle of divine nature. Obviously, the conscience does not literally disappear, but it stops functioning normally since its voice is being ignored. The most clear Biblical example of people whose consciences were seared are the people who lived before the Great Flood.

3. Biblical Examples of the workings of conscience

A. Old Testament

• **Joseph’s conscience** did not permit him to commit adultery with Potiphar’s wife. During the temptation, his conscience led him to say, *“How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”* (*Genesis 39:9*).

• The fear of the Lord did not permit David to take advantage of the opportunity to kill King Saul. *“So David and Abishai went to the army by night. And there lay Saul sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head, and Abner and the army lay around him. Then Abishai said to David, ‘God has given your enemy into your hand this day. Now please let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice’*. But David said to Abishai, *“Do not destroy him, for who can put out his hand against the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless?”* And David said, *“As the Lord lives, the Lord will strike him, or his day will come to die, or he will go down into battle and perish”* (*1 Samuel 26:7-10*).

• When **King Saul** found out that David spared his life by not using the chance to kill him while he was sleeping, his guilty conscience led King Saul to repent and stop chasing David. *“Then Saul said, ‘I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do you harm, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Behold, I have acted foolishly, and have made a great mistake’* (*1 Samuel 26:21*).

• While painfully suffering, **Job** loudly proclaimed to his friends, *“Far be it from me that I should declare you right; Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go. My heart does not reproach any of my days”* (*Job 27:5-6*). We see that the righteous Job understood that the reason of his suffering was not in himself but rather in some plan that only God could comprehend; hence, he trusted in God’s mercy with boldness. This ties in with what it written in *1 John 3:19-22*, *“We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in*

whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight”.

• **King David**, infatuated with Bathsheba’s beauty, fell into sin while going against his conscience. He acknowledged his sin of adultery only after the prophet Nathan convicted him, speaking to his conscience through a parable (*2 Samuel 12:1-14*). Coming to his senses, David sharply felt his gnawing guilty conscience. He poured out his pain, repentance, and plea for forgiveness in *Psalms 51*.

• An example of people with seared consciences are **the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah**, who descended to the depths of corruption. *“Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the*

near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, ‘Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of business’». His disciples remembered that it was written, *“Zeal for Your house will consume me”* (*John 2:13-17*).

• **The story of Zaccheus, the tax collector**. The tax collector Zaccheus was deeply touched by Jesus Christ’s love and mercy. In return he did what his conscience was guiding him to do: he repaid those whom he had injured and from whom he had stolen out of his sinful desires. *“Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was,*

and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, ‘Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house’. And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner’». Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, *“Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much”* (*Luke 19:1-8*).

• **The story of Peter’s denial**. On the night when Jesus was betrayed, the apostle Peter denied Christ out of fear, but upon hearing the rooster he remembered what the Lord had said. Being convicted by his conscience, he cried bitterly. *“And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, ‘Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times’*». And he went out and wept bitterly” (*Matthew 26:75*).

• **The story of Judas Iscariot**. The story of Judas is an example of how the conviction of conscience can be so unbearable that it causes a person to end his life by suicide. This is exactly what happened with Judas, who betrayed Jesus to the Jewish chief priests. *“Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, ‘I have sinned by betraying innocent blood’. But they said, ‘What is that to us? See to that yourself!’*» And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself” (*Matthew 27:3-5*).

III. THE BIBLE ON THE PURITY OF CONSCIENCE

The Holy Scriptures call for a person to protect his moral purity. *“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life”* (*Proverbs 4:23*).

However, we find out from the Bible that, *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (*Romans 3:23*). We are all sinners that have stained our conscience with sin. Are we forever doomed? The Lord God who gave us our conscience advises us how we can heal it, *“For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* (*Hebrews 9:13-14*). Look how many different religions there are! Each one of them is trying to help a person come closer to a state of holiness. Why is a person religious? Why do people willingly sacrifice themselves to various cults and sects? The problem is that conscience does not stop disturbing a person; it forces a person to feel their sinful nature and shortcomings before the Holy God. The mere performance of religious rites and rituals helps a person put to sleep their gnawing conscience. However, no religion, no spiritual practice will be able to cleanse our conscience from our faulty deeds, except one — the holy blood of Jesus Christ.

(Continued on page 10)



TOPICS FOR
CONSIDERATION

CONSCIENCE

(Continued from page 9)

Jesus Christ is the only path to a fully cleansed conscience. Those that sincerely repent and bring their sins before God with the intention to change their life for the better, the Lord forgives, because of the cleansing sacrifice for our sin that He Himself made on the cross.

A pure conscience — a pledge for spiritual and physical health!

The healing of conscience and body come hand in hand. The Holy Bible testifies of this in the Old and New Testament.

«For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness, I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning. For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh» (Psalm 38:2-7).

«Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working» (James 5:16).

A pure conscience is the source of inner joy and peace. The absence of a pure conscience affects the psychological and physical health of a person. Psychiatrists claim that most of their patients are ill because they do not know how to stop their gnawing conscience. Sometimes the pangs of conscience overflow the cup of patience and people commit suicide because they can no longer live with the gnawing feel of shame, guilt, and conviction. Sadly, they do not understand that even death will not put a stop to their guilty conscience. Contrary, with suicide people doom themselves to eternal suffering in hell where they will undergo an eternal anguish of conscience for their mistakes and wrong actions which they committed during their life. This is one of the most frightening sufferings that can be imagined. The Bible compares this suffering to torture in an unquenchable fire — the fiery Gehenna where, *«their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched» (Mark 9:48)*. How perfectly this expression describes the spiritual torments which are the effects of a guilty conscience!

The Lord calls us to have a good conscience because a good conscience is the guarantee for steadfast faith. The Word of God warns that without a good conscience, a person is doomed to suffer *«shipwreck with regard to the faith» (1 Timothy 4:19)*. Faith is an important aspect of spiritual life and a necessary component of our salvation *(Ephesians 2:8)*. Therefore, shipwreck of one's faith is the greatest tragedy. That is why the Lord warns us about the necessity of keeping a clean conscience so that we would not experience the shipwreck of our faith and lose our salvation.

We live in the last times of which the Lord says, *«Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared» (1 Timothy 4:1-2)*. This is witnessed in our present day. The conscience of our last generation does not rise above the average opinion. In a little while, God's cup of patience will overflow, as occurred in the days of Noah, and He will once again say, *«My spirit shall not always strive with man» (Genesis 6:3)*. Then He will destroy the earth and all the unclean on it. *«Through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men» (2 Peter 3:6-7)*.

While we still have time, come to peace with God: repent and ask Him to cleanse your conscience and grant you the forgiveness of your sins. Come into a covenant with God, promise to serve Him with a good and clear conscience *(1 Peter 3:21)*, and live by that conscience under the direction of God's Word and the Holy Spirit's guidance.

May the words from David's psalm be the sacred desire of your heart and your daily prayer to the Lord, *«Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me» (Psalm 51:10)*.

Do not forget that access to the Lord is only open to those with a pure heart, *«Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God» (Matthew 5:8)*.

Material for the newspaper «Prisoner» was kindly provided by

the Bible Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada

<http://cogmtl.net/Articles/141.htm>

HARSHTEST PRISONS AROUND THE WORLD

**Stanley Prison
(Hong Kong)**

One of the six most protected facilities in Hong Kong was built in 1937 and has remained a popular place for executions. In 1990, the Government decided to close it. About 122 criminals were hanged in the period between 1946 and 1966. In addition, the prison became an internment camp where 600 prisoners were killed during the Japanese occupation. Refugees who tried to cross



the border also ended up in the prison. The number of prisoners currently stands at about three thousand, which greatly exceeds the allowable limit.

**Attica Correctional
Facility
(New York)**

This prison, built in 1930, was the home of some of the most dangerous criminals in the world. Nevertheless, it



acquired notoriety only after the riot of September 9, 1971. About 2,200 prisoners seized the prison and took 33 prison employees hostage. They demanded better living conditions and political rights. After four days of negotiations, the situation ended with 39 people killed, including ten guards and employees.

**Montelupich Prison
(Poland)**

One of the worst Nazi prisons, it was used by the Gestapo during the Second World War to house political prisoners,



victims of street raids, deserters, as well as British and Soviet spies. According to various estimates, in the period from 1940 to 1944 about 50,000 thousand people were held there. One of the main methods of interrogation were cruel medieval tortures. After the war it became a place for interrogation of Polish soldiers of the Home Army.

**Camp 1391
(Northern Israel)**

This military prison for dangerous prisoners is located an hour's drive from Tel Aviv. Nobody knew it existed until 2003. Most of the information on the prison is classified, although the Israeli Supreme Court issued an order requiring its disclosure.

**Vladimir Central
Prison (Russia)**

The prison was built in 1783. It gained its notoriety during the Soviet era when it became a place of detention for political prisoners. Today it is crowded, and teeming with disease. It is known for the sadistic attitude of the prison guards towards the prisoners. Prisoners are pulled out of their cells by force, ordered to put their hands on the wall, and then beaten to such an extent that they cannot return to their cells. Sometimes this procedure ends in death. Sometimes prisoners are forced to beat each other.

**Kamiti Maximum
Security Prison
(Nairobi, Kenya)**

The prison territory comprises 1200 acres. The prison is known for its incredibly miserable living conditions, as well as the beating of prisoners to death and cases of sodomy. Malnutrition, plague and cholera are the main causes of death.

Nairobi Prison (Kenya)

In 1911, it was built to accommodate 800 inmates, but by 2003 this number



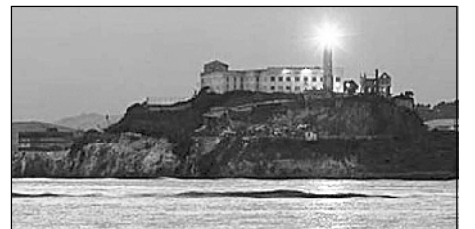
had grown to 3,000. For this reason, this prison is one of the most crowded in the world. As a result, there are many problems with hygiene, sanitation and general living conditions, where prisoners have to really fight for their mental and physical health. Prison cells are full of smell of sweat and feces; the stench of garbage is constantly poisoning the air.

Butyrka (Russia)

The largest transit prison in Moscow is known for its brutality. During the Great Purge, it contained more than 20,000 prisoners who were shot after investigations. The administration resorted to violence whenever convicts tried to protest against something. Overcrowding is a consistent problem. Some cells may contain up to a hundred people instead of the proper ten. During the summer, it is very hot, not to mention there is an epidemic of AIDS and tuberculosis.

**Black Beach (Malabo,
Equatorial Guinea)**

This place of imprisonment acquired its notoriety thanks to the cruelty of the guards, problems with malnutrition, overcrowding, plagues of rats and human rights violations. Prisoners often die from chronic diseases, and others escape. However, nobody pays attention to this. The prisoners live in constant fear of possible torture and prolonged beatings, after which some of them die.

**Vologda Prison
(The Ognenniy Island,
Russia)**

This is a kind of Russian version of Alcatraz. The prison is surrounded by a lake and houses the most dangerous criminals. Although the prisoners are not subjected to violence by guards or each other, life in cells without a toilet or sink, in a prison surrounded by icy water and snow, causes psychological devastation and degeneration.

(To be continued)

A Parable About Two Oars

A fisherman was transporting a person in his boat. The passenger said:

«Hurry up, I am late to work!»

Then he noticed that on one oar the word «Pray» was written, and on the other, «Work».

«What is that for?» the passenger asked.

«To remind us», said the fisherman, «that we must pray and work».

«Well, of course, we all have to work, but pray», — the man waved his hand, — «to pray is not necessary. Nobody needs it, why waste time on prayer?»

«You don't need to pray?», asked the fisherman. At that he pulled the oar on which was written «Pray» out of the water, and started to row only with the other oar.

The boat spun on the spot.

«You see what work is without prayer? We are going in circles and not moving forward».

Hence it is clear that to successfully sail the stormy sea of life, we must hold tightly two oars in our hands — «pray» and «work».

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

TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION

I. DEFINITION

1. Dictionary Definition.

Ozhegov's (Russian) Dictionary: «to be patient — (1) to endure something steadfastly and without complaint (suffering, pain, unpleasantness, or something unwanted); (2) to be at peace with the presence or existence of a person or thing; (3) to experience something unpleasant or grievous (defeat, collapse)».

Dahl's (Russian) Dictionary: «to be patient — (1) to tolerate, endure, bear, suffer; (2) to find inner strength, to overcome, take heart, hold onto, stand firm without losing heart; (3) to wait, to await something better, to hope, to humble oneself, to accept; (4) to condescend, tolerate, make allowance for, indulge, give slack; (5) not to rush, hurry, rush someone».

Dictionary of synonyms: «Patience 4 long-suffering, endurance, condescension».

2. The Bible's Definition.

The New Testament uses two words meaning «patience»:

A. Patience in relation to events.

The Greek word «*hupomeno*» means to go through

come to an end. The Flood is a picture of the world's end, «the righteous judgment of God» (**Romans 2:5**). This time is approaching with inexorable speed because the Lord has appointed a day of judgment. **Acts 17:31** «Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead».

The remaining time until the Day of Judgment, when the wrath of God will come down on humanity, cannot be called God's «delay». Rather, it is a time of grace and patience. **2 Peter 3:9** «The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance». Therefore, the Word of God calls each person to consider that the «long-suffering of our Lord is salvation» (**2 Peter 3:15**).

If people do not take advantage of the time of God's patience in order to come to terms with their Creator through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, «he himself will bring wrath against the day of wrath» as written in **Romans 2:5-6** — «But in accordance with your hardness and your

E. The apostle Paul. 2 Timothy 3:10-11 «But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra — what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me».

3. The Lord is calling for us to be patient.

The Bible encourages Christians to be patient with respect to both life circumstances and in relation to one another:

A. Patience with one another.

Colossians 3:12-13 — «Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do».

Forbearance towards a neighbor is motivated by love for that neighbor. It is no accident that patience is an attribute of true love («agape»): **1 Corinthians 13:4-8** «Love suffers long [Greek word «hupomeno» — patience towards people] and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself,

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT PATIENCE

something, be tested, endure hardship, suffer. It describes steadfastness and the ability to tolerate troubles, difficulties and all sorts of afflictions. **Romans 12:12** «Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer». The expression «patient in tribulation» is literally translated as «endure suffering worthily».

B. Patience with people.

The Greek word «*makrothumia*» is literally translated as «much suffering». Most often it indicates endurance, patience, long-suffering and «much suffering». It describes magnanimity, patience and forbearance in relation to one's fellow man and his behavior. This word is often used in the Bible to describe God's patience toward mankind. The Word of God calls upon all Christians to also be long-suffering: **James 5:7-8** «Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand».



impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds». **2 Peter 3:10** «But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up».

III. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HUMAN PATIENCE

1. Proverbs about patience as a human virtue.

☉ **Patience is the key to peace between people.** **Proverbs 15:18** «A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention».

☉ **Patience is better than courage.** **Proverbs 16:32** «He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city».

☉ **Patience is a sign of wisdom.** **Proverbs 14:29** «He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly». **Proverbs 19:11** «The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression».

2. Biblical examples of patience.

A. God's prophets in the Old Testament. James 5:10 «My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience».

B. Joseph. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and taken away to Egypt (**Genesis 36-45**).

C. Job. James 5:11 «Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord — that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful».

D. Abraham. Hebrews 6:15 «And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise».

E. King David. One example of King David's patience is in **2 Kings 16:5-14** — «Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came. And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: «Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue! The Lord has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the Lord has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!» Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, «Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!» But the king said, «What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, «Curse David». Who then shall say, «Why have you done so?» And David said to Abishai and all his servants, «See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him. It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day». And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust. Now the king and all the people who were with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there».

is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things [Greek word «hupomeno» — patience in circumstances]. Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away».

B. Patience in relation to the circumstances.

Romans 5:3-4 «And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope».

☉ **Examples of such forbearance in sorrowful circumstances. 2 Corinthians 4:8-9** «We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed». **2 Corinthians 6:8-10** «By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things».

In sorrowful circumstances, we must remember that God will not let us suffer beyond our strength. **1 Corinthians 10:13** «...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».

The reward for patience is salvation. **Matthew 10:22** «...he who endures to the end will be saved» (see also **Matthew 24:13** and **Mark 13:13**).

CONCLUSION

Patience, like other virtues, does not appear in a person automatically at birth. Its source is the Lord God, and therefore, it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-23** «But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law». Therefore, patience is produced in man by the Holy Spirit. **James 1:2-4** «My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing». Patience is an essential component in the process of saving our souls, along with faith. Therefore, the Lord Jesus said in **Luke 21:19** «By your patience possess your souls». How are we to understand His words? We are saved by faith: **Ephesians 2:8** «For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God». Faith which has been tested produces patience, which is necessary in order for us to keep our faith and help us to survive all the tests on the way to heaven. The Bible teaches that God's promises can be inherited only through faith and patience. **Hebrews 6:11-12** «And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises». The same idea is found in **Hebrews 10:36-37** «For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry».

In summary, we can give the following definition: patience is the ability to go through all trials and tribulations, keeping the faith and staying faithful to God.

The Word of God calls us to be patient like Christ, who gave the world's greatest example of patience in suffering. **Hebrews 12:1-2** «Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God».

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II. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT GOD'S PATIENCE

1. Our Lord God is called a God of patience.

A. The Lord is a God of patience because He is the source of patience. From the Bible we learn that God is love. From it we learn that God is patient. **Romans 15:5** «Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus».

B. The Lord is a God of patience because in His great mercy He endures our weaknesses, shortcomings and sins. **Exodus 34:6** «And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, YThe Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth...»

2. God's patience is called long-suffering in the Bible.

The Lord God has great patience in relation to his creatures. **Psalms 102:8-9** «The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever». **Psalms 144:8** «The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy». The long-suffering of God consists in His being «slow to anger», which He calls each one of us to imitate. **James 1:19** «So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath...»

Throughout history God showed His long-suffering towards people. **Romans 9:22** «What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction...»

God's patience is directly related to the free will given by God to man. Respecting our free will, God tolerates our choice and its consequences without destroying us for our failures and mistakes. Otherwise, by now the earth would be without mankind. If the Lord had not been a long-suffering God, man would not have had free will.

3. The fullness of God's patience.

The fullness of God's patience is revealed only in the New Testament age, which demonstrates His desire to save the largest possible number of people. **1 Timothy 2:4** «who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth». **2 Peter 3:9** «The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance».

The height of God's long-suffering is reached in Jesus Christ. **1 Timothy 1:16** «However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all long-suffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life».

That is why God's patience is called riches in **Romans 2:4** — «Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?»

4. Is there a limit to God's patience?

Despite the long-suffering of God, His patience has its limits. Once already the Lord has demonstrated His limit: in the days of Noah, when humanity turned completely away from God, the Lord destroyed all humanity, except Noah's family, in the Flood.

The worldwide Flood should be a reminder to us that God's patience has a limit and that His patience will soon

Albert KARKUNOV

PSALM 23 REMIX

My Lord, true shepherd full of love,
Rain Your riches on me from above,
Best of Your pastures You let me enjoy,
Your living water is my endless joy.

Restore my life by whispers of Your Word,
I know You care, my healing Lord.
Your soothing voice leads me the right way,
Your face I long to gaze on every day.

Shadow of death in dry valley has passed,
Perfect love away all fear of evil does cast,
Forever with me You promised to be,
Your rod and Your staff always comfort me.

Your Word and Your bread I won't oppose
To share them both with my friends and my foes.
You cover my head with Your oil of grace,
My cup runs over with worship and praise.

Your goodness and mercy are present with me,
I bow to you my heart and my knee.
For You all my treasures I am ready to sell,
In Your house, my Lord, forever I dwell.

CHOICE

Behind the scenes where we can't see,
Divine hand works things that be,
And lays a path ahead of me
The one who made the skies and every sea.
Yet I'm left to choose the path He plans,
To go the way of His or my demands,
To build on Rock or sinking sands,
To join Him or Satan's bands,
And fall in the pit or God's loving hands.
To follow Him who understands
The human nature more than you or me,
Because He made it with extra care,
Then lived and died in it for you and me,
So we could have eternity with Him to share.

2014

ATTENTION!

Dear Readers, «Prisoner» is currently published in two languages, Russian and English, and printed in both the Ukraine and the USA. This newspaper is published and distributed exclusively from voluntary financial contributions. Those who wish to offer their «widow's mite» in support of «Prisoner» will find details on the last page of each issue. For American Christians who wish to support «Prisoner» and the prison ministry, we have added a tear-off card to indicate the amount of your financial assistance and for which specific need it is designated. May God bless you!

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

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



Hope of Freedom

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

MY DONATION:



For prison ministry



For the publication of this newsletter (Prisoner)

Amount: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

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Questions:

Peter: (425) 346-4945, petyawa@gmail.comDasha: (206) 604-4594, dasha1@uw.edu

You may also donate online through PayPal at our website
www.hopeoffreedom.org

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

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!»



PRISONER

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God bless you all!

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Parables From Daily Life

ENDLESS BREAD

Once there was a poor old woman. She was so poor, that at times she did not have anything to bake bread out of. She had a neighbor, a rude woman, who constantly mocked her for her poverty. Once the neighbor noticed that as soon as she would prepare to bake bread, the old woman's chimney would emit smoke, as if bread was baking.

«Did this old beggar also become rich?» thought the neighbor in surprise. «I need to look in and check».

The neighbor walked over just in time to see the old woman pull a loaf of bread out of the stone oven. The old woman seated the neighbor and treated her to some bread. But the neighbor could not contain her surprise.

«How do you have bread? Not long ago you were poorer than a beggar, but now you bake bread daily».

The old woman told her that she was tired of being mocked and taunted for her poverty. And so every time the neighbor would bake bread, the old woman would sit around and tend to her fire. A week passed, then two, then three, and the old woman got an idea.

«I should pray to God for his mercy every time I tend to the fire». And so she began doing this. The old woman would place a piece of wood into the fireplace and say a prayer. But as soon as she said her prayer she heard a knock on the window. Looking out she saw an old man in tatters asking for bread. But the old woman did not have any. Instead she gave him her last potato. The old man ate it and began asking for bread again.

«Where am I going to get you bread?» asked the old woman.

«Just take it out of the oven», replied the old man.



The old woman looked into the fireplace and saw a loaf of bread, all baked and ready to be taken out. She gasped in amazement, pulled it out and began feeding the old man. He finished the bread, then looked at the old woman and asked for more.

«I do not have anymore!» the old woman replied.

«Pull it out of the oven again», said the old man.

The old woman looked over at the fireplace and there was another loaf of bread! She pulled the second loaf out and asked in amazement:

«How long will God give me bread?»

«As long as you share it with those who are hungry», replied the old man.

From that day forth, there was always bread in the old woman's home.

HAPPINESS AND KINDNESS

There once lived a king. His people and neighboring kings considered him a greedy man. He collected enormous taxes from his subjects, and would even take away the last piece of bread from a beggar. One day the king decided that he must learn to do good things so that the neighboring kings would respect him. «But I have no desire to do good things», thought the king. «Those who do good deeds probably have something that I do not yet have».

So he called together his advisors and wise



men and asked, «Who does the most good for others?»

«The happiest people do the most good for others», answered the wise men. «They are filled with happiness and feel they must share it with others».

«But I am not happy», thought the king, «due to the fact that I am lacking something. I do not have enough wealth. Now when I get enough, I will be happy and start being kind and good to others».

So he raised the taxes for his people. Unfortunately, he did not become happy, even though he did become wealthier. It turns out that the happy do good things for others, but other people's property cannot make a man truly happy.

BUCKET OF APPLES

A man bought a house. It was new, big, and beautiful and had a garden of fruit trees, which were also nice and neat. Not far off in an old and untidy house lived a jealous neighbor who always attempted to ruin the man's mood. This jealous neighbor would put garbage or anything else that would create a mess by the gate of the man's big house. One lovely morning the man awoke in a good mood only to find a bucket of slop on his front porch. But instead of becoming angry, he took the bucket and cleaned it out to perfection. Then he gathered the ripest, biggest and tastiest looking apples, put them in the bucket and went over to his neighbor. Upon hearing the knock on the door the neighbor fiendishly thought, «Finally it got to him!» He opened the door eager for drama, but the man calmly handed him the bucket of apples and said: «People share what they are rich with».


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