

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!



PRISONER

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

(John 8:32)

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CHRIST IS RISEN!



«Christ is Risen!» — Is the affirmative exclamation we hear mostly on the day of Passover, which the Christian world celebrates once a year. Oddly, on this day, even the unbelieving atheists pronounce it out loud and with exclamation. Mass psyche is transferred from one to the other, and therefore even the most ardent atheist answers «Indeed He is risen!» What motivates unbelieving hearts that day to confirm the fact of Christ's resurrection? Perhaps it is tradition? After a day and throughout the year, few people remember the resurrection or even pronounce this exclamation. Even those who believe in the undeniable fact of Christ's resurrection, for some reason, only once a year say: «Christ is risen!»

I really like what Apostle Paul said in *Romans (10:9-11)*: «**That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.**»

As it turns out, we confess the resurrection of Christ for salvation with our own words. The Scripture clearly tells us that «**Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed**» that is, to confess the fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead. And here the question immediately arises: why then are we so stingy with the affirmative and the constant confession of the fact of Christ's resurrection? Why only once a year we make the devil tremble from the exclamation «Christ is risen!»? Certainly the believers know what the devil is afraid of, when they profess the great event — the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Today we live in a time when all our words spoken out of our mouths, have great creative and destructive force. The Scripture says: «**Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their**

line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world» (*Ps. 19:2-4*).

Knowing these truths of the Bible, let's just imagine what it would be with the devil, if all the faithful greeted each other saying: «Christ is risen!» — «Indeed He is risen!» And these daily exclamations might not only become our most vivid greeting to each other, but also our endless confession that Christ is really alive. Of course, these words would carry destructive force against demonic evil. For there is a huge difference between the once a year mass exclamation of the resurrection of Christ and daily pronounce that indisputable fact thus destroying the devil. As stated in *the Epistle of James (4:7)*: «**...Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**»

The good news bears endless joy for all people and nations, that Christ died for our sins and on the third day he rose from the dead for the salvation through faith of every repentant sinner. The main purpose of the gospel — is to discover and bring to people the fact that Christ has conquered death and rose from the dead. «Christ is risen!» — This is good news for all the inhabitants of the earth. There is no greater joy, when you believe and know that Jesus has victory over death and opened the door to eternal life for every sincere Christian believer.

For the past few years, every morning, after I climb out of bed, begins with the words: «Christ is risen!» The Brothers whom I live with, almost in unison say, «Indeed He is risen!» Of course, after such good exclamations the morning becomes good in and of itself. Similarly, I greet other Christians, who like to affirm the exclamation of this truth not just once a year. For this is most pleasant to the heart, when you can again and again say: «Christ is risen!» I heartily congratulate all who sincerely love the Lord, with this great joy. May the Holy Spirit so fill your inner spiritual world, that one day you will feel how invaluable the words are: «Christ is risen!»

Yes, we will carry this good news everywhere, and full of good cheer without getting tired!

I.GORIK.

YOUR LETTERS

GOD IS LOVE!

Hello, dear editors of this newspaper.

I got another publication, for which I am really grateful for. For me it was a complete surprise when I read my own letter. To be honest, I forgot about the letter completely. I sent letters to other brothers and sisters in Christ but did not hear any response. Thank God that we can call upon Him, and He will give us peace. While reading the letters from the brothers and sisters who were in these places, tears start filling my eyes from the loneliness they are in, because I am experiencing the same thing. When I'm having these feelings, I diligently read the Scriptures and listen to the Family Radio (Christian). Mostly in this state I begin to open my heart to the Lord, and tell Him everything on my heart. After this, in prayer, the Lord provides comfort and His love. In this love everything becomes easy to forget. Glory and praise to God for His love!

Prior to receiving the next «Prisoner», we in our group meetings talked a lot about God's love (love-agape). It was nice to read that same article, «The Faces of Love.» After all «**God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life**» (*John 3:16*). Through our brothers we can see how God pours out his love amongst us. I also thank God that through His love He connected me with my children. I not only feel needed, but I feel their love for me as well. Sometimes flipping through your life you understand that you only had the love you wanted. But you don't even think about God's love. Thank the Lord that every sinner has the opportunity to come to Him and to know His love.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are not alone, we have a best friend and helper — Jesus Christ, who loves us with His love. Honor, glory and praise to Him for it all!

I would be very happy if someone needs my help, or if someone will have the desire to write me a letter.

I would like to finish this letter with a poem from our sister in Christ **Vera Kazak**, who volunteers in our prisons and speaks about God.

I would be grateful beloved editors, if you see the need to publish my letter. With sincere respect to you, brother in Christ.

Andrew BUKETOV,
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What is the Lord's prayer and should we pray it?

The Lord's prayer is the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples as recorded in *Matthew 6:9-13* and *Luke 11:2-5*. The text in *Matthew 6:9-13* reads: **«Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen»**. Many by mistake believe that these words should be a prayer that we should recite word for word. Some people perceive the Lord's prayer almost like a magic formula, as if the words themselves have a special power or influence over God.

The Bible teaches us the opposite. God is far more interested in what is happening in our hearts during prayer, rather than our words. *Matthew 6:6* tells us: **«But you, when you pray, enter into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father Who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly»**. Seventh verse continues: **«And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words»** in prayer, we should pour out our hearts to God (*Philippians 4:6-7*), not recite memorized words.

The Lord's prayer should be understood as an example, a model of how to pray. The Lord's prayer teaches us to pray. It gives us the «components», which must be in prayer. **«Our Father Who is in heaven...»** teaches us whom to pray — to the Father. **«Hallowed be Your name...»** tells us to worship God and praise Him for who He is. The phrase **«... Your Kingdom come; Your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven»** reminds us that we must pray for God's plan in our lives and in the world, and about our own plans. We must ask, that God's will and not our desires are fulfilled. We should ask God for the things we need: **«Give us this day our daily bread»**. **«And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors»** shows us our confession of sins before God and our turning from them, as well as forgiveness of others as God has forgiven us. Conclusion of the Lord's prayer (**«...and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one»**) is a plea for help in achieving victory over sin and requesting protection from the attacks of the devil.

So again, the Lord's prayer is not a prayer, which we are obliged to memorize and repeat to God. This is just an example of how we should pray. Is there anything bad in remembering the Lord's prayer? Of course not! Is there anything wrong with repeating it to God? Not if we put our heart into it and really mean what we say. Remember: in prayer, God is much more interested in that we approach Him with the whole heart, rather than with specific words we use. The *Epistle to Philippians (4:6-7)* states: **«Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus»**.

To whom should we pray: The Father, The Son or The Holy Spirit?

All prayers should be directed to our Triune God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that we can pray to one or all three Divine persons, as they are a single entity. To the Father we pray together with the psalmist: **«Listen to my voice in the morning, Lord. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly»** (*Psalms 5:3*). We pray to the Lord Jesus as we pray to the Father because they are equal. Prayer to one of Trinity is a prayer to all. Stephan, being tortured, prayed: **«...Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!»** (*Acts 7:59*). We must also pray in the name of Christ. Paul admonished the faithful of Ephesus to give thanks **«always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ»** (*Ephesians 5:20*). Jesus assured his disciples that whatever they asked for in His name, if it is according to his will, will be given to them (*John 15:16; 16:23*). Similarly, we are to pray to the Holy Spirit for His strength. The spirit helps us pray, even when we don't know how or what to ask for (*Rom. 8:26; Jude 1:20*). Perhaps best understood the role of Trinity in prayer, is when we pray to the Father through (or in the name

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of) his Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. All three Divine personalities are active participants, in the prayers of the faithful.

Equally important, whom we should not pray. Some non-Christian religions call their followers to pray to a pantheon of gods, deceased relatives, saints and spirits. Such prayers are unbiblical and are actually insulting to our Heavenly Father. To understand why, we must consider the nature of prayer. The prayer consists of several elements, and if we consider only two of them — praise and thanksgiving, we can see that the prayer, in essence, is worship. When we praise God, we worship Him for His work in our lives. When we bring prayer of thanksgiving, we worship His kindness, mercy and love toward us. Worship carries glory to God, the only One Who deserves it. Prayer to someone else except God, means that He is sharing His glory with those to whom we pray. In reality, prayer to something or someone else besides God is idol-worshipping. **«I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images»** (*Isaiah 42:8*).

Other elements of prayer, such as repentance, confession and requests are also forms of worship. We repent, knowing that God is loving and forgiving, that He gave us the remission of sins through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross. We confess our sins, because we know that **«If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness»** (*1 John 1:9*), and worship Him for it. We come to Him with our requests and petitions, because we know that He loves and hears us. We worship Him for His mercy and kindness in the desire to hear and answer to us. Considering all this, it is easy to see that prayer to someone else except our Triune God is unacceptable: it is a form of worship, and worship belongs only to God, and Him alone. To whom should we pray? God, and no matter to Whom of the Trinity we pray.

What does it mean to «pray without ceasing»?

Paul's words in *1 Thessalonians 5:17* — **«pray without ceasing»** — can be confusing. Of course, this does not mean that we should stay in the position of a bowed head and closed eyes the whole entire day. Paul did not mean a nonstop conversation, but rather a state of conscious communion with God and humility before Him by us, constantly. Every waking moment must be lived in the understanding that God is close to us and that He is actively involved in our thoughts and actions.

When we are consumed with anxiety, fear, frustration or anger, we must consciously turn every thought into prayer, and every prayer into gratitude. In his letter to the *Philippines*, Paul advises us: **«Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God»** (*Philippians 4:6*). He taught the believers in Colossae to devote themselves to **«Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving»** (*Colossians 4:2*). The Apostle exhorted the faithful of Ephesus to consider faith as a weapon, used to conduct spiritual battles (*Ephesians 6:10-11*). Throughout the day, prayer should be our first answer to every dangerous situation, every alarming thought and every task given by God. Lack of prayer will lead to our dependence on ourselves instead of depending on God's grace. Unceasing prayer is, in fact, the prolonged reliance on Heavenly Father and fellowship with Him.

For Christians, prayer must be like breathing for the body. It is not necessary for us to think about how to breathe, because the atmosphere creates the necessary pressure to bear on our lungs and actually makes us do inhale and exhale. It is therefore harder to hold their breath than breathe. Similarly, when we enter into the Divine family, we enter spiritual atmosphere, where the Divine presence and grace create pressure or influence on our lives. Prayer is the natural reaction to this pressure. As believers, we all must enter the heavenly atmosphere to breathe the air of prayer.

Unfortunately, many believers have delayed their spiritual breathing for a long period, believing that brief moments with God are sufficient for existence. Such limited of admission of spiritual oxygen is due to sinful desires. Every believer should always be in God's presence, constantly inhaling His truth in order to fully function.

For Christians, it is easier to feel safe relying on God's grace, rather than depend on it. Too many believers are satisfied with physical blessings and do not seek spiritual

blessings. When programs, methods and money produce impressive results, there is a tendency to confuse human success with heavenly blessing. When this happens, the zealous desire for God and thirst for His help will be in lack. Constant, persistent and unceasing prayer is an important part of the Christian life and stems from complete obedience and dependence upon God.

What is the relationship between prayer and fasting?

Although the relationship between prayer and fasting is not specifically discussed in Scripture, the common thread that connects these two concepts is visible in all places of the Bible. In the old testament, fasting with prayer is mentioned in connection with moments of needs, dependency and/or extreme helplessness in the face of the oncoming disasters. Prayer and fasting are combined in the old testament, during the tribulation, repenting and/or deep spiritual needs.

The first chapter of the book of *Nehemiah* describes that he prayed and fasted, deeply suffering in connection with news about the destruction of Jerusalem. The many days of his prayers were full of tears, fasting, confession on behalf of all his people and requests for God's mercy. Outpouring of his grief was so intense that he just couldn't stop to eat and drink. Destruction that fell on Jerusalem, lead Daniel to the same state: **«Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes»** (*Dan. 9:3*). Like Nehemiah, Daniel fasted and prayed that God showed mercy to the people, saying, **«we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments»** (*Dan. 9:5*).

In some cases, fasting in the old testament is linked to intercessory prayer. David prayed and fasted for his sick child (*2 Sam. 12:16*), crying out to the Lord in zealous petition (*vs. 21-22*). Esther called Mordecai and all the Jews fast for her, for she was preparing to appear before her husband-king (*Esther 4:16*). It is obvious that fasting and prayer are closely linked.

There are cases of combined prayer and fasting in the New Testament that are not linked with repentance or confession. The prophetess Anna **«...did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day»** (*Luke 2:37*). At the age of 84, prayer and fasting were part of her service to the Lord in His temple, as she waited for the promised Savior of Israel. Also in the New Testament, the church in Antioch fasted in view of the fact that the Holy Spirit appealed to them, appointing to send Barnabas and Saul to do the Lords work. At that time, they prayed and fasted, laying hands on the two men and blessing them to minister. So we have these examples of prayer and fasting as part of worship to the Lord and desire for His good will. However, nowhere in the Bible is there any mention that the Lord would rather answer a prayer that's accompanied by a fast. Fasting with prayer is rather indicative of the sincerity of the one who is praying and the criticality of the situation in which he is in.

One thing is obvious: theology of fasting is a theology of priorities, in which believers are given the opportunity to express individually and intensively their dedication to the Lord and to the issues of spiritual life. This dedication is reflected in the short period of refraining from such basic necessities as food and drink, to enjoy uninterrupted communication with our Father. Our **«...boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus»** (*Heb. 10:19*), when we fast or not, is one of the great advantages of a life with Christ. Prayer and fasting should not become a burden or duty, but rather a celebration of God's goodness and mercy to His children.

What hinders an effective prayer?

The most obvious obstacle to an effective prayer is the presence of unconfessed sins in the heart of the individual. Because our God is holy, a barrier forms between Him and us, when we come to Him with unconfessed sins. **«But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear»** (*Isaiah 59:2*). David confirms this, knowing from personal experience that God is far from someone who tries to hide his sin: **«If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened»** (*Psalms 66:18*).

The Bible mentions some areas of sin which

hinder effective prayer. Firstly, when we live according to the flesh and not the Spirit, our desire to pray and our ability to effectively communicate with God is broken. Although we receive a new nature, being born again, it continues to dwell in old flesh, and this old «shell» is spoiled and sinful. Flesh can regain control over our actions, thoughts, and motives unless we tirelessly **«mortify the deeds of the body»** (*Romans 8:13*) and guided by the Spirit in relationship with God. Only then will our prayer be effective.

The life of the flesh is selfishness — another obstacle to effective prayer. When our prayers are motivated by selfishness, when we ask God what we need and not what He wants, it hinders our prayer. **«Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us»** (*1 John 5:14*). To request in accordance with God's will is to ask in obedience to it, regardless of whether we know it or not. As in all the other times, Jesus must be our example in prayer. He always prayed according to the will of His Father: **«...nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done»** (*Luke 22:42*). Selfish prayers are always aimed at satisfying our own desires, and we should not expect God's answer to such prayers. **«You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your lust»** (*James 4:3*).

Life according to egotistical, carnal desires also leads to cruelty towards other people. If we are indifferent to the needs of others, we should not expect that God will not be indifferent to our needs. When we come to God in prayer, we must first be concerned what His will is. Second of all, we should be concerned what the needs of others are: on the bases that a true believer believes that others are better and is concerned about their interests more than his own (*Philippians 2:3-4*).

A serious obstacle to effective prayer is the spirit of unforgiveness. When we refuse to forgive others, root of bitterness sprouts in our hearts and muffles our prayers. How can we expect God to unleash upon us un-deserving sinners, forgiveness and blessings, if we nurture hatred and anger toward others? This principle is beautifully illustrated in the parable recorded in *Matthew 18:23-35*. God has forgiven us of debt (sin), not measurable, so He expects that we'll forgive others. Failure to do this will hinder our prayers.

Another barrier to effective prayer is unbelief and doubt. This does not mean, as some have suggested, that if we come to God in absolute conviction about something, He will definitely do as we ask. Praying without doubt means praying in full faith and understanding of God's character, nature and intentions. **«And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him»** (*Hebrews 11:6*). When we come to God in prayer, doubting His character, purposes and promises, we are extremely insulting Him. We must be confident in His ability to satisfy, any of our requests that meet His will and purpose for our lives. We must pray with the understanding that, whatever His goals are, they are the best for us. **«But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord»** (*James 1:6-7*).

In the end, interpersonal differences also constitute a definite obstacle to prayer. The Apostle Peter specifically mentions this as an obstacle to the prayers of husbands, who are showing disrespect for their wives: **«Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered»** (*1 Peter 3:7*). Where there is a serious conflict in the family and the head of the house shows no relationship that Peter describes, the communion with God and the husband is disrupted. Likewise, the wives must follow biblical principles of obedience to their husbands' leadership, so that their own prayers would not be disrupted (*Eph. 5:22-24*).

Mercifully, all of these obstacles can be easily eliminated by coming to God in prayer of confession and repentance. In *1 John 1:9* the Apostle assures us: **«If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness»**. As soon as we do this, we will enjoy clear and open channel of communication with God and our prayers will not only be heard and answered, but our heart will overflow with a deep sense of joy.



PASTOR'S WORD

THE THEOLOGY OF RIGHTEOUS JOB

The bible contains a very instructive story about the life and suffering of Job, which serves as good example for people of all generations. Job stood out from all of his contemporaries with his righteousness. The bible tells us, how God assessed Job: «... **there is no one like him on the earth, a man without sin and upright, fearing God and keeping himself far from evil**» (Job 1:8).

Now came a time of trials, even for righteous Job. In one day he loses all of his numerous assets, ten of his beloved children, and shortly after, his health. His body got covered by terrible leprosy, which brought out disgust and fear of getting sick with this contagious disease, even in those who personally knew, respected, and loved him. This is how Job describes his suffering: «**He has taken my brothers far away from me; they have seen my fate and have become strange to me. My relations and my near friends have given me up, and those living in my house have put me out of their minds. I am strange to my women-servants, and seem to them as one from another country. At my cry my servant gives me no answer, and I have to make a prayer to him. My breath is strange to my wife, and I am disgusting to the offspring of my mother's body. Even young children have no respect for me; when I get up their backs are turned on me. All the men of my circle keep away from me; and those dear to me are turned against me. My bones are joined to my skin, and I have got away with my flesh in my teeth**» (Job 19:13-20).

Job's wife who was witnessing all of this happening right in front of her eyes, was also suffering from the loss of all of their assets, the loss of her husband's health (by the way, leprosy, the disease that her husband was suffering from, is an incurable disease even today) and probably the worst of all for a mother, the loss of their children. She had the same question arise hundreds of times «What for? What for? What for? How could God, the One we worshipped so faithfully, allow this unbearable suffering?»

This woman, tortured by grief, insomnia and on the verge of losing her mind, gives logical advice to her suffering husband: «Curse God and die, since God acted this way with us after all of our efforts to please Him, he rewards us like this...» Did she mean that God would definitely punish Job with death if he would curse Him, or did she mean that Job would commit suicide after completely breaking his relationship with God, that I don't know. One thing is clear, is that she offered him an escape from torturous reality and with that an end to his sufferings. However Job did not agree to escape gruesome reality, not by death, not by alcohol or drugs, like some people do today, but preferred to endure everything in full consciousness. Further in the scripture we find him in complete sorrow and suffering, but still sober and sane. He was saying: «**If we take the good God sends us, are we not to take the evil when it comes?**»

Job did not mean that it was in the person's power — to have or not to have difficulties and suffering, what he said was about acceptance or non-acceptance. This is about the internal attitude of the person's heart, of his actions towards the suffering that comes into his life. For us this means: will we continue to be in the same relationship with God, like in those times when we gave Him the right to have control over our life, or will we take it back?

Job's spiritual attitude does not resemble the attitude of many Christians today, who are absolutely not ready to accept the bad. Even more, they don't think that such a fair God can allow any difficulties or suffering in their life at all. They tend to reason: «After all He is a loving God and does not want to see His children suffer».

For a child to learn to walk, it is necessary for him to exert himself, to stand up and try. While the child is straining himself, falling down and getting up again, his muscles are getting stronger. This process is painful and does not go without bruising; however the ability to walk with your own legs is worth enduring all the difficulties. Similarly, obtaining the necessary spiritual experience for heaven is worth all of the suffering and pain of earthly life. If we, as parents, with all of our love for our young children, allow them to bruise themselves in order for them to learn to walk, more so our Heavenly Father, the only difference is that we need earthly abilities for 70-80 years, but spiritual for eternity. «**For our present trouble, which is only for a short time, is working out for us a much greater weight of glory; While our minds are not on the things which are seen, but on the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are for a time; but the things which are not seen are eternal**» (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Therefore to consider that God does not love me because I am going through sorrow and suffering, is the same as the conclusions of young children who think their mom does not love them since she does not give them ice cream and candy, which they like, but makes them eat potatoes and meat instead.

Now let's discuss the benefits of suffering in the life of a Christian.

All suffering can be divided in two categories: inescapable and voluntary.

Inescapable — these sufferings are caused by birth defects, sickness, tragedy and the natural process of ageing. They come not depending on whether or not they are expected or wanted.

Voluntary suffering — are those, which a person endures as a result of conscious decisions. This type of suffering

is completely in the persons power whether he will have them or not. For example, a person chooses the narrow Christian path, and with it humiliation from non-believers, mockery and slander. Being a Christian, a person can go on a path of sanctification and reconciliation with God. This requires effort in prayer, fasting, and learning the will of God. While doing so his flesh will suffer, deprived of pleasures and worldly entertainment.

Both kinds of suffering, with the right attitude, can prove to be a great blessing for a Christian, by going through them he will change into the form and character of God. Yet the voluntary suffering of those walking on the path of the Lord is a lot more valuable in the eyes of God, than the involuntary suffering. They show that the Christian loves God more than himself and his own well-being. He is ready to go through pain, if only to please God whom he loves. Apostle Paul suggests Christians to take the truth upon them as armor, who suffers in the flesh stops sinning. Who is suffering voluntary from walking the path of obedience to the truth, will be greatly rewarded by God.

1 Peter 2:19-21 — *For it is a sign of grace if a man, desiring to do right in the eyes of God, undergoes pain as punishment for something which he has not done. What credit is it if, when you have done evil, you take your punishment quietly? but if you are given punishment for doing right, and take it quietly, this is pleasing to God. This is God's purpose for you: because Jesus himself underwent punishment for you, giving you an example, so that you might go in his footsteps.*

Further we'll discuss, based on the Bible and personal experience, the results of calmly enduring suffering in the name of God.

1. Sufferings contribute to correction, cleansing and spiritual growth.

Hebrews 12:6-10 *For the Lord sends punishment on his loved ones; everyone whom he takes as his son has experience of his rod. It is for your training that you undergo these things; God is acting to you as a father does to his sons; for what son does not have punishment from his father? But if you have not that punishment of which we all have our part, then you are not true sons, but children of shame. And again, if the fathers of our flesh gave us punishment and had our respect, how much more will we be under the authority of the Father of spirits, and have life? For they truly gave us punishment for a short time, as it seemed good to them; but he does it for our profit, so that we may become holy as he is.*

Psalm 119:67 (KJV) — *Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.*

Psalm 119-71 — *It is good for me to have been through trouble; so that I might come to the knowledge of your rules.*

1 Peter 5:10 (KJV) — *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

2. We learn to be compassionate towards others through suffering.

2 Corinthians 1:4 — *Who gives us comfort in all our troubles, so that we may be able to give comfort to others who are in trouble, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

Hebrews 10:32-34 — *But give thought to the days after you had seen the light, when you went through a great war of troubles; In part, in being attacked by angry words and cruel acts, before the eyes of everyone, and in part, in being united with those who were attacked in this way. For you had pity on those who were in prison, and had joy in the loss of your property, in the knowledge that you still had a better property and one which you would keep for ever.*

3. To produce humility, patience, and obedience to God.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 — *And keep in mind the way by which the Lord your God has taken you through the waste land these forty years, so that he might make low your pride and put you to the test, to see what was in your heart and if you would keep his orders or not. And he made low your pride and let you be without food and gave you manna for your food, a thing new to you, which your fathers never saw; so that he might make it clear to you that bread is not man's only need, but his life is in every word which comes out of the mouth of the Lord.*

Deuteronomy 8:16 — *...so that your pride might be broken and your hearts tested for your good in the end.*

Romans 5:3-4 (NIV) — *Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

Hebrews 5:8 — *...Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered.*

4. For our glory.

1 Peter 4:12-14 — *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

Romans 8:17-18 — *Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 — *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

5. For witnessing to other people.

Like the faithfulness of Job and the heroism during the test he endured, served as an example for the people of all the following generations, today the faithfulness and persistence of Christians in suffering has a positive effect on others. It is said not in vain: the blood Christian martyrs is the seed of Church, meaning, during persecution of Christians, large amounts of people turn to God. Some martyrs die but lots of hundreds and thousands, which come to believe, fill their rows.

6. For God's glory.

John 11:4 — *When he heard this, Jesus said, «This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it.»*

1 Thessalonians 1:6-8 — *You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it.*

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 — *God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day He comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.*

Is it possible for a Christian to avoid suffering?

Yes it is, but then he will stop being a Christian. After all, a Christian is the one who follows Christ, Who suffered a lot Himself.

It is written: «**To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps**» (1 Peter 2:21).

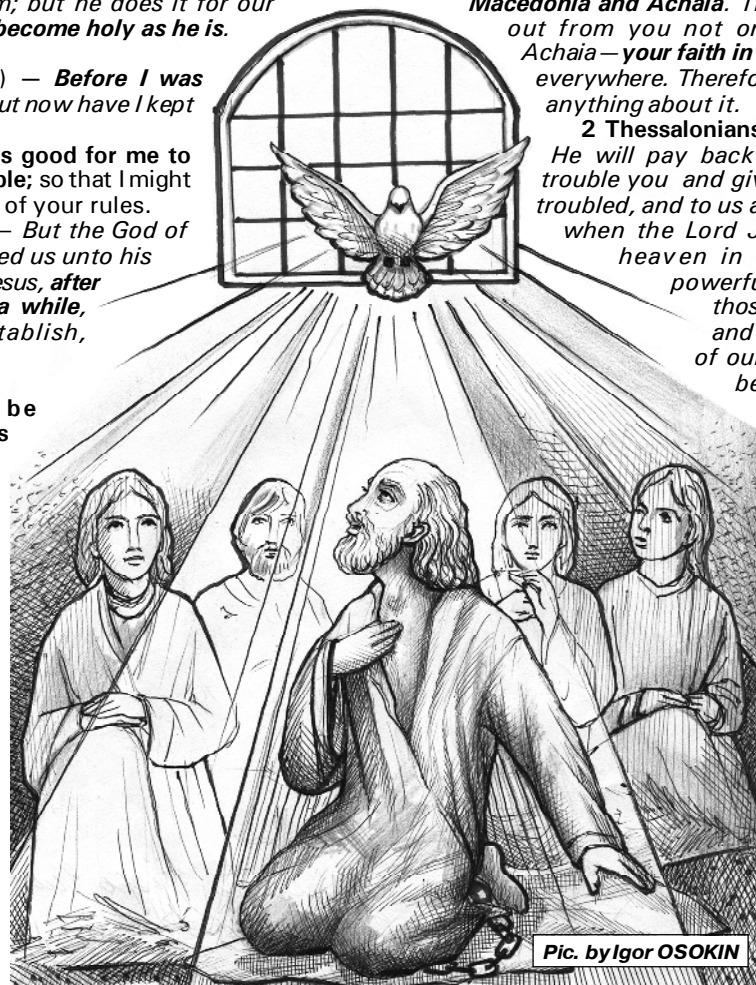
Hebrews 5:8-9 — *... Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him...*

A person, refusing the temporary sufferings, that are related to the preparation of eternal bliss, will have eternal suffering in hell.

Matthew 16:25 — *...For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it...*

«**Suffering is God's path. If Christ was required to fulfill His great task by suffering, then there is no reason to demand a different fate for the Church, which is His body on earth**» (O. Tyark).

Aleksandr BORISENKO.



Pic. by Igor OSOKIN

Simple Truth



Some newly converted Christians often complain that they are somehow treated unfairly, or worse, they are ignored and treated as nothing. Strong resentment gnaws at these people and pride does not allow them ask why they are treated this way, especially in worldly people. Typically these people look for an excuse for their behavior, and try to find flaws in their adversaries in every way. In all time people eloquently judge other people to make themselves seem better, they are not embarrassed for choosing their words. Judging — is always a flowing stream of negativity that erupts from the heart through our mouths. Often this stream comes from an evil heart, because a heart filled with the Holy Spirit never judges anyone. But, unfortunately there are much less of these people than those who are inclined to condemn others. Slandering and condemning others is a favorite activity of the resentful, arrogant and the prideful. These people are blind and see very few people besides themselves. They read the Bible but do not understand what the Lord commanded about human relations: **«All those things, then, which you would have men do to you, even so do you to them: because this is the law and the prophets»** (Matt. 7:12).

This saying of the Lord is known to many Christians, but the problem lies in the fact that few people apply this to themselves. That is, very few people ask themselves: do I do to people as I want done to myself? Such people do not have enough objectivity to look at unpleasant (for them) situations from the standpoint of Jesus Christ.

We (people) want a lot from other people towards ourselves but are not willing to do as much, not to mention more, to others. Primarily everyone is focused for their own benefit. From here comes much anger on others, for their own self-esteem is always inflated. Therefore such people begin endless judging to become «holier» even a bit, at least in their own eyes. This happens not only now but has happened before. The Bible has a striking example, as «guardians» of moral values brought a woman to Jesus.

«Now the scribes and Pharisees came, with a woman who had been taken in the act of sinning against the married relation; And putting her forward, they said to him, Master, this woman has been taken in the very act of sinning against the married relation. Now in the law Moses gave directions that such women were to be stoned; what do you say about it? They said this, testing him, so that they might have something against him. But Jesus, with his head bent down, made letters on the floor with his finger. But when they went on with their questions, he got up and said to them, Let him among you who is without sin be the first to send a stone at her. And again, with bent head, he made letters on the floor. And when his words came to their ears, they went out one by one, starting with the oldest even to the

last, because they were conscious of what was in their hearts: and Jesus was there by himself with the woman before him. Then Jesus got up, and seeing nobody but the woman, he said to her, Where are the men who said things against you? did no one give a decision against you? And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, And I do not give a decision against you: go, and never do wrong again» (John 8:3-11).

These scribes and Pharisees, who brought the women to Jesus, obviously considered themselves spiritual and people of high moral. However, only one phrase of Jesus Christ immediately removed this mask from all those present. The Bible says that **«...they went out one by one, starting with the oldest even to the last, because they were conscious of what was in their hearts»**. I think that they were also guided not so much by conscience,

but the fear of being disgraced in front of each other. For despite the fact that they pulled on masks of righteousness, every one of them knew each other. For this reason, they all dispersed to avoid accusations and ridicule from each other.

Once as I was reading the Sermon on the Mount, I more clearly understand the words spoken by Christ: **«Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will go into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the pleasure of my Father in heaven. A great number will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, were we not prophets in your name, and did we not by your name send out evil spirits, and by your name do works of power? And then will I say to them, I never had knowledge of you: go from me, you workers of evil»** (Matthew 7:21-23).

The fact is, all of the above words of Jesus Christ are directly related to believers. When you fully delve into the deeper meaning of what was said by the Lord, you cannot help it, a slight chill runs through your body and you start to delve deeper into yourself with a single question, am I doing everything that is pleasing to God?!

In his first epistle the apostle John gives us all good counsel. He writes: **«He who says that he is living in him, will do as he did»** (1 John 2:6). The entire bible shows us how Jesus acted, which from the first to the last page reveals the truth of life, instructing, teaching and rebuking us with the Living Word.

Therefore let us not disappoint the Lord in the beginning of the Christian path, not in the middle, nor at the end. To have a good relationship with other people, you should always apply the words of Jesus Christ to yourself. For how much more simply and clearly we can say it, than is said: **«whatever you desire that men should do to you, do even so to them»**.

Finally, I add: if we want to be loved, we must first learn to love others.

I. GORIK.

CROSS — TEST OF SONSHIP

Cross. What picture does this word invoke in our mind's eye? What else does it bring up? Some are immediately picture festive semi-darkness, filled with the scent of incense and flickering candlelight; others: happy colored spots of light break through the high stained-glass windows. Yet others — a massive chain and a hairy chest, or an expanse of sky with soaring spires and domes, or perhaps a mournful quiet churchyard.

This word may not cause any reaction in the soul, or it may cause violent feelings; from indignation to holy awe. But hardly anyone's representation of the cross today will cause disgust, disgust mixed with an instinctive fear. Although this is the feeling Christ on the cross invoked in passersby, shaking their head, blasphemed him, saying, **«You who would give the Temple to destruction and put it up again in three days, get yourself free: if you are the Son of God, come down from the cross»** (Matthew 27:40).

The Cross from which the mutilated body of Jesus helplessly hang (the same flesh that became the Word) was not glorified either in the reverent silence among the icons of the altar and stained glass, nor in the sky. Roman soldiers crucified criminals by the road from the city gate. Not too high, so as not to spend unnecessary effort, and close enough so that everyone could read the plate with the

charge: «Thief», «bandit», «Rebel»... As an example to others. At Christ's Cross the accusation read: **«King of the Jews»**.

The space in front of the city gates played a special role in the lives of any fortified settlement, densely packed inside the life-saving walls. Here all the trade routes converged. Here were any public meetings, excitement, and celebrations. Here trade was in full swing, often prohibited on city streets. Pickpockets and patrolling guards scurried around; they conducted a brisk business, they traded and stole money. It was the most populous, the noisiest, and the most troubled spot in the region. No one, except the relatives of the condemned criminal and those responsible for the execution of the sentence, stayed at the Cross. Everyone hurried about their business, awkwardly looking away and trying to fill the pause in their conversation with any phrase, no matter how insignificant.

Where is the most populous and busiest place in your city? Imagine it. Perhaps, as in my city, the areas near the central Market: noise, jostling, swearing, shouting, and shrill horns from the public transports, fighting for every customer... Have you pictured it? Now imagine just ten steps from the passenger drop-off area on a small hill, there are three live bodies nailed to wooden beams to

die in a not so reverent silence, not in an atmosphere of respect and compassion, but under the scorching sun, among the jostling, shouting, the stench of blood and sweat. The majority of those who saw the Cross of Christ were innocent bystanders, through whose mouths the devil, who left him alone until this time (Luke 4:13), screamed in helpless horror, **«if you are the Son of God, come down from the cross»**. And the religious leaders of God's people, the chief priests, with the scribes, elders and Pharisees, finally gained their unanimity, increasingly incited the crowd, and, mockingly said: **«A saviour of others, he has no salvation for himself. If he is the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will have faith in him. He put his faith in God; let God be his saviour now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God»** (Matthew 27:42-43).

«If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!» — The most logical thing in the perspective of earthly logic, but the most meaningless in terms of the logic of heaven. If anyone had the power of God's Son, they probably would have done so and proved to the mockers, who is who. «If you can — do it», «if it's offered — take it», «you have power — use it» — is what the world teaches us. «If you have — give» — Christ teaches us. Give power, give dignity, and give your



right. In the Cross of Christ there is advanced mathematics, the intersection of parallel planes — two sides of the highest commandment: to love God (Deuteronomy 6:3-6), and love thy neighbor (Leviticus 19:18). For the one I love, I'm ready to give everything (Which is why we most often give everything to ourselves, whom we love the most).

The cross is the true test of sonship. Here, at the Cross of Christ, is the freedom out of the vicious circle of endless disputes about freedom and predestination, because on the Cross converge the sovereign will of a loving Father and the free will of a loving Son. For more than twelve legions of

angels (Matthew 26:53), ready at any moment to rush to the rescue. Jesus could not come down from the Cross, could not because He is the Son of God. He could not save himself because He saved others. When his life lay on the scales, on the other side of the same scales were the lives of all those whom he loved. He had no choice, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). In love there is no choice at all. After all, «to love» also means «to give».

<http://mirvam.org/2015/12/13/krest-test-na-synovstvo/>

DISCUSSION CLUB

1. The Fifth Commandment.

In the Old Testament, the fifth commandment is mentioned in three places.

A. The biblical text:

Exodus 20:12 — Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Deuteronomy 5:16 — Honor your father and your mother, as Jehovah your God has commanded you, so that your days may be made longer, and that it may go well with you in the land which Jehovah your God gives you.

Leviticus 19:3 — And fear every man his mother and his father and keep my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God.

B. The content of the commandments:

1. The command: respect / fear your father and mother.

2. What is the purpose?

— To prolong thy days.

— To be well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

— Do not despise your parents in the eyes of others and do not deprive them of respect from others.

C. Father / mother or mother / father?

— **Exodus, Deuteronomy:** «Honor your father and mother».

— **Leviticus:** «Honor thy mother and father».

We sometimes have a tendency to respect and love our mother and at the same time to be afraid and fear our father. But the Bible clearly indicates that we need to also love and respect our father and fear our mother.

5. Why is this commandment with a promise of long life and prosperity?

The Bible says: *Honor thy father and thy mother, so thy days prolong.* Why are we promised a long life and blessings in the case of compliance with this commandment?

Possible answers:

— God always blesses those who keep His commandments.

of encouraging you; when I spoke when it was necessary to listen; when I criticized you instead of forgiving you; When I said «yes» instead of saying «no» and «no» instead of «yes»; when I often required too much and tried to mold you into my image and likeness. I tried to make you into someone who I wanted myself to be... instead of helping you discover yourself.

8. How long should it last?

Matthew 10:35 — For I have come to set a man against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Honoring our parents, we must always remember:

— Our veneration should be directed to God first,

— Our responsibilities towards God are paramount.

9. What if the parents are not worthy of veneration?

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

2. The relationship between parents and children.

A. This is the very first and the most important relationship in life.

— It was arranged by God from the moment of the creation of man.

— Each of us is a child to their parents until their death.

Notice the equality of the mother and father in this commandment (revere both).

B. The commandment calls for...

— Children to respect their parents;

— To maintain contact and relations between the generations.

3. Why does God want the children to honor their parents?

A. Because the three persons involved in the human birth are: the father, the mother and God! Oddly enough, God is also involved in the emergence of a new human into the world!

B. Our relationship with God is often described as the relationship between the Father and children:

Exodus 4:22 — And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus said the Lord: Israel is my son, my firstborn.

Hosea 11:1 — When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Malachi 1:6 — A son honors his father, and a servant — his master; if I am a father, where is my honor? and if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts...

Romans 9:5-26 — As He also says in Hosea, «I will call those not My people, My people; and those not beloved, Beloved.» And it shall be, in the place where it was said to them. «You are not My people; there they shall be called sons of the living God» (Quoted Hosea 1:10).

2 Corinthians 6:18 — And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, said the Lord Almighty.

Isaiah 64:8 — But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; and we all are the work of thy hands.

The prayer «Our Father» begins with the words: *Our Father...*

The fifth commandment is for children beginning their obedience to the rulers and authorities. Likewise, obedience to God begins with obedience to parents.

4. Reverence and fear.

A. Reverence (Jewish *kabed*): in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy.

This word can be understood in different ways. — Children can honor their parents in different ways (to respect, care, love, experience, contain, to help, to forgive, and so on).

— The main importance is to please, provide care, help, and to respect.

— Obedience is the central point in honoring parents (**Ephesians 6:1-3** — Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right Honor thy father and mother; it is the first commandment with a promise: that it be well with thee, and thou may live long on the earth).

This commandment is addressed more to older children, so that children did not leave their parents to fend for themselves, but continued to care for them in old age.

— Parents deserve respect and a serious attitude toward them.

B. Fear / anxiety (Jewish *tira'u*): in the Book of Leviticus.

— Do not forget who your parents are. And do not take on the role of your own parents.

— Good communication and relationships between generations contribute to the improvement of our lives.

— Our parents are wiser than we are, so we can learn from their experiences and avoid many mistakes, if we listen to their advice.

— Your own children will treat you the same way you treat your parents: **Galatians 6:7** — whatever a man sows that shall he also reap; **Luke 6:31** — And as you desire that men should do to you, you do also to them likewise.

— In addition, often the will of parents is based on their relationship with their children.

6. Parental responsibilities towards children.

A. How children have responsibilities towards their parents, parents also have responsibilities towards their children.

Luke 1:17 The prophecy of John the Baptist says: *And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*

Here it does not say, to turn the hearts of children to fathers (parents). Why? Because veneration to parents is known to everyone by the fifth commandment in the law of God. However, it says that parents, too, have responsibilities towards their children:

It turns out that the fifth commandment applies to:

— Children who must honor their parents,

— To parents who must return their heart to their children.

This truth can also be seen in the New Testament:

Ephesians 6:2-4 — Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right Honor thy father and mother; it is the first commandment with a promise: that it be well with thee, and thou may live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Thus, respect from children to their parents should be recompensed with respect from the parents towards their children.

7. What does it mean «to be parents worthy of reverence»?

— Love (boundless love for their children): **Isaiah 66:13, Isaiah 49:15.**

— Teach and guide (**Deuteronomy 6: 6-7, Proverbs 1:8-9; Proverbs 22:6 Jeremiah 35:6.**)

— Take care of the needs (**2 Corinthians 12:14.**)

To do all this without the slightest error, the parents must have the wisdom of God. However, none of us are perfect. Here is a letter Marion Wright Edelman wrote to her sons, (Chairman of the US Children's Fund).

I ask for your forgiveness for those moments when I talked, instead of hearing you out; for being angry when I should've been patient; for taking action, rather than waiting; and when I upset you, instead

— What if our parents are not worthy of veneration?

— What if they have caused and are causing us pain, suffering, or problems?

— What if in the past they have abused us (physically or emotionally)?

There is no simple answer to this question. The fate of each person is unique and inimitable. However, consider the following:

The word «honor» has a very broad meaning and can mean many different things. The commandment «honor your parents» is not based on whether the parents deserve it or not. God commanded to honor ones parents. Thus, God wants us to honor our parents under all circumstances. And finally, you can also obey and respect people for whom you don't experience a sense of sympathy or love.

In a situation reverence means respecting and assisting someone, according to how much strength we have. Another important point: perhaps veneration in some cases could mean forgiveness.

Do not forget that the fifth commandment is a transcript of the second commandment given to us by Jesus Christ: «Love your neighbor as yourself» Love for one's neighbor begins with love and respect for one's parents. It is they — who are our first and closest «neighbors». And to love them is sometimes not the easiest task. Often, to love and care for one's family, is more difficult than it is to love a stranger.

The material for the newspaper «The Prisoner»

Was kindly given by,

Bible discussion club, Montreal, Canada

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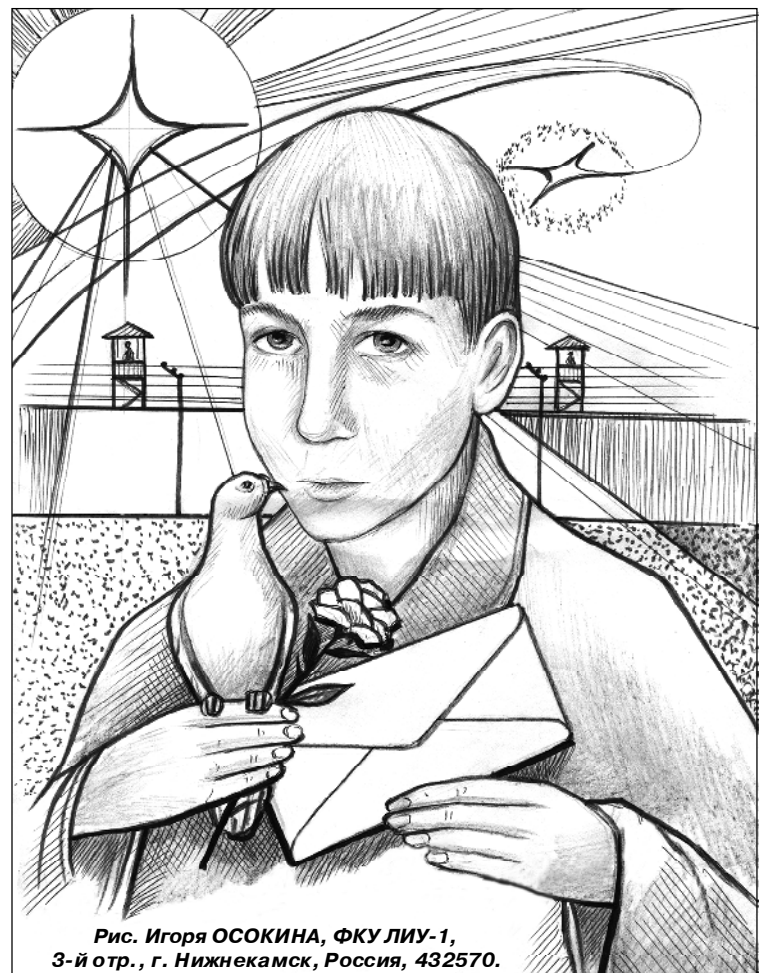


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TESTIMONIES OF BORN AGAIN CHRISTIANS

FROM LAWS OF THIEVES TO THE LAWS OF GOD

I grew up in Ossetia, in a normal family. My father and mother were very respected people. Older brother and sister — teachers. But as they say, every family has its black sheep...

Our region is not very big. And in those days thieves laws flourished in it. When I was at the age to be in the communist youth organization, to the school came those who were called hooligans. They smoked and got drunk. Among them were people who were freed from prison. It was interesting for me to communicate with them. Their conversations seemed to me fairer than the communist youth and system. I came closer to ideas of thieves. I wanted to achieve and tried hard to achieve high standing in the lawless community. And I succeeded, I quickly learned to play cards, cheat, outplay, and began to teach people the ideas of thieves. And even when I was sitting in jail, I could not calm down. When my mother came to visit me, I did not come out, and we talked through the roof. She said that my father was ill and could not come. I could not believe why my father did not come, no matter how sick he may have been..

My first term ended quickly — in just a year and a half. My relatives came to get me. When we drove into the village (80 km from prison), instead of turning home they turned into the cemetery. Then the mother wept and said: «Son, your father is no more. So that you would not look for him at home, let us go to the grave...» My father was everything to me: a friend and comrade, he always understood me. In life, he never

raised his hand at me, never said a harsh word. But I could not look him straight in the eyes. He was both kind and a strict person. And you know, even when I visited his grave, I did not make any decisions, to fix my ways, to help my mother but rather I did not calm down. I served a short sentence, and with the leaders, continued in drunkenness, using drugs and stealing. I



reasoned that if you aspire to be a thief then working is shameful.

Once, in a fight, I stabbed a man. He died in hospital on the 8th day. For this I was given a 12 year sentence. This is how my «thug» life began in prison. I was 21 years old at the time, and counted on being free at 33. I thought: if in freedom nothing became of me — at least in prison I will become something. As Suvorov, hero of the Russian empire, said: «Every soldier wants to become a general,» and I figured: «Any prisoner who respects himself wants to become a thief.» In prison, I was very arrogant. The administration in charge hated me.

Soon my brother said that my mother was ill with cancer. I asked the administration for a visitation right and at this they were very surprised: «We don't allow this visitation for you but for your mother!» But the meeting did not take place, my mother died. On that day I stopped caring, my father I did not bury, my mother either, what do I need to be free for?! I waved my freedom goodbye. As a rowdy inmate I was transferred to Arkhangelsk. However, because of my behaviour the leaders would not take me in any camp, I refused to chop trees for work, and so I was taken back to Ossetia, then to Novochoerkassk, into a more confined area. So I became a step up in the underworld. Next I ended up in the Krasnodar region. When a believer come to us, I asked that he be next to us. But I was not acquainted with God at the time. The man then gave me a Bible.

In those 12 years a lot happened. When I returned home, I continued my life of sin. Even two years did not go by and I was again jailed for drugs and it was like I was home again. Everyone knew me well and I was not in need of anything. But I did not have peace.. I was free for a few days, then I was imprisoned for drugs again. When I was released 4 months early, I did not even go to my brother and sister because I was ashamed to go to family. I stayed with friends.

One Sunday we were standing in a crowd with the guys on the street, we were drunk and had shot up. Right at this time the Sunday service of the Christians had ended. I met my friend (we had previously shot up together). It was said of him that he came to faith and became a Baptist to which I replied, «Leave the man, he has his own and we our own». Gene Dzegoev came up to us and talked, congratulated me on my release, and then took me aside and said: «Would you come to our meeting on Sunday?» I answered that I would come just so he would leave. «No! Give me your word that you will come! Know that Jesus loves you!»

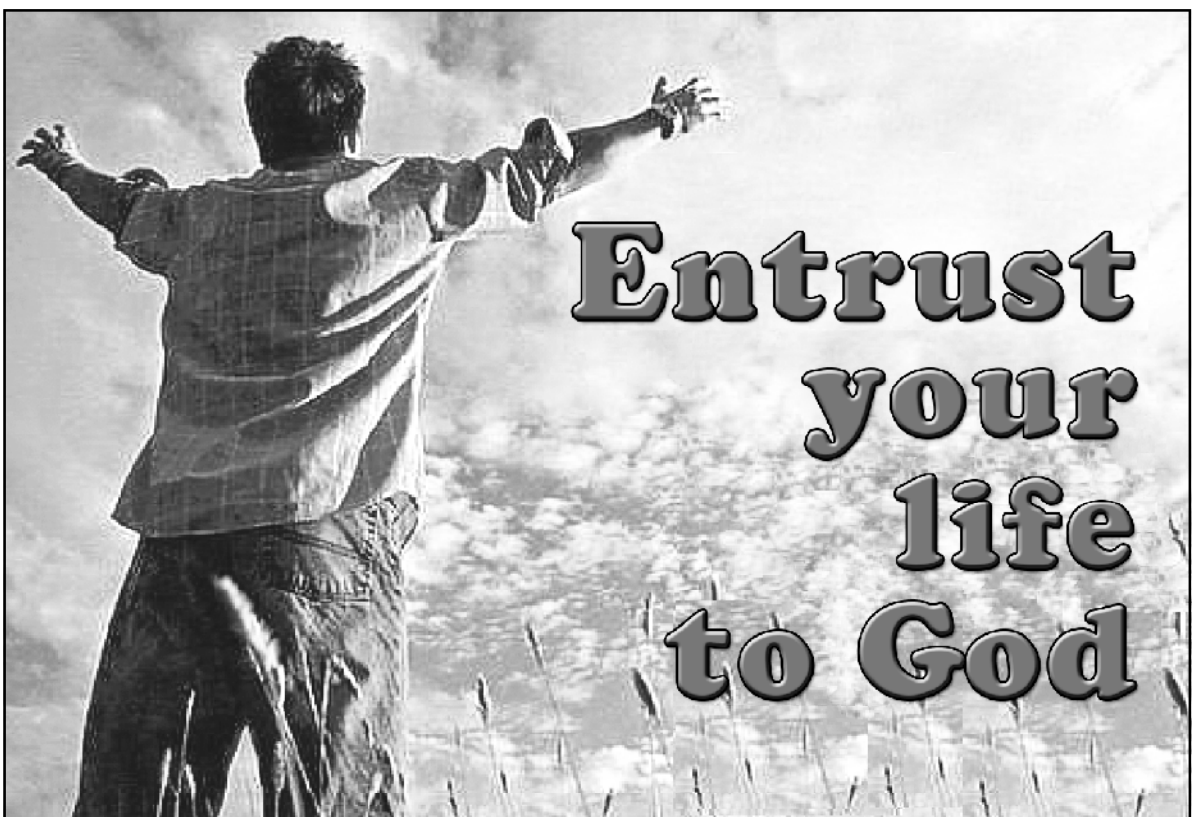
These same words touched my heart. All week I was thinking: what does Jesus love me for? In life I had done nothing but sin and cause problems. Even to my close ones I did not bring anything good. What does He love me for? For my sins, or what? Since I gave my word I came to the meeting. And you know there I saw so many familiar people, even those who I used to smoke with! They all came to God! My soul became inexplicably calm. And thank God! I started going to church, to Jesus! The addiction left me by itself, then the drinking, then I stopped smoking and I began to think about life. At the time I was almost 40 years yet I was not married and never thought about a family. And thank God, He sent me a wife. God began to show me such miracles that I can not live without Him. I have a house, I have a job. Who could believe that the I would work in a school as a director!

This is how Jesus Christ changed my life 180 degrees. What I was and who I have become. Glory to Jesus Christ!

Many thieves have come to God. They dropped their thieving ideas, they are now Christians. And there are many such testimonies..

I say to those who make the first steps to the lawless world: «Come back and repent, come to our Lord Jesus Christ! He will calm you. And when you feel this grace — you will not leave God. Only God can calm our hearts!»

Roman MURZAEV, Ossetia.



«You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures» (James 4:3).

A huge number of letters come to the editorial office, including the common phrase: «Help us for Christ's sake!..» As a rule, the writers of these lines have very tearful stories and repeatedly point to the reference from the Bible such as: *Matt. 25:31-40; Prov. 24:11; Ps. 78:11; James. 1:17* and others. Then they list essentials which exceed the monthly income of ordinary people. Almost every similar letter ends repeatedly underlined the fact that in addition to the essentials, sums of money without limits can be placed on their individual accounts. Also, the Lord's name is used only in the beginning of the letter, in the form of greeting, then in the middle, in the form of «Help for Christ's sake!» and a line at the end. In these letters, there is never anything spiritual, although the authors say they are believers. Reading these letters, one wonders: do these people live according to the word of God — as the Lord Himself commanded? For Jesus Christ clearly said in the Sermon on the Mount: «**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you**» (Matthew 6:33).

Apparently, some so-called Christians believe that the Lord's word spoken in those days was only for the first Christians, who followed Christ then. They do not attach importance to the fact that the biblical words have a particular living power, which through faith helps a sincere Christian believer in everything. To see this, we just need to start to live according to His word. The Lord said, «**Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?**

Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, «What shall we eat?» or «What shall we drink?» or «What shall we wear?» For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble» (Matthew 6:25-34).

When we have full confidence in the Lord, and are in daily search of the kingdom of God, the Lord will surely take care of us. He knows our every need and fills our needs with all necessary. And then there is no need to ask believers for in anything «for Christ's sake», for the Lord knows himself, through whom He would send precisely this assistance. The main thing is a sincere (child like) faith and complete trust in the Lord, and the Christian life itself must comply with the main image, that is Jesus Christ. And if it happens in the life of a Christian, then everything spoken by Christ has a real place, that is it comes to be. The Lord clearly said, «**If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will [a] ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you**» (John 15:7). Scripture also gives a characteristic of God: «**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?**» (Num. 23:19). Based on the above, you can rest assured that God

will not leave without attention any human need, if the do as the Lord commanded us. Relying on people, especially just by manipulating with the name of the Lord («for Christ's sake!» and so on), is unlikely to bring the desired result. The fact is that prisoners are already full if tearful stories of believers in freedom. Prison workers around the world are well aware of each other, and therefore all the beggars are well known. In this age of computerization, hiding ones selfish desires is virtually impossible. Therefore, there is only one way — complete trust, faith and trust in the Lord. God is impossible to cheat. And so it means we have to be open before him without lying. God sees every heart and knows every soul. Therefore his help always arrives in a timely manner, if the heart of the Christian is devoted and completely open to him: «**For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him**» (2 Chronicles 16:9).

Those who really need help, it is not necessary to write letters of complaints using the phrase «for Christ's sake!» and a number of hand-picked quotations on the subject from the Bible. It requires only faith and openness to God's heart. The letter to the Hebrews has a wonderful reminder: «**Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, «I will never leave you nor forsake you» (Hebrews 13:5).**

The more we trust in God and in search of his kingdom, the closer God is to us and takes care of every coming day. Even the ancient prophet was told: «**Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand**» (Isa. 41:10).

In the present day, these words are spoken by God remain in real power. For good reason it is said: «**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever**» (Hebrews 13:8).

I. DOLGUSHINA.



TESTIMONIES OF BORN AGAIN CHRISTIANS

BE COURAGEOUS AND LET GOD INTO YOUR HEART

In my life I have never had a turning point, when out of a normal citizen of the country, I became a criminal. Because I grew up on the streets, and as long as I remember myself, crime was my life, my element. That's what I was breathing, and I literally had no idea that there is something different and that there is any sense in something else.

When I was 17 I was arrested for the first time and taken to jail. Then I was sentenced to 1.5 years. When I turned 18, I was transferred from the juvenile prison to an adult prison and there I committed several serious crimes. Even then the court wanted to identify me as an especially dangerous recidivist, but due to the fact that the first conviction was when I was a minor, legally they could not make this charge. They sentenced me to extended imprisonment and sent me to a maximum security prison.

There were times, after eight and a half years of prison, when I thought about the meaning of life: «Maybe it's worth starting an honest life?» But this thought probably only lasted for about five minutes, and I remember laughing: «Wow, what a stupid thought I came up with!»

The first time I really understood that there is something the opposite of the life I lived, was when I met Jesus Christ. It was in prison. I had a dream: I saw Jesus in a dream, how He saved me from death. In the morning I could not understand how there could be a connection between me and God? I gathered all the «wise men» in the prison to interpret the dream. I finally realized that I did not see something important which was going to bring me satisfaction. At the time I did not know what was going to bring me happiness because I did not have it.

One time I was approached by some guy who said, «This is the Word of God,» and gave me a few pages printed on plain paper. It was the Gospel of Matthew. I eagerly read these lines. I had the impression that I am a

wanderer in the desert, whose soul dried out into hardtack. And now, a source of water that I drink and drink, and the soul begins to come to life... I constantly looked at the papers and thought: «...How few of them. Why is so little written about God, about Jesus Christ?»

Of course, Christ shook me to the very depths. It was then that I realized that someone had pulled the rug out from under my feet. It was then that I realized that someone was lying to me. I did not know that there is a devil, I did not know about the spiritual world. And in general, I did not understand anything in the gospel; I knew only that Christ is a great deity, who has something to do with the people today. I imagined standing at the Cross where the Lord was crucified. I thought that if I was there, I would have killed these people, I would not allow anyone to touch You, I would have cut them with both hands while my hands were not tired. I would not let Thee be crucified. And then for the first time in my life I prayed. Then a reassessment of values began.

When I was released, my friends said that there is a lot of work for me. However, I began using drugs again. I did not have problems with money, and did not have to search for drugs. I could easily and freely use drugs in large quantities. Friends told me: «Why did you start using drugs? We have so much work where we need your cool head, because it's a very serious matter. We must take a sober look at things». But I could not give up drugs. They were stronger than me. I tried to quit, but I did not succeed. Friends said: «We do not believe you, you have enormous willpower; you can refuse anything». Then I realized that they doubted me.

I was a very arrogant and insolent, and therefore said: «Who do you think you are? I do not even want to know you. You think I cannot live without you? It is you who cannot live without me!» We parted ways then. I knew how to live in this life, how to

find the money to have fun. But I was left alone, which I regretted. I was used to living among people who are united by one idea, therefore it was difficult to be alone.

In 1993, I was arrested again and sentenced to 1.5 years for drug abuse. There I met Christians from the Baptist church, and saw that they are really believers. I learned all about God and saw what it is to be a true Christian. I realized that I was afraid to become one and this frightened me. I have always considered myself brave and never thought that something in life could scare or stop me.

A very hard struggle began which lasted a few years before I was humbled and realized that I will lose this fight and I cannot fight God. God loves me, and I hate him; He wants to save me, and I want to die; He offers me good, and I'm doing wrong. I saw that this was illogical. I realized that there is a way out; submit to God. But the difficulty was that I did not want to acknowledge my spiritual poverty, therefore I fought to the very end.

I faced death many times and many of my friends died; some shot like mad dogs, shootouts, some slaughtered, some hanged themselves, many died from drugs, and some are serving life imprisonment. I had to go through all this in life. When I was dying of sepsis, I prayed to God: «God, I do not understand why you created me: for me to die on this bed like a dog?» In the night a person brought in, he groaned and died that same night. God showed that this wasn't happening just because.

Then I turned to the Lord: «God, do something. I do not know how to change my life. You want me to be a Christian but I do not understand how to become one. I even cannot imagine how my life can change. I'm soaked to the bone marrow with crime. I do not know how to get rid of them and get free. Forgive me God, I know that I have a bad relationship with you. I'm sorry». Then God said to me: «I will put you on your feet». And then, all of a sudden



I started to get better! Doctors were simply amazed at what was going on.

I openly told them that I pray to God, and God said that would put me on my feet. Several months passed when I realized that I was better. However I called again and ordered drugs. I was transferred to another hospital where I again began to use drugs. There I saw a young woman die, 25 years old, and a man of 22 years. For the first time in my life, a chilling horror fell upon me, as if God took me by the throat and asked: «How long will you anger me with your sins?»

I remember that I sat down and thought, «I am sick of this foul drug addicted life! All my life I have the police looking me, or I need something to steal, or I have to hide, or some kind of trouble, or gang violence. I'm tired already, I cannot live like this». Then God spoke to me that evening: «I love you, I want to save you, do you really not understand this?» Only then I took the only solution, I knelt and cried like a child. For several days tears flowed from my eyes. I asked Him: «Lord! Forgive my sins. All my life I have done evil and hated people in the world. But now fill my life, because I want to live for You!»

Today I work in the church, I serve the brothers; missionaries, many pastors, and the work is colossal. But we want to do even more. This is only the beginning. It is a great joy for me! Christ has forgiven all my sins! I pray that God's grace transforms the lives of others!

Sergey GAVRILOV.

UNUSUAL STORIES

A Special Document



Among the papers of a missionary who passed away, on the island of Formosa a special document was found. On it was written an oath that the young man had given to God: *Today I'm giving myself to Thee and I promise to use my talents, abilities, time and possessions for the glory of your name. I surrender myself and everything I have to you without any limitations. Not my will but yours shall be done.*

The first entry was made on the day of his sixteenth birthday, and was renewed each year on his birthday.

The last entry was made at his 85th birthday. After he got married, his wife signed under the oath as well.

A Generous Act

People say that the Emperor Carl the Fifth owed a large sum of money to merchant of Augsburg. That merchant once decided to give a banquet in honor of the Emperor... After the banquet he took out the bill in front of the Emperor and ripping it into tiny pieces he threw it into a burning fireplace. This way he forgave the Emperor the debt he owed him.



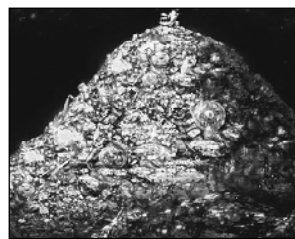
When the Emperor entered into the merchant's house, he did not have enough money to pay off the debt: but when he left his house, he was free of any obligations. The Emperor himself, did nothing to earn that, so he had nothing else to do except gratefully accept the merchant's gift. Thanks to the noble act of the landlord, there wasn't anything left of the bill. When Carl the Fifth saw how the flames were destroying it, he knew that his debt was forgiven.

Just like us, when we see what Jesus did on the cross for our redemption, we are convinced of the freedom we gained from sins. The landlord made a sacrifice when he got rid of the bill

that had great value. But to redeem us from our sins our Christ has done much more. He gave away his only Son to crucifixion that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have an everlasting life.

Spiritual Things are Above Material Things

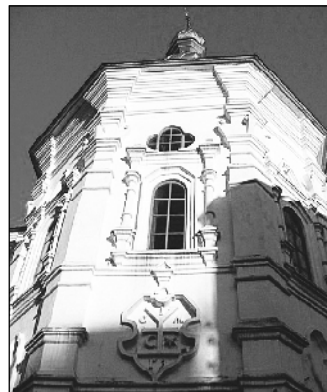
A well-known American evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody lost all of his property to a fire. On the next day, his friends came to sympathize with him. He greeted them, as always, with a radiant smile shining on his face and was very surprised by their sympathy. He told them: «I have many more treasures, than those that were burned in the fire. The things that were burned are too unimportant to talk about. You can read about my possessions in Revelations 21:7».



It's important not to overdo it

One person, who used to be an atheist for many years, became a Christian. In a talk with him, I found out that during his youth years he went to a Christian Institute. His questioning of Christian faith was brought out by being in that Institute. He told me about the years he lived in it. As a young boy he and his friends went to church every Sunday and were locked in the tall galleria, which was positioned at the farthest corner of the church, where they barely heard any words of the sermon. They felt like prisoners in that far corner, where in the summer it was very hot and in the winter they suffered from terrible cold... All Sunday they had to pray, pray, and pray. And nothing the preachers said would touch his heart. He got so tired of those prayers that he decided to stop being a Christian as soon as he left the Institute.

This is a very sad and tragic story, but unfortunately, this happens often. You can teach your children religion in such a tedious way, that they will start to despise it. You need wisdom to bring souls to Christ.



vk.com/shortstoryforsoul

CHRISTIAN NEWS

The Strength of a Dying Mothers Smile

He lived just for the sake of money and pubs. But everything changed after he saw his dying mother's smile. Steve Christie was planning to celebrate his 40th birthday in one of the Edinburgh (capital of Scotland) hotels. He planned three days of binge drinking with his 5 friends but unexpectedly, he got a call from his father. Steve's mother was dying. She had a massive heart attack and the surgeon said that she had only 2 days to live. Steve's sister (a devout Christian), spent the whole night with her. On the next day, Steve came to visit her in the hospital.

«When I was walking to her room, I didn't know what to expect», said Steve. «What will I see? Despair? Depression? Tears? When I walked into the room, she was lying on the bed. They told her, her diagnosis but... she had a radiant smile on her face. I asked my sister Jackie: «What happened? Did they misdiagnose her?» She replied: «No, everything is much better. She's saved». «Saved?» I asked «Saved from what?»

Four years ago that mysterious smile on the mother's face was the first link in the chain that led Steve who is now 44) to salvation and onto the streets preaching. Today this Scottish man from Edinburgh regrets that he didn't want to and waited so long to read the Bible and Christian scriptures, and listen to the Christian CD's that his sister gave him for the purpose of leading him to Christ.

His repentance and involvement in service became a good encouragement for the whole nation which was once blessed with Protestant Reformation through John Knox but began to lack spiritual faith.

«I was very stubborn», confesses Steve. «For 20 years, I lived however I wished. I did whatever I wanted, but that was the wrong path. I tried everything in search of happiness...» But true happiness can only be found in the LORD.

<http://www.invictory.info/article1115.html>

DISCUSSION CLUB

If you were ever interested in psychology, then you must have heard about the tests that help a person get to know oneself. If you've taken one of these tests at one point or another, you know what is involved. And for those who have no idea what these tests are, we want to offer one of them.

Prepare a sheet of paper and a pen. Try to quickly and honestly answer the questions below. Once you answer these questions, read the explanation of the test, which is located in the box below.

Question #1: Think of your favorite animal (except a dog or a cat).

Write down three sentences that describe your attitude towards that animal.

2. Why does a person need to get to know him- or herself?

To answer this question, let us think a little about it. Suppose a person tried to get to know himself and realized that he was good or bad, what's next? Either he will fall into depression from the awareness of his own shortcomings, or will be extremely proud of his abilities. What is next? The person needs to do something with what he learned about himself. And if he does not use what he learned to improve himself, then his self-discovery is useless. In other words, if improving is not the purpose of self-discovery, then what is the point in getting to know oneself?

Thus, we have come to the definition of the term «self-discovery».

opinion is objective, we can safely rely on Him in the process of self-discovery.

To help each of us get to know our self objectively, the Lord God gave us His Word.

A. For the people of the Old Testament, the 10 commandments became their spiritual mirror (**Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 6**). God's law was given to man so that he could compare himself with it and realize his sinfulness: **Romans 7:7** — *...I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;* **Romans 5:13** — *For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law;* **Romans 3:20** — *...for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

To help us know ourselves and work on our character, the Lord has not only given us His wise and impartial Word, which serves as a spiritual mirror for each of us, but He also created a tool by the help of which we can test the process of self-discovery and improvement. This tool for each of us is the Church.

Communication with brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as all kinds of situations that occur in the church, force a person to demonstrate certain features of his character, both good and bad. In this way the person gets to know himself and finds out what else he needs to change in his character.

You may say that now we are contradicting ourselves. In the beginning of the conversation it was said that the opinion of a person or group of people is subjective, and therefore does not allow a person to get to know himself in a full-fledged manner. And now we urge everyone to get to know oneself through communication with close people... and not just anywhere, but in church.

Dear friends, there is no contradiction here. It is one thing to rely on the world's public opinion and worldview, formed under the influence of sin. In this case, instead of getting to know oneself and improving according to the image of the Creator, you will only deteriorate, transforming into the image of your worldly surroundings, that is «conforming to this world». In **Romans 12:2** the Lord tells us: *and be not conformed to this world*, meaning that we shouldn't live by the image of the sinful world. There is a Russian proverb that says: who you spend your time with, is who you will become. But the Bible teaches: *Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners* (**1 Corinthians 15:33**).

It is a completely different thing to trust the opinion of Christians, whose worldview is formed by God's Word. In this case, it is useful for each of us to have close relationships with people who are guided by biblical principles in their lives. This will allow us to not only get to fully know ourselves, but to also get closer to the goal, which is the transformation into the image of our Creator: *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord* (**2 Corinthians 3:18**).

In conclusion, we want to remind that self-discovery should not be an end in itself. The aim should be to perfect one's self-identity. But perfection is impossible without the awareness and recognition of one's mistakes, and the desire to change for the better. Therefore do not forget that you will improve only if firstly, you are willing to admit your mistakes and change, and secondly, if you will allow and not interfere with the Lord God working in you on all the necessary changes.

Today we talked about the need to examine ourselves. Let the following Scripture be parting words to each of you in your process of self-discovery: **2 Corinthians 13:5** — *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reborn?*

<http://cogmtl.net/Articles/111.htm>

TOPICS FOR REFLECTION

GETTING TO KNOW ONESELF

Question #2: Think of your favorite color.

Write down three sentences that describe your attitude towards this color.

Question #3: Close your eyes and imagine either the sea or the ocean.

Write down three sentences that describe what you feel.

Question #4: Imagine yourself in an empty white room without windows and doors.

Using three words, describe what you feel.

It is the process of getting to know oneself as an individual in order to improve, meaning to change for the better.

II. HOW CAN ONE GET TO KNOW HIMSELF?

1. By relying on his own mind
Some are so confident in themselves, that they believe they are capable of getting to know themselves by relying on their own mind. The Bible proverb says: *Be not wise in thine own eyes* (**Proverbs 3:7**). The Lord God, knowing about the limitations of our mind and perception, warns us through the prophet **Isaiah (5:21)**: *Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*

Therefore, the Lord advises us to not rely on our own subjective opinion, but to trust Him and His Word in all matters: **Proverbs 3:5** — *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

2. By relying on the opinion of those surrounding you

A person can get to know oneself by comparing himself with others and listening to their opinions. These measures allow the person to learn something about himself. However, this kind of self-discovery is doomed to be one-sided and subjective, because people's opinions about us are subjective in most cases.

Thus, this method of self-discovery is also unsuitable.

3. By relying on God's opinion

Remember: only God's opinion is objective.

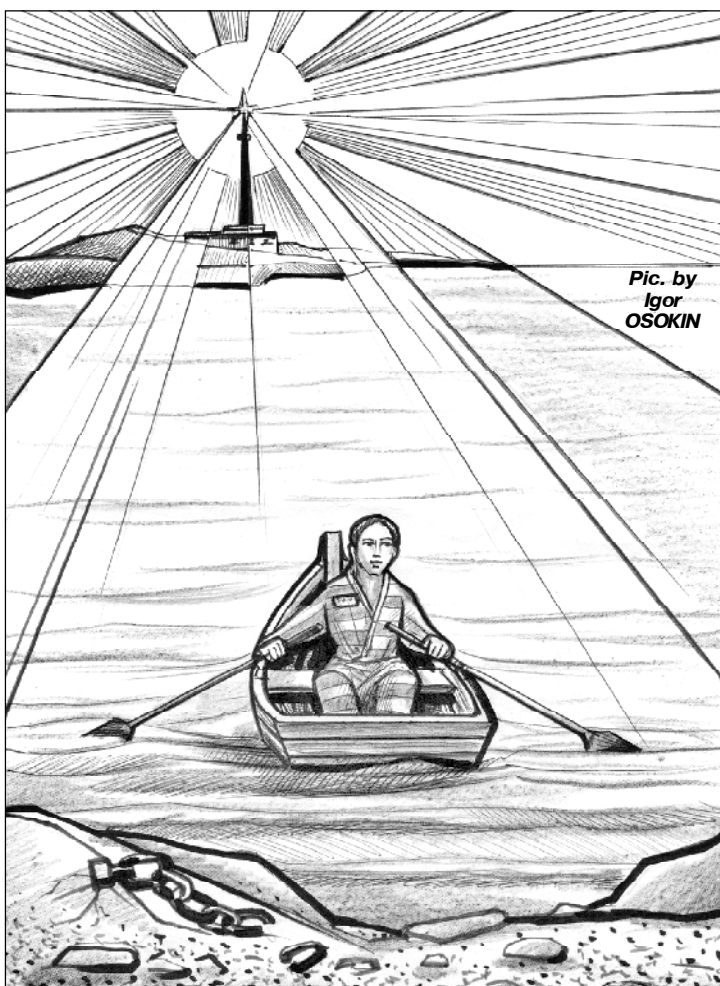
Firstly, the Lord God is our Creator, who created each of us. Who knows us better than our Creator who sees through each and every one of us?

Jeremiah 17:9-10 — *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

Secondly, as an impartial Judge, He shows no partiality in His judgment: **1 Peter 1:17** — *And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Since God is no respecter of persons and His*

B. For the people of the New Testament era, the Lord gave the New Testament: the Gospels and Epistles, which are full of edification and spiritual advice. The New Testament is the spiritual mirror, looking at which a person can, not only see God, but get to know himself: **James 1:22-24** — *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*

1 Timothy 4:16a says: *Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them.* The Word of God teaches that, firstly, we need to delve into ourselves, that is, examine



Pic. by Igor OSOKIN

ourselves; secondly we need to delve into the teaching of God about what He wants us to be; and thirdly, we need to compare ourselves with the standard given by God in His Word, and seek to conform to this standard.

III. THE CHURCH AS ONE OF THE INSTRUMENTS TO WORK ON ONE'S CHARACTER

In **Hebrews 10:25**, the Lord tells us: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of*

TEST EXPLANATION:

Your answer to the first question describes your attitude towards your surroundings.

Your answer to the second question describes your own attitude towards yourself.

Your answer to the third question describes your attitude towards life.

Your answer to the fourth question describes your attitude towards death.

Please do not take to heart the results of this test, as it was not designed for those your age, but for children of primary school age. But if you learned something new about yourself, then we are happy for you.

The fact that this conversation began with the test is not an accident. The aim of this test was to help people learn something new about themselves or help them understand their subconscious feelings. Today we will talk about self-discovery, and will look at it through the prism of the Bible.

I. THE NECESSITY OF SELF-DISCOVERY

The first thing we need to find out today is the answer to the question «Does a person need to get to know oneself? If so, why does one need it?»

1. Does a person need to get to know oneself?

The Holy Scriptures answer this question through **1 Timothy 4:16**, where the Lord tells each of us to delve into yourself: *Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.* To take heed unto thyself means to get to know yourself.



THE MEANING OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

The problem with all Christian holidays in our country is that most people do not understand the meaning of the holidays. People may know and perform a lot of traditions but not understand the truth enclosed in celebrating them. Because of this, people are often celebrating holidays that actually condemn them and leads them to trial and punishment.

We fight not to observe more traditions but to grasp a deeper understanding of God's Word, which is God himself. Therefore, at each worship service, and certainly at a festive divine service, we open the Bible and study it so that we can understand God, and celebrate so it would be pleasing to Him. So today we'll study the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection.

I. The meaning of Jesus Christ's death.

...For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit... (1 Peter 3:18). (KJV)

Therefore, what is the true meaning of His death?

1. His death is not just an example of moral conduct.

2. His death is the only way to save a person from the terrible guilt and violent wrath of God that will forever be on sinners who have not obeyed the Gospel.

3. In his death Christ survived the eternal hell, the outpouring of eternal justice of God's wrath on sinners.

II. The meaning of Jesus Christ's resurrection.

1. His resurrection glorified and worshiped our Savior, who is eternal:

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was (John 17:5). (KJV)

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world (John 17:24). (KJV)

Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God (1 Peter 1:21). (KJV)

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:6-11). (KJV)

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him (Romans 6:9). (KJV)

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Romans 8:34). (KJV)

And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you (Acts 13:34-41). (KJV)

2. The resurrection proved the righteousness of God in forgiving a sinner:

But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many (Romans 5:15). (KJV)

If Jesus had not risen, God would not have had a righteous path for forgiveness of a sinner, because sin must be punished justly, with the wrath of God. And if Jesus had not risen, then He did not bring a necessary sacrifice. And if Jesus had not risen, then he was absolutely sinful or he had not been so glorious to survive the eternal torments of hell.

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept (1 Corinthians 15:12-20). (KJV)

3. Christ's resurrection leads sinners to repentance and gives them strength to repent in all of their sins:

Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them (Acts 5:25-33). (KJV)

4. The resurrection gives reason for forgiveness of sins (removal of guilt, the release of the wrath of God):

And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept (1 Corinthians 15:17-20). (KJV)

5. The resurrection gives a foundation to a spiritual birth (revival):

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7). (KJV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you... (1 Peter 1:3-4). (KJV)

6. The resurrection gives a foundation for the Holy Spirit to dwell in a born again person and to begin taking care of their impotent soul:

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his

loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:29-42). (KJV)

7. The resurrection gives us power to defeat any sin:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him... (Romans 6:1-8). (KJV)

8. The resurrection gives a saved person an advocate and judge who defends us from prosecutors and keeps us in his love, the love of God:

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:31-39). (KJV)

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (Colossians 3:1-4). (KJV)

9. The resurrection gives saved people God's protection, and a personal communication with Him:

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in

heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:16-20). (KJV)

10. The resurrection declares that the judgment of God is approaching:

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:16-31). (KJV)

11. The resurrection spares the saved soul from the wrath of God:

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life (Romans 5:6-10). (KJV)

For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). (KJV)

12. The resurrection guarantees eternal life: 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:21-24; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Romans 6:4; 8:11.

13. The resurrection set the foundation and the power of the Word of God: Mathew 17:22; 1 Corinthians 15:4; Acts 13:32-33.

14. The resurrection brings forth the miraculous healing as in the days of Jesus Christ: Acts 4:8-11.

15. The resurrection assures that Jesus Christ will be judge of the living and dead: Acts 10:42; 17:31.

16. The resurrection makes joy and happiness possible: John 20:1-18.

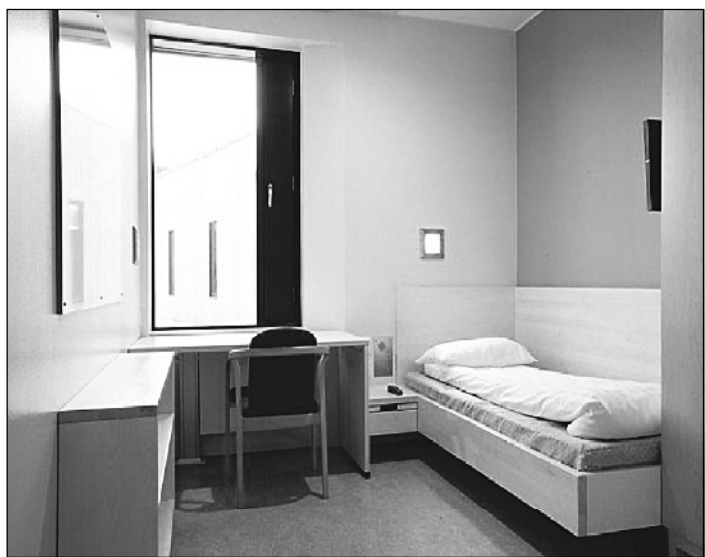
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LIFE IN NORWAY. WHY IS NORWEGIAN



The Norwegian prison is recognized as the most comfortable in the world

Criminals facing a term in their home country prefer to flee to Norway and serve their term in this country. Foreigners, even if they entered the country illegally, enjoy



the same rights as Norwegians. According to the prison service in Norway, now foreigners account for 34.2 % of all prisoners in local jails.

The number of foreign inmates in Norwegian prisons over the past 14 years has quadrupled. It features computers with Internet access, libraries, telephones, medical care, sometimes they even give pocket money. The level of comfort in the prisons is approaching summer youth camps.

According to experts, the humane treatment of convicted persons is beneficial to their rehabilitation: the percentage of repeat offenders here are the lowest in Europe — 30 %.

Why in Norway, Criminals serve no longer than 21 years?

Indeed, this is an interesting question, which lately is discussed along with other «prison» themes.

For example, why is it useful to provide for criminals in prison? Is there any other solution? In essence, the imprisonment was used as a result of the unanimous attitude towards the objectives of criminal punishment.

The sentence has five objectives: deserved punishment, restriction of rights, intimidation and deterrence, correction and rehabilitation. The penalty matches the public conception of Justice and respect for the rules, which in the cultural consciousness of our country's population noticeably weakened. Any conversation that correcting the offender is more important than punishment, usually causing outrage and criticism that: such a

position significantly weakens the security of society, pushes aside the interests of the victims and it makes the criminals lives too comfortable. Never mind that according to some studies, some forms of corrections reduce the likelihood of further crimes. Those against this system, first and foremost, categorically demand vengeance on the offenders. Although the same thing is happening all over the world.

Unlike other countries, Norway has been characterized as a progressive system of penalties, which focuses on the correction and rehabilitation, which is expected to reduce the level of crime in the future. This does not mean that they do not imprison — just that the conditions in prisons are created such to reduce the likelihood repeat offenders.

Unlike many of the United States judicial districts, in which the sentence of the offender is

Norway is one of the most prosperous countries in Europe. It's a fact. Everything there is created for the people, for their comfortable life. This also applies to criminals. For them, such comfortable conditions of detention are created, that it may seem like a fairy tale. Norway has a truly humane prison system. For many centuries of our history we are accustomed to the fact that the perpetrators of the crimes should suffer. This primarily applies to the conditions of the prison. People should be afraid of prison, afraid of punishment.

determined by the verdict (that is, they serve exactly the term that was appointed by the Court), in Norway, the final sentence is not specified in the verdict. And the issue of the prison term is solved on the basis of the analytical report in which is stated whether or not the prisoner has reformed.

As noted, the appointed term of imprisonment in Norway does not exceed 21 years, but the appointed term may be extended by five years if the prisoner has not managed to reform by end of the originally assigned sentence. And in this case,



the period may be extended every five years up to infinity. Therefore, in principle, a person can remain in prison for life, just that their sentence will be increased gradually.

The results of such a system appear to be positive, in the sense that they reduce the likelihood of

repeat offenders. I could not find a more authoritative source, but in the article an article on the Norwegian prison system, published in the Guardian newspaper, the percentage of repeat offenders is approximately 16 %, the lowest in Europe, while in the United States it is about 40 %.

However, the practice of sentencing a term and prison conditions, are not without controversy. Recently in Europe there were fierce disputes about the apparent injustice that prisoners in Norway live in relative luxury, and that the living conditions of the poor and/or elderly, law-abiding citizens is much worse.

A completely justified question is: should prisoners be kept in more comfortable conditions than those of law-abiding citizens, even if these improved conditions are part of a policy that promotes the rapid correction of offenders. At least in this respect Norway has chosen the





PRISON BETTER THEN OUR FREEDOM?

strategy through which it can, with maximum efficiency, reduce crime. And one of the elements of this strategy is to limit prison terms.

Halden Prison

Located in about 75 acres of pine forest, the prison is designed for 252 prisoners. The construction and furnishing the prison cost the Norwegian budget 1.5 billion krone (\$252 million).

The prison «Halden fengsel» is a complex situated in the forest. On the territory of the prison is the cultural center with recording studio, creativity rooms, library, winter garden, a sports center with a large hall for classes, jogging tracks, separate houses for extended visits with relatives, a building for school and labs, a Medical Center, and manufacturing workshops. Also in Halden fengsel, you can find a pottery Studio, a gym, a library,



rather reminiscent of inexpensive hotels.

They are also authorized mobile communications and Internet access. In the building there is a prison kitchen where prisoners are taught culinary arts.

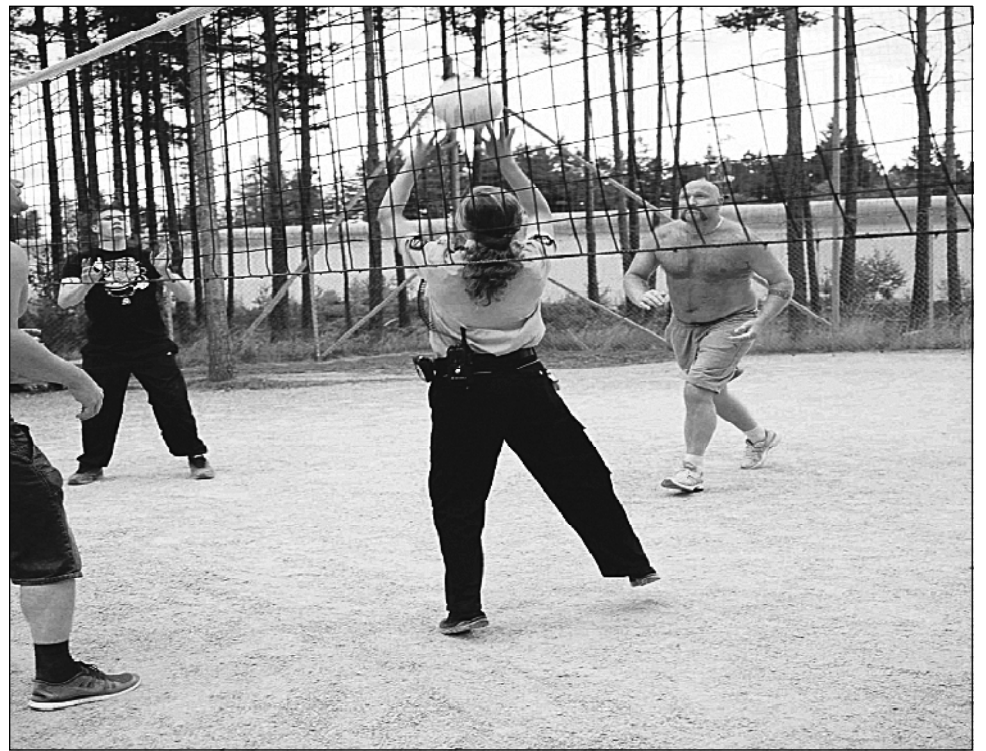
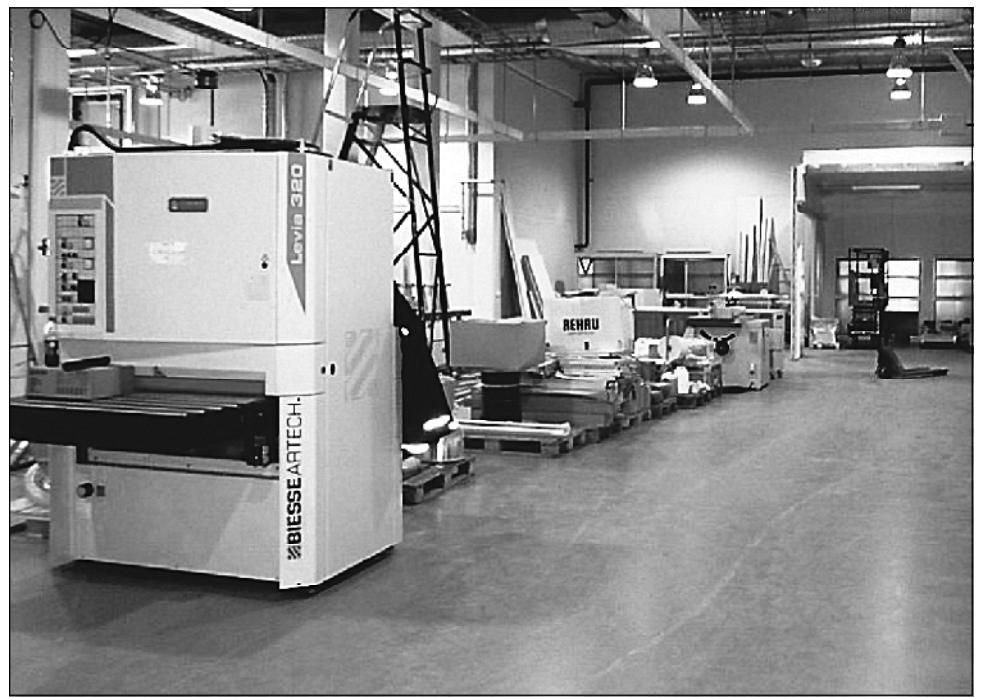
The Director of the prison, Are Hojdal', notes that the «Halden fengsel» houses drug traffickers, murderers and rapists, but the Norwegian prisoner rehabilitation measures are effective: only 20 % of the convicted prisoners are jailed again within two years after being released, while in the United States and the UK, this figure reaches 50-60 %.

As for social benefits granted to foreign individuals serving time in Norwegian prisons, foreign offenders receive the same benefits as the Norwegian prisoners. After one year in the Norwegian prison they have the right to:

Receive material assistance for kids who are minors (970 NOK/month).

And receive additional material assistance for children who are not enrolled in a daycare (3303 NOK per month).

The prison conditions, in which more than 200 Norwegian criminals convicted of serious crimes reside, differ little from those that they had when they were free. Norwegian



computers, a room for prayer and even a grocery store called Justisen («justice»).

Prison artwork, costs almost a million dollars. The prison regime in Halden allows for the free movement of prisoners on the territory.

«In the Norwegian prison system, the main thing is respect for the person and his rights,» said the Director of the prison in Halden, Are Hojdal. «We do not see anything unusual. Each convicted person has full room, 12 square meters, equipped with modern furniture, LCD tv, a shower (2 square meters), a small refrigerator, and is a room



photographer Knut Egil Wang visited the prison where prisoners are more like a health resort than the bleak existence in a maximum-security correctional facility. See for yourself by looking at photos of Norwegian prisons.

One of the advantages of the prison in Halden, is considered to be the attitude of the administration towards prisoners. The guards are without weapons and play sports with the convicted and they have dinner together. Half of guards are women. The management of prison believes that this reduces the aggressiveness of the prisoners.

TESTIMONIES OF BORN AGAIN CHRISTIANS

My name is Andrey Kreshchenko. I am 30 years old and am serving time in a maximum security prison. Our prison is divided into seven sectors, I am the leader of the Seventh sector. My brother Zhora is serving time in the adjacent sector.

I repented and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and personal savior on August 2, 2001. My search for God began after five years on the run, when I was finally arrested. Once in jail, I became ill with tuberculosis. When I arrived to the tuberculosis zone #89 in Dnepropetrovsk, I thought about the meaning of life and eternity for the first time. For the first time in my life I was afraid of death when I saw twenty-year old guys whose lives were just starting, die from tuberculosis. There were many questions that my environment could not answer.

After a seven-month stay in the tuberculosis zone, I was treated and was transferred to the «healthy» camp, SIC-21. That is where I met the faithful brothers who have helped me find God. They answered all of my questions biblically. And as I wrote above, God came into my heart August 2nd 2001.

It was very difficult to take this step. I was still thinking about the opinions of others. What will my

older brother Zhora say? How will my accomplice, who is also in this prison, react to this? But thank God that He gave me wisdom and courage; I used to think faith was for the weak. After my repentance, I began to pray for my relatives, for

Spirit we talked the night away. We began to pray for my two brothers, Sasha and Zhora.

As time went on, at meetings with Zhora I always tried to sow the Word, telling him about Jesus. I also prayed for Sasha, asking God to

2003), the church gathered at the club for praise and worship. Zhora also came along. After the worship, I came out and testified about Sasha's repentance during the prison visit. In the end I said: «my brother Zhora, who is here now, is the last member of our family who is not saved. But I believe the Word of God, which says, «you will be saved, you and your household», the time will come and he will repent. God will soften his heart». After that, I took my place.

The Pastor preached, and then there was a call for repentance. Eight people repented and among them was Zhora! After the prayer of repentance, I ran out to the stage and congratulated Zhora and then testified that God saved my whole house!

Praise God! I thank Him that He has revealed His mercy, and my whole family repented. I want to say to all the readers of this testimony, boldly and faithfully put your trust in God. God is faithful to His Word. He watches over every word in the Bible. May God abundantly bless you all!

**Андрей КРЕЩЕНКО,
СИК-21, 15-е отд., 151-я бр.,
с. Аполлоновка,
Солонянский район,
Днепропетровская область.**

«You will be saved, you and your household»

God to save them. Four months after my repentance, on December 10 2001, my mother came for a visit. Prior to her arrival, I did not dare tell her about my repentance. I was afraid that my mother would not understand and would tell me to keep away from religion and church and use my brain. But God prepared a surprise for me.

On the day of our meeting, slightly nervous, I came into the room, hugged and kissed my mother, and looked for an opportunity to talk to her about God, and when I blurted out: «Mom, I've decided to change my life with the help of God and repented of my sins and now go to church», she turned to me and said: «Son, I too repented». What a surprise! In one

send him his evangelists. Later he wrote me that he was often stopped in the street and told about Christ. After a year, on December 25, 2002, we met again with the whole family during a prison visit.

When Sasha was driving to this meeting, his neck cramped up, so that he could barely turn his head. The Lord gave me confidence, and I preached to them, and then suggested to pray for Sasha's healing. He agreed. After the prayer, I immediately invited him to repent of his sins. He answered that he was ready. My brother repented, praise God! I prayed for him with tears in my eyes, tears of joy.

Of all the family, only Zhora remained unconverted. After 12 days, at Christmas time (January 6,

The Lord called me to him and broke the world I built with the devil. It all started from my childhood. I was christened Alexander when I was 12 years old. Formally I was a member of the Orthodox Church, but I was not instructed in the Christian faith. I lived like everybody else. I learned how to live in school and in from the people who surrounded me. I grew up without a father; he died early on during my childhood. My mother was a good person but not strict in my upbringing, and I had her around my finger. The freedom I had, was often used in my own detriment; I committed petty crimes, stealing, cheating, fighting, and in 14 years managed to earn a prison sentence.

Prison taught me much, even useful things: to think for myself, have a personal opinion and not be afraid to go against the flow of life, work, read books, do sports, achieve my goals, be careful with what I say and take responsibility for my words, and many other things as well. But at the same time, in jail I learned: lying, cunning, craftiness, and worst of all — my soul was already crippled and poisoned with all I had seen and experienced in prison. The criminal world and all who lived in it, I already knew.

Playing «naperstki» I earned a fortune. By cheating and scamming, I learned, at the time, a lot of money. I married twice and had two children. During a routine crime, transporting a large amount of drugs, I was detained and was surprised that I was arrested, they even fabricated a criminal case: large scale drug trafficking. I did do this, but it was hard prove; you needed a lot of evidence. The police did not attempt to gather evidence, and the case was put together from the testimonies of drug addicts under dictation of the investigators. Words without evidence is worthless, but not in the USSR.

So God showed me: You are a criminal and wicked, and they can do the same to you. But that arrest was the beginning of my new life. When I was arrested and was questioned, I was temporarily left alone in the office of the inspector, and I saw the icon of the Mother of God with the Christ Child in her arms, I felt such a weight on my shoulders that I could not stand and I just dropped to my knees and began to pray to Virgin Mary, I asked to be saved and to take me through all the trials and bring me out to the light. In the end, that is exactly what happened. I faced a considerable sentence, the case was exaggerated, it was on the news and even a movie was filmed.

It was necessary to give a considerable sentence because of all the publicity. In fact they were just scared that the drugs were not controlled by the police, and they didn't get anything out of it except for headaches. In the prison cell, I picked up the Bible and began to read it. My life collapsed like a house does from an atomic bomb; fast and scary. It felt like a dream or a movie, like this wasn't happening to me. I

became beautiful, full of bright colors, yet I remained in prison. Then I was sentenced to 8 years (not the 12 years the lawyers told me) labor camp and construction of a church in the prison. God has given me freedom much earlier than my expected release date.

Still in camp, I read about the life of a saint, who was Russian but lived in America. I learned about a monk, the spiritual son of a saint

Call upon God, and He will exalt you

lost my freedom, family, friends, money and the opportunity to live the way I wanted. I thought that I was dead but still alive externally for some reason. I could not find consolation in anything, peace and quiet only came when I read the Bible.

One day I heard an American preacher on TV; he called people to repentance and taught how to invite Christ into your heart. I lay down on my bed and quietly invited God into my heart; I asked: if you exist, please come into my heart also. I was so surprised when God came into my heart through the Holy Spirit, and let me know about him, that I almost fell off the bed.

I was elated with joy, and I wanted to shout to the whole world. The Bible was opened to me, and I could not understand why I did not understand these words of the Holy Scripture before. God began to work in my life, and everything around me began to change. There was a desire to pray, study the Bible, live

living in our time. It was about Saint John Maximovitch and Eugene Rose. So for the first time I encountered saints, who strongly influenced my further life. What struck me was the love in Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco, his caring for the children of God, Christians, and his readiness to help any person who was suffering. His zeal to God just touched my heart and encouraged a life with Christ. This is surprising for this century, he was just some weirdo who walked barefoot, barely ate, did not sleep in a bed, but looked for the poor in the slums and trash, he fed and clothed them, he was a bishop, and his life was truly that of a Christian.

When I was reading about St. John, I saw a photo of a monk, his face and gaze was far away, in some other world, the world beyond this world, the monks face was nice and on his face was a joy that he was looking and seeing this mysterious world. You want to say

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

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

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

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



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