

PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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

(John 8:32)

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«He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me» (Mk. 7:6).

Today, many Christians try to preach the gospel and talk about what Christ means in their lives. A lot is said about the mercy and love of God, many say it's important to have love towards God and your neighbor. When you listen to or read these sermons, your heart fills with joy. However, when confronting reality, it turns out that not everything is so smooth and pretty among the Christian people. The first thing you notice is the imperfection of love. It is talked about a lot, but words and actions do not coincide with each other. And imperfection of love is not only in the unbelievers but in Christian's as well. Today, Christianity is divided into many churches, and the imperfection of love is present in almost every church. First of all, the manifestation of this imperfection occurs in

human beliefs and no religious restrictions and austerity will save us if we do not become perfect in love.

Perfection in love is a love for all people. This is the love that God loves everyone without exception. He loved each one of us and handed us his saving hand. The same love God is waiting from us so that His love in us will manifest itself fully. But what happens in reality: do we have that love which God is patiently waiting from us?!

Today, many Christians of various denominations are more inclined to condemn other faiths than to achieve perfection in love. Many Christians are trying to prove the truth of their church, but at the same time forgetting the most important thing — the perfection of love. And, as has been said above, where there is no perfect love, there is only a «sounding brass».

Today's theme of imperfection in love did not come up just by chance. We receive a lot of letters,

IMPERFECTION IN LOVE

condemning other Christians, or denominations. Unfortunately, human beliefs prevail over God's. If everyone was striving to follow the basics of Christianity, God's commandments (love God and thy neighbor), in the present day there would not be open hostility between Christians of different churches.

Why is all this happening? Is the example of Jesus Christ worth nothing for Christians? Well, if we call ourselves Christians, then why not do as He did?! Scripture says: «He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked» (1 Jn. 2:6). It's obvious that the Lord came into the world to save it. As it is written, «...I came not to judge the world but to save the world» (Jn. 12:47). When Christ spoke these words, he did not divide this world between the righteous and the unrighteous. He loved all people without exception, and His desire was to save everyone! The love of Jesus was so great to the people that He even died on the cross, so that everyone had a chance to be saved. The Lord did not share his love selectively — He loved everyone. And it is this love, Jesus expects from us, so we loves each other. One day he said to his disciples: «A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you» (Jn. 13:34). Here's impartial love for all people, and is given to us as an example for to learn to love everyone, even those who don't love us.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that we should love our enemies (Matt. 5:44), and explained why it should be done: «For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect» (Matt. 5:46-48). God encourages all of us to be perfect as our heavenly Father. And this perfection, above all, in love. Without love it is impossible to be a Christian, because the two main commandments of God is love. Without love, Christianity simply lost its meaning. As it is said: «If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing» (1 Cor. 13:1-3, ASV).

What would we do in our Christian life, without the perfect love to which the Lord calls us; everything will be in vain and meaningless. No

written not only by believers, but nonbelievers also. Readers ask various questions about their everyday concerns. And from the set of letters one letter seemed very alarming which raised this subject. We quote the letter:

Dear Editors of «Prisoner»

The frankness and honesty of your publication prompted me to write this letter. The newspaper «Prisoner» publishes very revealing testimonies of those who actually were sunk down by sin. Your paper, in contrast to many other Christian publications, makes us rejoice. On the pages of your newspaper you do not hypocrisies, but you tell them the truth, which is emphasizing and reprovng sin as it is. You are asked

Catholics and Orthodox, and Protestants to love as I love myself. Christ teaches me not to turn away from those who are still living a worldly life, but to do everything so that, looking at my life, people want to be like me. Maybe readers of this paper will say to me: a Christian must belong to a church, and so on. But, my dear, I did not find to this day in any church, where I would not in words, but in actions and deeds of Christians see love to all people. I hear a lot of words of love, but so little of it is shown. Jesus said that in the last days, many will be cold with their love. I also would like to add, that many will have no love to start with. As long as people will pay attention to gossip and condemnation of others, Christianity simply will be dead. For only love to all people, can guarantee salvation. It is unacceptable to speak about Christian love and at the same time not have it in yourself. If this happens, then the presence of God is not with in that person. For everyone knows that God is love.

Slowdown, people in the urgency of your words of love! learn to love each other, before the next day comes into its place...



questions — and you answer them through the individual headings. I do not know if there is room for my questions, but to me it is very important to ask them. Forgive me, people of faith, but I would like to ask: why do you not love each other?! You call yourself a Christian and at the same time abuse and condemn others. Orthodox call Protestants sects, and in turn, they say, «idolaters» and other unflattering words. Catholics are not bypassed and a lot of bad things are said in their direction. However, everyone whom I listened to listed — Protestants, Orthodox and Catholics — call themselves Christians. But did Christ teach us to judge other people?! What kind of example do you show to those who do not know God? Didn't Christ tell us to love our enemies? But how can we talk about loving our enemies, if we can't even love one another. Thank God that I do not belong to any earthly church. My temple, how the bible states, is inside of me. My God — Christ, taught me to love everyone and not to condemn anyone. He teaches me, and

This is the letter that came to our office, at the end of which, no return address, and a signature that read: «With hope for a miracle, brother of White Crow».

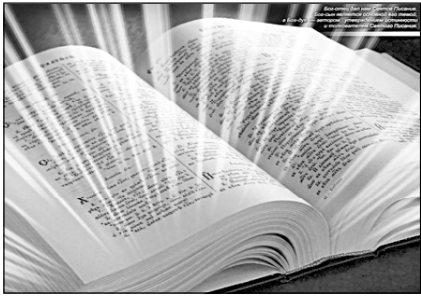
Right away this letter may be treated differently. But in any case clear irrefutable fact that many Christians love remains imperfect. Perhaps the time has come to ask ourselves if we surely show a good example to others?! For the Lord said: «Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven» (Matt. 7:21).

«If you keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have told you, that my joy may be in you and your joy will be perfect. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you» (Jn. 15:10-12).

I. GORIK.

PASTOR'S WORD

CONCERNING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHRISTIANS FOR CONSCIOUS SIN



We are concerned about the general moral degradation of society. But the most alarming, for sincere Christians, is the fact that most Christians are moving in the same direction, even though at a distance. Those who should not succumb to sinful onslaught, but be a wavebreaker and a beacon for the people of this world, lose salt and in many cases are difficult to distinguish from the world.

Why are Christians of the well-fed and prosperous time easily give in to their lusts and almost voluntarily do sin? Worldly tendencies have begun to appear among today's Christians. Tendencies with which Christians of past generations fought against desperately, and some even gave their life in the struggle. Many Christians of our time are no longer different from the people of the world, in appearance and morality. The same, provocative lust, outside appearance, immodest speech, interspersed with empty jokes and dramatic carnal emotions, unhealthy talkativeness. Having an attractive appearance and wealth is valued higher than spiritual virtues.

What happened? Why is the image of Christ, which was the dream of every Christian, not popular now? Why, does the true humble follower of Christ become an instrument for jokes and banter, not only by the worldly people, but even other fellow Christians?

We can put blame on the fact that we are living in the end-times. The Bible foretold that at the end of times this will happen. But is not one of the causes of deviations in Christianity distorted teachings that widespread in recent years?

This false theology emphasizes that every believer is a child of God, shortcomings and sins are not important. God looks upon His children through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ, and therefore in his eyes they are at all times pure, holy and without blemish. It

proclaims: «We sin with our bodies, but since flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God, it is therefore not a barrier to enter Heaven».

1 Corinthians 15:50 — *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.* Concluding this: if in the eyes of God through the blood of Jesus Christ, we are always pure, holy and blameless, what is the point to show zeal and diligence to live honestly and faithfully, when in Christ we already possess all of these? In support of this false theory above, the following text from the Bible is used, *That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19).* They explain that God, to us — believers, does not impute our sins and trespasses. So what that someone does not trespass? even the Bible says: *...for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God... (Rom. 3:23).*

As a result of this understanding — the new generation is not aware of the responsibility before God for their actions. This is reflected in lighthearted attitude towards the use of alcohol, drugs, gambling, watching filthy movies, extramarital relations, and so on. Due to this interpretation of the Word of God we have a generation of paralytics who cannot deny themselves, lustful «Christians». **God did not create our universe, and sent His Beloved Son to the terrible suffering to fill Heaven with will-less, lustful creatures, who cannot deny themselves in anything.** He wants to have close to Him overcomers, who stand firm against sin.

Let's take a more detailed look at the essence of this modern delusion, which seduced tens of thousands of sincere Christians to divert from the ancient path of sanctification and separation from the

world. God does not impute sins to people who never knew His laws and commandments and are for the first time turning to Him in repentance. In the name of Jesus Christ, they receive forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Their life begins with a clean slate. This is absolutely not about the truth-knowing-Christians, forgiven, sanctified by the blood of Jesus Christ, and knowingly and willingly sinning.

We, people, have received forgiveness freely, through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. But Jesus Christ himself, paid the price by enduring enormous suffering, humiliation and martyrdom. Christ's suffering and death, is the high cost of satisfying Justice. All of this is in order, so that we can take this opportunity to have access to the Holy God. A Christian who deliberately sins, shows great disrespect for the atoning sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ. In this he is saying: «Because I'm a believer, it's not that important, God and I have another, special relationship».

Christ's sacrifice is for those who are conscious of their imperfections and are seeking to correct them, but not for the arrogant and insolent. For conscious sins of Christians who are in covenant with God, He has a separate clause...

Heb. 10:26-29 — *For if we have received the knowledge of the truth, sin, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. [If] rejected the law of Moses, with two or three witnesses, without mercy [shall be punished] death, then how much worse punishment do you think will be the one to blame, who scorned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and the Spirit of grace?*

Num. 15:30 — *But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or foreigner,*

my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

This is not an evening walk in the moonlight, but action that leads to bodily exhaustion and many physical pains as trial for knowingly sinning, so that the spirit may be saved.

In the case of Israel's king David, as a punishment for his deliberate sin, his just-born son died, but it was not over. He had to go through the judgments of God in full, for willful sin, regardless of what God said about him: *I found a man after my heart, showing His special favor for David.* And even with all this, God has not shown partiality to him. What he sowed, he did reap. This is what God said and performed over David:

2 Sam. 12:9-14 — *«...Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife». Thus says the Lord, «Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun». David said to Nathan, «I have sinned against the Lord». And Nathan said to David, «The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, [a] the child who is born to you shall die».*

Diseases, loss, life of disappointment may be judgements of God for willful sins.

For more than three decades of my ministry to the Lord, I've seen a lot of examples when in the life's of different people, the above truths were fulfilled. There was a time when people were looking for an excuse to drown out the accusations of conscience, and commit sin. They knew that they should not, that this afflicts the Lord, but they did anyway. Committed in secret... years passed, and it seemed that all is well, everything has passed, but then came a certain day. The day of reckoning, when their hearts sank with grief and suffering... There was a lot of crying and bitterly, bitterly regretting the past. For many it was stretched on for months and years. For some, the remainder of their entire life was upside down. As a result — collapse of the family, children driven away, dishonor and shame. When these people looked back, they said, «Oh, if I knew that this would happen, I would never have done this».

For all the people of this world, the final and irrevocable judgement will be at the White Throne, when all the peoples will stand before God in changed bodies. But with those who are in covenant with Him, He has other relationship. God judges and punishes them today, for life on earth is so they use these lessons for personal improvement and not be condemned with the world. These judgements are of instructive nature.

1 Pet. 4:17 — *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

Isa. 26:9 — *...For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.*

1 Cor. 11:32 — *But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.*

Thus, is the manifestation of God's judgments upon His children — good or bad? Today, it may seem bad, but from the perspective of eternity, it is a special grace, an additional chance to not get to the final judgment as a defendant. Let's see how people responded when they passed through God's judgments:

Ps. 119:67 — *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.*

Ps. 119:71 — *It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.*

Ps. 119:75 — *I know, O Lord, that your rules are righteous, and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.*

Is it possible to avoid the judgments of God?

Firstly — do not sin.

Endure. Deny yourself. Humble yourself, ask for His help.

Heb. 12:15-17 — *See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no «root of bitterness» springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears (see Gen. 25:29-34).*

Secondly — judge yourself.

If sin happens, you cannot treat it lightly. It is necessary to condemn ourselves seriously. The deeper we hurt ourselves in repentance, the more sensitive is the «scar» in our minds, and the smaller the probability of recurrence of the incident.

1 Cor. 11:31 — *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*

Ps. 72:13-14 — *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.*

Thirdly — give thanks to God.

If in your life tragedy did not happen because of conscious sin, do not consider it your merit, and do not consider yourself better than others. No wonder the Bible says:

Prov. 11:2 — *When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.*

Prov. 22:14 — *The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.*

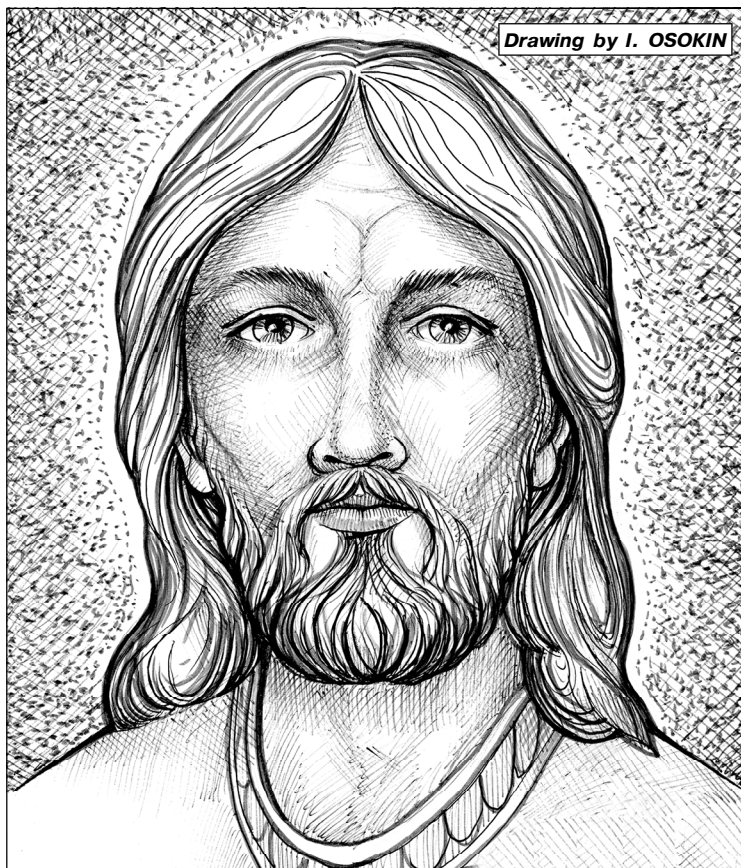
The cause of the fall of a man is often not weakness (the humble and feeble, God keeps under his protection), but pride, self-confidence, exaltation over others. You can use «peripheral vision» to observe the life of a proud believer, and you will be convinced of the truth of these warnings.

Deut. 4:3-4 — *Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baalpeor: for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day.*

The effort involved in sanctification, moving closer to God and the knowledge of His will in our lives, turns around into great blessings not only for us but for future generations. Just yesterday, I was a witness to a statement by one elderly brother, who said: «In my time as a young man, I sincerely responded to God's call to follow Him, even though all my relatives did not know God. Now I have about 100 of my descendants (children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren). In my family there are singers, choristers, choir directors, church servants in different categories, and they all serve God». Faithful and true is our God! Glory be to Him!

Verily did King David say: *With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury (2 Sam. 22:26-27).*

Aleksandr BORISENKO.



TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

I WAS A THREE-TIME CHAMPION IN KUNG FU

Fate brought little Tony Anthony to China, where his grandfather lived. This boy saw his future in kung fu. After all, his grandfather was a great master who was respected not only in the well-known Shaolin and all over China, but also far beyond those borders.

Methods of child upbringing were far from European. Every morning, Tony woke up from a bucket of ice water being poured onto him. Then hour by hour — training, any misstep resulted in a massive blow from a bamboo stick. Tony was a quick learner and soon he reached the tops of ancient knowledge.

Over the course of 8 years, the task of my grandfather was to prepare me so well that I could transfer the knowledge to the next generation. My book is called «Taming the Tiger» because he taught me the movements of the tiger. I studied kung fu not in the gym but in the woods and deserted places and using barbaric methods of training. For eight years my grandfather tried to break me, he treated me harshly and often beat me.

At age 12, I was sent back to England because my parents had saved enough money that I could live with them again. It was a difficult task. Frankly, they were complete strangers to me, we even spoke different languages. The only known language to me was Cantonese, and they only spoke in English.

When I went to school I learned to defend myself. I grew up among Buddhists so I had to adopt new ways among different races, and this caused me to use my knowledge of kung fu the wrong way.

I grew older and the International Confederation of kung fu (organization), which is headquartered in Geneva, sponsored the continuation of my training and I reached a significant level of skill in a fairly young age. They paid for my training in London, and paid contributions to the Shaolin Temple in the UK. As a result, I had my own technique for fighting. When I grew up they paid for my trip to Asia, Pakistan, Thailand and China, where I took part in various competitions. I did not suffer a single defeat in fighting during 1997-1999; I kept and defended the world title. Over time it became boring — I had enough.

It ended with the fact that I started to work for an organization that conducted courses for learning kung-fu and became one of the instructors. I traveled to schools in different countries of the world and taught martial arts: my task was to ensure that the training of kung fu was conducted at the highest level.

Then I changed jobs in the company and began working in the security unit. We prepared men and women ex-soldiers to become bodyguards. We taught them the possession of knives, guns, and other weapons, a variety of tactics to combat terrorists, disposal of explosives, health care, methods of driving cars, foreign languages, and fighting. All of this was my specialty. I worked in a large gym and taught men and women the art of combat that they didn't learn in the army.

This went on for some time. Then one of my friends invited me to become a bodyguard. I must say that at that time I was rather tired of training others for days on end. My friend promised me that I would make more money and do a lot of traveling. I did not need a lot of convincing; I took the courses and became a bodyguard. This way I could earn more money and lead an interesting life.

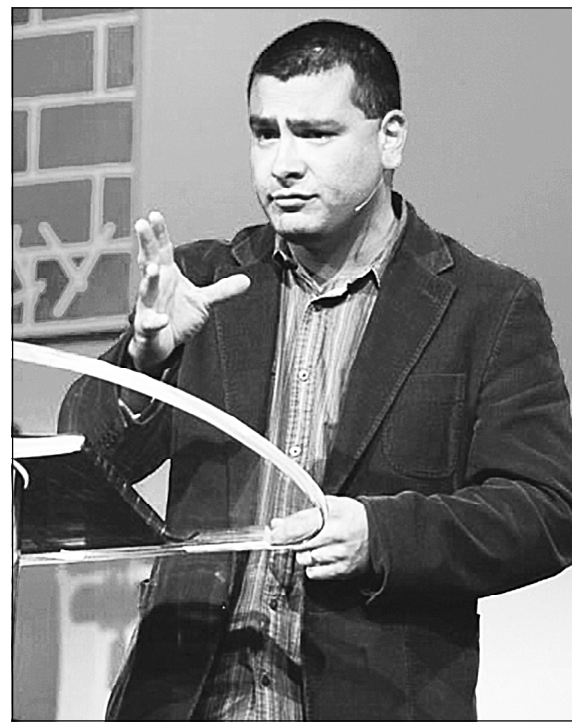
At first I was disappointed because I had to work with people who really did not need a bodyguard, they just

held me as a more powerful weapon. But over time, there were situations in which I successfully applied my skills and was promoted. I began to work for diplomats. I mainly worked in England, guarding the ambassador who was from South Asia. Then we moved to Italy, and from there — to Cyprus.

Over time, we learned that the ambassador was a gambler and was putting his life at risk. At some stage of my work, he asked me to collect a debt from a man who lost and owed a large sum of money, it was a gambling debt. I thought that even for a criminal — and I was one — it was unethical, and I refused. However, my opinion changed when we moved to Italy.

I was engaged to a girl named Aya, a Sweden native. We dated for three years and were going to get married. She was a beautiful, brave and very smart girl, a student in law school. We were happy together. But when I was in Italy, she was killed in a car accident in England.

I did not leave my work, all the while trying to occupy myself not to think about her death. I became very aggressive. Rage boiled inside me and it came out onto to people around me. Amin (the Ambassador who I guarded) again offered me to collect debts, and I agreed. I started to walk to homes, offices, and deal with the bodyguards of debtors, paving my way with fists and weapons. I would find the people and immediately demand money, not giving them time to prepare. Then I beat them severely. If I saw a man who seemed to be laughing at me or saying something



funny about me, I came up to him and beat him (*this anger eventually led Tony to prison (Nicosia in Cyprus) — one of the worst places on earth*). By this time I was engaged only in «knocking out» the debts; I passed into the robbery. My father asked to borrow some money for his surgery and I just started to plunder. When I had to collect a debt from a person who lived in a five-star hotel, I just «cleaned» the whole floor as well. I would burst into a room and if there was someone there, I would beat everyone in a row and take the money.

Finally, for those crimes I was put prison in Nicosia for three years. I should have been put behind bars for many other crimes as well. I killed people while performing my duties as bodyguard. Instead of firing at the leg, I unnecessarily shot at the head.

In prison, I served three years for robbery. I remember that at first I was placed in a cell where there were only seven bunks, and I was the

fourteenth person. The relationship between the prisoners was horrific. In my mind flashed a horrible thought that I will not stay in this chamber: because I will kill them all. Then they put me in a singular cell.

You may ask, what happened to my religion? I realized that it did not help me because it focused on me. To focus and meditate, I had to be strong and disciplined. However, I was not interested in this. Martial arts in general, should've disciplined me, but all still went out of control. It did not work.

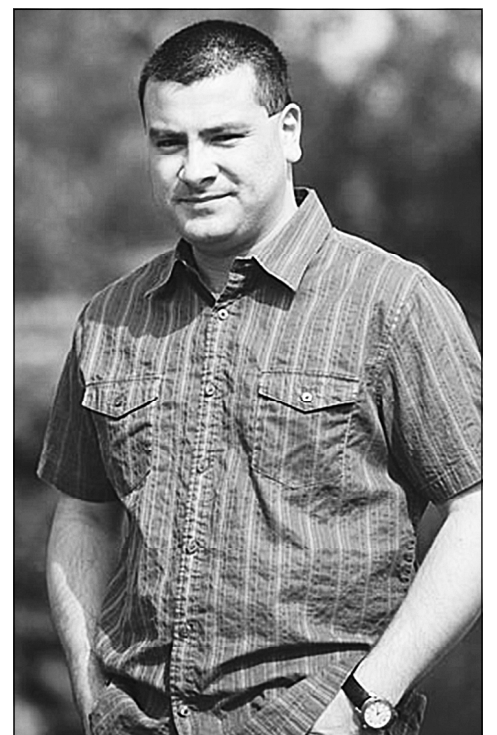
One day, a man named Michael Rights wrote to me. I was surprised to receive his letter because I had never heard of him. He saw me in newspapers of when I was arrested for my crimes and he decided to write. He wrote, «How are you doing... We read in newspapers... We're worried about you... We want you to know that we are praying for you». «I'm a Christian missionary — he wrote — My job is to talk about God because we live in a world that has forgotten about the Savior. We will continue to pray for you and if we can do anything for you, let us know».

I sent him a request for a visit. And he began to visit me every week for six months. He never preached to me, never! And I was very grateful to him for that and respected him. I did not have any warm feelings toward religion. My attitude in those days was: we live in one boat, and if someone needs help (rescue) God is indifferent.

Michael was a good guy, responsible for his words. He came to visit me, and I was such an unworthy man. After six months in a place where every month someone got raped, slaughtered, and killed, you become annoyed, depressed, and easily angered. One day I decided to beat Michael up. It was May 3, 1999. I wanted to know why he actually comes and what he wants from me. I thought: «Maybe he wants to make me into an admirer of the Bible?» I waited for him, thinking of how to hit and where it will go. «What happened?» — asked Michael. And so I asked, «What do you want from me? You want to make me into a Christian?» Then he said: «I don't want anything from you, I want to give you something». In his hands there was nothing. I thought, «What is he going to give me?» But he said: «I want to tell you the good news». «What is the news?»

«Good news Tony, in that Jesus loves you». «Idiot, what do you mean by Jesus loves me? How can you believe in a God whom you can't see?» He told me: «You know there are things in this world that we cannot see, but we believe in them. We can't see magnetism, or electricity, or love, or thoughts. And if we don't see God, that does not mean that He does not exist». Michael was telling the truth, but I didn't want to listen to it.

He said that each person has a place in there heart for God, but in its place we put our own lives, our personal desires and pleasures. Michael said to me: «in a place in your heart you put championships for kung fu, sex, violence, drugs. You haven't even thought about placing Jesus there». He was right, I did not. In the Bible there is a verse, (This holy book was given to me by Michael Rights. The Bible is still with me and means a lot to me) it is the words of Jesus from *the Gospel of John (8:36)*: «**Therefore if the Son shall make you free, you**



shall be free indeed» (MKJV). Michael told me, «You can spend your whole life earning money, but if today your life were taken from you, how would money help you? You say drugs can make you feel «free», but it's dependent, not real freedom. Friends and the family cannot set you free, but if Jesus sets you free, then you will truly be free.»

I did not beat Michael up that day, and I'm happy I didn't, because I began to love him.

I returned to my cell, thinking about what he told me. That evening I did what Michael asked me to do. He asked me to make the desire to want to change my life. He said that perhaps in my life there seems to be something from which it is impossible to turn away from, like certain habits, but God says: «Do not worry; I will help you if you have the desire». And Michael said: «Be ready to obey Jesus. Because if God created you in the womb of your mother, and created a whole world around you, do not think that He isn't worthy to take first place in your life. That's what it means to «submit». It means that we need Jesus, and we need to make him the priority in our lives».

I prayed to God and I began to look different. My heart began to soften.

I just prayed in my cell and invited God into my heart, and within 24 hours, my life changed.

Now I dedicate all my time to evangelization. I visit prisons, schools, universities, churches, concerts, and festivals sharing the Gospel with people from different sectors of society. I am also the author of «Taming the Tiger», which has already been published in 22 languages.

I called on the name of the Lord Jesus, He saved my life, and it happened in reality. On that day I realized that I did not need to use kung fu. And I have not beaten or needed to beat a single person; Jesus freed me from this.

I also believe that the basis of Kung Fu is a spiritual principle that has its roots in Buddhism; since it was founded by a monk, so spiritual people could control their mind and body, which is the very essence of Buddhism. And for me the most important thing in life is what Jesus said: «**I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me**» (*John 14:6, MKJV*). In kung fu, there are many paths: the path of the dragon, the way of a tiger. And in the world there are many different roads, but Jesus is the only path in the right direction.

Tony ANTHONY,
<http://iscelen.org>

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

Peter Tokarev, born in 1953, used drugs for 34 years and spent 20 years incarcerated. There are people whose fate even an atheist would not say any other way but only «It's a miracle of God!» The life of Peter Tokarev, how it changed — is truly a miracle. «Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new» (2 Cor. 5:17).

Peter TOKAREV

I was born in Kherson. I began using drugs as a teenager in the year 1969. At that time, during the Soviet Union, there was law that one could get locked up for «drug possession». The contraband powder was obtained through a seaport. My first trial was in 73, for counterfeiting money. Since it was easier to get drugs in prison than outside it, I continued to shoot up. Once outside, I continued to commit crime after crime and again went to jail, and so twenty years passed.

In the end, my life came to a dead end morally, spiritually, physically. My body atrophied, my internal organs without the drugs stopped working, my nails fell out, and due to blockage in internal veins my leg turned black and swollen and I could no longer walk. But mainly — my soul felt such a burden.

Several times in my life I tried to commit suicide. Once I tried to hang myself off of a tree but the very thick and sturdy branch to which I fastened the rope fell to the ground with me and only broke my shoulder. I tried to hang myself in the garage on a beam but the steel beam burst. I injected myself with a fatal dose of a narcotic (to buy it, I sold everything I had) but I missed: instead of injecting in the groin as planned, I got it under the skin and a large bump formed on that spot. There was a time when I tried to shoot myself. I put the gun in my mouth and for an hour unsuccessfully struggled to get myself to pull the trigger until my hands cramped. As soon as I pulled the gun out my finger slipped and I

There are people of whose fate is said: «This is a miracle of God!»

shot a round into the air. What did I feel then? No, not fear, but disappointment. But now I understand that it was all God's mercy.

I was released from prison in 2002 and tried to be treated for addiction. Thanks to old acquaintances I tried all possibilities: clinics, hospitals, professors — no one could help. In the end they brought me to live out my last days with my mother.

(Mom did not live with us: we kicked her out of the house. We called her «shtunda» because she, like my grandmother, was a believer. I remember once she gave me a Bible when I was locked up. Not knowing what to do with this book, I ripped the cover off the book «War and peace», put it in there, and began to read. However, the Bible did not appeal to me at the time. The principle of «turn your other cheek when someone slaps you» did not mesh with my views).

One night she knocked on the door and asked permission to enter. She said: «Son, you're dying. Everything is already purchased for your funeral. In this world you lived in hell, allow me to call the believers to pray for you. Maybe there you will escape the torment, and finally we will be with you together». I agreed. And I think to myself: «And the truth is, I did live in hell. There are years, even decades, of which I do not remember anything: just continuous darkness». That night, I first turned to God. I just said, «God, if you exist, and can pick me up on my feet, I will serve you». After a short prayer, my life



began to change. Believers started coming to our house who would then take me, a dying drug addict, to a rehabilitation center.

At first I could not understand what was going on. I thought they had brought me to the medical rehabilitation centers. I ask: «Where are the doctors and droppers?» And they told me: «We will pray for you». — «Are you kidding — I say — I will start my withdrawals, and you will pray?» I remember one night, I woke up because something dripped on me. I woke up, and as I lay with my eyes closed I listen to the brothers tearfully praying: «Lord, save Peter, help him to sleep, heal him...» I got goosebumps all over my body... Then later Rustam comes up to me and says: «I see that you have no faith in the fact that God will heal you. Have you read the Bible? Remember, there is a story when some friends brought a paralytic to Jesus and they could not get into the house because it was crowded so they broke the down the roof and lowered him on

the stretcher in the middle of the room before the Lord? And seeing their faith, He healed the sick man. Likewise Peter, now it is us carrying you to Jesus!»

After some time Paul Grigoruk came to the church. He spent 20 years in prison in the Soviet Union for his faith in the Lord. During his sermon, he suddenly said: «Maybe I have come here so that you would hear that God loves you?»

I took these words as addressed to me and so I stood up, that is some sort of power lifted me up, because I could still not stand on my own. Brother Paul asked me, «What do you want?» — «I want to repent!» Everyone knelt with me and began to pray. Then the brothers laid their hands on my head and during the prayer a real miracle happened. I felt that God began to give healing. My legs filled with fire and the flames gradually enveloped my whole body. At the end of the prayer, I jumped up and ran out into the yard. From such joy I was running around the church and praising Jesus Christ and the Heavenly Father. For the first time in many years, I saw the sky...

Following these events, I have gathered all of my medical records and threw them in the trash. Previously I had been found with HIV and tuberculosis, but now the doctors were now saying: «You never had these diseases!»

And this is despite the fact that I almost spent three years in tubbarake. People that went there only walked in, on the way back they

were carried. God renewed everything in me. I asked — and all my nails grew overnight. I cried out, and the Lord baptized me with the Holy Spirit. I had a rotten prison lingo, so that people could hardly understand me, and the brothers even banned me for some time from speaking in the presence of other believers. God fixed this also — it was cleared as if by itself. One day, when our center was being filmed for a documentary, my wife Yelena saw it and by that time she had already become a believer. She recognized me and in amazement she came to Kiev. In this manner God gave me back my family. He has reconciled me with my enemies, gave them repentance, and now we as brothers glorify His name together. God has changed my life. How can one not serve such a God?

Yelena TOKAREVA

Peter and I met in the year 1977 and we dreamed to create a family. His soul was always kind but he was a drug addict and for this reason he did a lot of lawless deeds and ended up behind bars. I tried to support him as best I could. I brought transmissions to prison, wrote letters, and many times tried to persuade him to go to the hospital but it was to no avail...

When Peter was in prison, I came to God and began to attend church. Someone once gave me a video of a Kiev Christian rehabilitation center for drug addicts. When I saw Peter in it, I could not believe my eyes and came to Kiev. What I saw firsthand, I cannot put into words — it was a real miracle! God has completely changed this man.

In spite of what had happened, in the depths of my heart I always hoped... as though I knew that all my suffering was not in vain. God renewed our family. Today Peter for me is a loving husband and mentor in the Word. Our house has peace, understanding — in short, exactly that what I was afraid before to even dream about.

Peter and Yelena TOKAREV, Ukraine, <http://iscelen.org>

IN THE COLUMN, I FELT MYSELF FREE

In my previous life there was little that was good. And in my life without God things could not have been any other way. My whole life — is a constant search for justice. Take, for example, a drug addict, who was jailed for drug possession. He is imprisoned two years. While still in the detention center, he is already free to buy these drugs again. The same power that locked him up also brings him the drugs. And this lie is always before one's eyes. I asked myself the question: «Does truth even exist? Where should I look for it?»

Living without God, you find yourself in different addictions: cigarettes, drugs, money — everything that is not considered a sin in the world. And to have all these things, I stole. At that time I thought that I was simply taking money from those who have a lot of it. That is how I passed my life. But this cannot continue for long and again I found myself behind bars. But even there, behind the barbed wire, I was confronted with a lie. The interrogator of the criminal persuaded them to take on other thefts to their record, because they won't lock you up for more than five years anyways, no matter how much you steal, «Take this crime and we'll give you drugs, money and cigarettes». There were prisoners who took more than twenty crimes upon themselves.

In 1984, once again serving my sentence, this time in Uzbekistan, I met with two people convicted for their faith. They gifted me the New Testament. All night I read avidly. But at the time in my heart nothing happened, because I did not want to lose credibility among my comrades. After the second release, I continued to live the old lifestyle and continued communicating with criminals. I already had a wife and young son. Of course, she had a



difficult life. I was rarely home, hiding from the police so as to not get locked up again. Before leaving the city, I gave a telegram to my wife, and she went with our son after me. Soon I was back behind the barbed wire. It was a center of strict discipline in the Donetsk region. The Lord brought me here to unite me with believers again. We talked and drank tea. At that time I cursed viciously. One of them asked me: «Could you not express yourself like this?» I replied: «I do not know, I probably can». From that moment I felt that my cursing words had left. When I wanted to swear, something stopped me. My heart began to change. I was drawn to these guys. I saw that they were different and it was easy to be

around them. From their stories I found out who had helped them to become such people. It was Jesus. Out of interest, I asked them where they meet. The next day at seven in the evening, something pushed me to go to their meeting. The first half of the way I walked, the second — ran. I was drawn to them. There my heart was filled with peace and quiet. I was completely in another world. They all had shining eyes, happy faces. They began to sing a song in praise of God. I realized that this is what I was looking for all my life.

For the first time I heard the people sincerely turn to God in prayer. Then they began to testify what works God has done in their lives. At the end there was a call to repentance. I knew that I was a

sinner. Inside, I felt a great desire to give God all my sins. We knelt and began to pray. Then the supernatural happened, which is impossible to put into words: being in prison, I felt myself free from alcohol, drug, cigarette addiction. I understood what it means to love God. I remember one episode when after one of the meetings, I was filled with joy as I was running down the stairs. One of the guards was going the opposite direction. It is no secret that all prisoners hate them. I have always said: «The best policeman is a dead policeman». But at that moment I felt such love for him that I took his hand and shook it with joy. He looked at me with surprised eyes and said, «Have you forgotten where you are?» He could not understand that the people who Jesus Christ suffered for were dear to me, regardless of the person.

In the prison God did so many miracles. There was a man with the nickname Lame, who had been sitting in prison for eleven years. He was one of the most unmanageable prisoners. He was repeatedly put in solitary confinement. He was shot through the spine, and he could only walk with crutches. But the Lord even touched him. Jesus not only forgave sins, but also healed him. During baptism he was helped to enter the water. Upon emerging from the water of his legs were still weak and he relied on his comrades to move. But with every step his legs became stronger. And the Lord performed a miracle: soon he was standing on his own, healthy legs! In front of the whole crowd, 500 people, he threw away his crutches. Another prisoner was healed, who for 23 years suffered from asthma. Now, when he came to the hospital and the doctors could not help him, they sent him to us, saying: «Go to the believers, people get healed there».

It is not easy, we had often faced bitter hearts and ridicule. But God has always been on our side. I recall a time a prisoner, who was well known began to bully and threaten me. All his companions sat by him and watched how this will end. Then I told him: «You know, you can only do what a certain Somebody will allow you to do.» This answer angered him even more: «Who is this Somebody?» — «God!» All I had to do was say this when the man jumped away as though some invisible hand pushed him away. God showed His power and remained glorified.

After my last sentence I came out a different person: fresh, born again. At the same time, my wife and son moved from Uzbekistan to Lipetsk. There I began to attend church. I can not recall without tears the day when my wife and twelve year old son responded to the call of the Lord and repented to Him of their sins. I continually praise Jesus for the family, which he gave me. Now my wife is a loyal friend and helper in the pastoral ministry. And my son is also involved in the ministry of worship.

For eight years I was on drugs. The doctors told me that we would not be able to have more children. But my wife and I began to ask God that He would bless us with another child. What is impossible for man is possible for God. God gave us a wonderful daughter who greatly loves God and strives to Him with all her little heart.

Finally, I have found truth and justice. I am glad that the Lord led me in this way to Himself, because now I can say with certainty to the person who is lonely and abandoned by all, «Jesus loves you! You are dear to Him, and through you He can show His power».

Yuri TAIRKIN, Russia, http://www.ypa-uucycy.narod.ru/zakl/yurij_tairkin.htm

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

Do not kill (Exodus 20:13).

1. The meaning of the Hebrew word *rasah* (to kill / murder) — «kill».

This word has several shades of murder:

Intentional killing: 1 Kings 21:19 — *Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?*

Accidental murder: Deuteronomy 4:41-42 — *Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan toward the sunrise to escape to the murderer who kills his neighbor.*

Penalty for killing: Numbers 35:30 — *Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.*

The best definition of this word would be the following: an act of violence against the person of hatred, personal gain, anger, confusion, error or for some other reason which resulted in the death of this man.

2. The New Testament interprets this commandment?

Jesus very lucidly explained the depth of this commandment: *Thou shalt not kill.*

Matthew 5:21-24 — *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

1 John 3:15 — *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

1 Timothy 1:9-11 — *...knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous one, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for homosexuals, for slave-traders, for liars, for perjurers, and anything else that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.*

II. Sanctity and inviolability life

At the heart of the sixth commandment is the concept of holiness, the value and sanctity of human life.

1. Why is human life is so valuable and inviolable?

A. Human life is valuable because human life belongs to God.

It happens to be:

- God's creation,
- God's property.

He alone has the right to dispose of human life.

B. Human life is precious because each person was created in the image and likeness of God. Killing a person — is to destroy God's image.

2. Murder — is the destruction of God's creation.

Murder is an act which is the opposite of creation. Man is a part of God's creation. God created man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. A killer deprives a person of life, destroying God's creation.

In Genesis 4:10 God said to Cain, who killed his brother: *What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.*

• «The voice of the blood from the ground!» The Earth — is also God's

creation. Thus, the creation of God is a witness against killers.

• The killer kills a person, an individual. And in it, he kills his future children, grandchildren, work of his hands, and the achievements that he could not do.

• Murder is a crime against humanity!

3. Murder — a usurpation of God's right to own human life.

Usurpation — that's illegal seizure of power. So, murder is an illegal seizure or usurpation of God's right to own human life.

Human life belongs to its Creator. The killer also depriving human life, assumes the right to dispose of human life, and decide whether or not he live.

4. Murder is a blasphemy against God.

• Because it destroys God's workmanship, created in His likeness and appearance.

• Because the killer is acting as God and Judge.

III. EXAMPLES OF MURDER

Now, let us reflect on the most common types of murder, in addition to the ordinary murder.

1. Suicide.

In ancient Israel, there was no special standing law of suicide, because suicide fell under the category of homicide. In contrast to the pagan philosophy and practices, Jews highly valued and respected human life. Depriving yourself of life is a complete degradation of the individual and considered satanic, demonic obsession to an extreme degree. Only the damned of the damned could come to such an end. Biblical examples of this can serve as King Saul and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus.

1 Samuel 31:4-6 — *Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together.*

Matthew 27:5 — *And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself.*

OUR LIFE BELONGS TO GOD. HE ALONE DECIDES WHEN TO STOP IT

Question to ponder: «Suicide is a sin against whom?»

2. State system of punishment by death.

In accordance with God's Law, the nation of Israel in Old Testament times was to punish with death, people who do not obey the laws of God. But the goal of this penalty was to restore God's order of things. And so it is not considered a destruction of God's creation but the restoration of God's order of things in His creation by God's laws and commandments.

Exodus 21:12-15 — *He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die. And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.*

Exodus 22:18-20 — *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death. He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.*

Romans 13:3-4 — *For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*

Questions for reflection:

• Can a state system of punishment of death to be justified?

• Can the godless state use the death penalty system as a restoration of God's order of things?

3. Euthanasia.

Euthanasia — is a voluntary agreement with the doctor about the deprivation of life of the terminally ill. Or, in other words, access to a doctor with a request to turn off life support.

Questions for reflection:

• Can we:
- Decide to end our own or a relatives life?

- Make or ask another person to deprive us of life?

• How can we know if this will of God or not?

4. War.

The arguments used to defend the killing during the war:

- Self-defense,

- The restoration of God's order of things and the laws.

Questions for reflection:

• Is there anything that could justify a war?

• How rotten is the world, that war for the restoration of God's order of things in the world and the law is justified.

• We are called to resist evil and depravity. Is bloodshed needed to confront evil? Why? How can we be sure that there is no better alternative to shedding blood?

• Whose blood is spilled in most cases of opposition to evil?

Genesis 9:6 — *Whoever sheds man's blood, his blood shall be shed by the hand of man: for man was created in God's image.*

Matthew 26:52 — *...for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.*

5. Abortion.

The debates revolves around a single question about abortion: «Who is a person and when do they become living?»

The Bible says: *You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed* (Psalm 139:15-16). Does this verse says that human life begins at the moment of conception?

Now pay attention to the following biblical verse: **Exodus 21:22-23** — *If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life.*

This verse says that if a pregnant woman was hit by one of her attackers, and she gives birth prematurely (in the original it is written: not «depart» but «give birth prematurely»), if neither the child nor the mother suffer, then the one who hit her will only pay how much the judges decide. But if the child or the mother shall die (it is hidden under the words, «And if any mischief»), then the murderers must pay with their lives.

Thus, it turns out that the unborn child in the eyes of God is a complete human being.

Further, in the following verse of about Virgin Mary, to which the angel came to announce that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit and give birth to the Son of God. Pay attention to the fact that the fruit is called the Son, not a fetus: **Matthew 1:23** — *Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. In the original, it says: Behold, a virgin will be with the Son (not a fetus) in the womb and give birth to him, and shall name him Emmanuel, which means God with us.*

IV. RESISTANCE TO EVIL, WHICH THREATENS THE LIFE OF ANOTHER

1. Respect and love of our neighbors requires us to confront and resist evil and corruption.

One of Protestant theologians described the positive use of the sixth commandment, which is not only do not kill your neighbor, but also protecting the life of your neighbor from any manifestations of evil: *We need not only to live in peace with people... but also help, as much as is in our power, we must resist humiliation and injustice and people who want to hurt our neighbors.*

2. Non-resistance to evil is in itself evil.

Remember the saying: *Evil in the world is done with our acquiescence.*

V. ARE WE ALL MURDERERS?

1. This is what the New Testament says about the sixth commandment:

Matthew 5:21-24 teaches that anger and slander is murder.

1 John 3:15 teaches that hatred is murder.

2. A better understanding of the sixth commandment:

- Usually, the sixth commandment is a **prohibition** understood by all: do not do anything that entails the destruction of the human personality, spirit, or life.

- However, there is also «**positive**» interpretation of the sixth commandment, not only do not kill, but create! What does it mean? This means that we should make every effort to promote the creation and development of the human personality, the spirit and life. This is confirmed by many verses of Scripture:

Hebrews 3:13 — *But exhort (in the original: «encourage») one another daily, while it is called «Today,» lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Hebrews 10:25 — *Let us not give up meeting together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting (in the original: «encourage») of each other, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

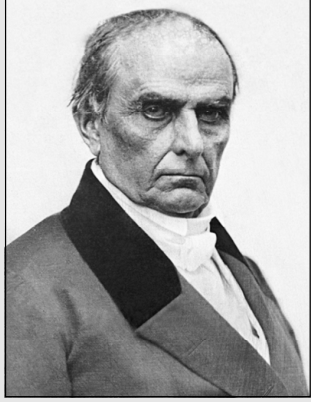
1 Thessalonians 5:11 — *Wherefore admonish (in the original: «encourage») one another and edify (in the original: «build up») one another, as also ye do.*

How can we build and strengthen each other?

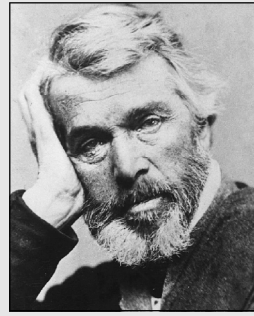
1 Thessalonians 5:12-15 (note the verbs) — *And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.*

This article for the newspaper «Prisoner» was kindly provided by the Bible discussion club, Montreal, Canada
<http://www.cogmtl.net/Articles046.htm>

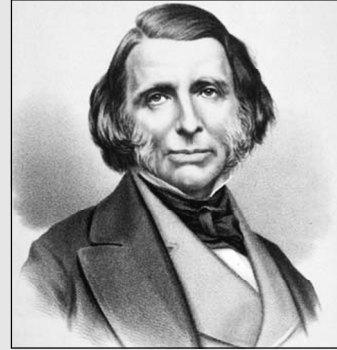
QUOTES BY FAMOUS PEOPLE ABOUT GOD AND THE BIBLE



Daniel WEBSTER, American politician, US Secretary of State: «If there is anything in my thoughts or style to commend, the credit is due to my parents for instilling in me an early love of the Scriptures. If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its



Thomas CARLYLE, Scottish philosopher and historian: «The Bible is the truest utterance that ever came by alphabetic letters from the soul of man, through which, as through a window divinely opened, all men can look into the stillness of eternity, and discern in glimpses their fardistant, long-forgotten home».



John RUSKIN, English writer, artist, art theorist, literary critic, and poet: «Whatever merit there is in anything that I have written is simply due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read me a part of the Bible and daily made me learn a part of it by heart».

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

Did we all inherit sin from Adam and Eve?

ANSWER: Yes, all people inherited sin from Adam and Eve, specifically from Adam. In the Bible sin is described as a violation of God's law (1 Jn. 3:4) and rebellion against Him (Duet. 9:7, Josh. 1:18). The book of Genesis (chap. 3) describes the rebellion of Adam and Eve against God and his laws. Because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, sin became a «legacy» of all their descendants. Rom. 5:12 says that sin came into the world through Adam, so death spread to all people, because all have sinned. This sin is called inherited sin. The same way that we inherit physical characteristics from our parents, we also inherit our sinful nature from Adam.

Adam and Eve were created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27, 9:6). Nevertheless, we match the image and likeness of Adam (Gen. 5:3). As a result of Adam's sin, all of his descendants were also «infected» by sin. David lamented about it in one of his psalms: «Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me» (Ps. 51:5). This doesn't mean that his mother birthed him unlawfully, rather — she inherited a sinful nature from her parents, and they — from theirs and so on. Like David, we inherited sin from our parents. Even if we live our life in the best possible way, we still remain sinners because of inherited sin.

Being born in sin leads to the fact that we all sin. Note the sequence in Rom. 5:12: sin enters the world through Adam, death followed sin, it comes to all people, and all people sin because they have inherited sin from Adam. Due to the fact that «all have sinned and come short of the glory of God» (Rom. 3:23), we are in need of a perfect, sinless sacrifice to wash away our sins — that which we are unable to do on our own. Fortunately, Jesus Christ is our Savior from sin! Our sin was crucified on the cross of Jesus and now, in Him, «we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace» (Eph. 1:7). God in His infinite wisdom, has provided a means of escape from our inherited sin, and it is accessible to everyone: «So, let it be known to you, brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins» (Acts 13:38).

How can I defeat sin in me spiritual life?

ANSWER: The Bible describes the following resources that are available for us to defeat our sinful nature:

1. The Holy Spirit — this is a gift, given by God to us (the church), to receive victory in our

Christian life. Contradicting acts of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit is described in Gal. 5:16-25. This text calls us to live by the Spirit, giving into His control. This means that we need to follow the calling of the promptings of the Holy Spirit rather than the desires of our flesh. The influence of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life is easy to follow in the example of Peter. Before he received the Holy Spirit, Peter disowned Jesus three times, though he promised to follow him to the death. After the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, he preached openly and strongly to the Jews of the Savior. A person who lives by the Spirit tries to not drown out His callings. («**Quench not the Spirit**», as it says in 1 Thess. 5:19) And strives to be filled with Him (Eph. 5:18-21). How can one be filled with the holy spirit? First, it all depends on God's decision, just as it was in the times of the old testament. It was then that God chose individuals in specific situations and filled them with the Holy Spirit in order to perform essential work (Gen. 41:38; Ex. 31:3; Num. 24:2; 1 Sam. 10:10 etc.). Texts Ep. 5:18-21, Col. 3:16 testify that God chooses those who fill themselves with His Word; This is confirmed by the fact that in each case the result was the same as described there. So, this brings us to the next point.

2. God's Word — The Bible. In 2 Tim. 3:16-17 it says, that God gave us his word to prepare us «**for every good deed**». The bible teaches us how to live, what to believe in, points to our flaws, helps make the correct decision, to find the correct path and stay on it. As it is written in Heb. 4:12, The Word of God lives and acts by penetrating deep into our hearts, to eradicate those problems, which, according to human opinion, it is impossible to do. This strength is capable of changing our life as written in Ps. 119:9, 12, 106 and in many other texts. Joshua, leader of the Old Testament Israelites, was told that in order to win over his enemies (an analogy to our spiritual battle) he should use this tool, meditating on it day and night to fulfill his instructions. Although from the military point of view, this did not make sense, Joshua still did as God commanded him, and in doing so he gained a victory in the battle for the promised land.

Very often we neglect this tool. We believe that it is sufficient to take our Bible to church and read from it every day during morning prayers. But we do not study the Word of God, do not reflect on it, do not apply its truths in our lives, do not repent of our sins, which it reveals, and we do not glorify God for His gifts. In relation to the Bible, most of us suffer from either anorexia (lack of appetite) or bulimia (an abnormally increased hunger). We either accept only as much as necessary to maintain a spiritual existence, or do it often, not thinking about how much is

needed for a healthy, flourishing Christian life.

We need to develop the habit of studying God's Word every day, meditating on it and memorizing the verses that have touched our hearts. And I advise you to keep a diary in a notebook or on a computer. Strive daily to record what you have learned from the Bible. In addition, I also often write down my prayers to God, when I ask Him to help me to change the aspects of life which He pointed out. The Holy Spirit uses the Bible in our lives and the lives of others as part of the «battle armor» God has given us for the spiritual battle (Eph. 6:12-18).

3. Prayer — Here is another one of the effective tools given to us by God. Again, very often, Christians used it only formally, getting little use from it. We hold prayer meetings, prayer hours but do not get a lot from them like the examples of the early church (Acts. 3:1, 4:31, 6:4, 13:1-3 etc.). Paul often mentions to pray for those to whom he preaches. but we even when alone with ourselves do not use this powerful tool available to us, even though God has many wonderful promises concerning prayer (Mt. 7:7-11, 18:1-8, Jn. 6:23-27, 1 Jn. 5:14-15). Paul also mentions prayer in a passage on preparation for the spiritual battle (Ep. 6:12-18).

Why is prayer important? Let us remember the words of Jesus to Peter in Gethsemane, said before the Peter's betrayal. There, while Jesus prayed peter slept. Jesus woke him and said, «**Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak**» (Mt. 26:41). Perhaps you, like Peter, want to do the right thing, but did not find the strength to do so. To do this, you need to follow God's instructions — keep searching, keep knocking, keep asking... and He will give you the strength you need (Mt. 7:7). But to achieve this, we must pay more attention than just the formal service.

I do not mean that prayer has the magic power. This is not so. But God is almighty, and a prayer — is just us admitting our weakness and God's unmeasurable greatness. This appeal to Him for strength is what He wants us to do, not what we want (1 Jn. 5:14-15).

YOU ASK



WE ANSWER

4. Church — it is a last resort; we again often ignore. When Jesus sent his followers out to preach, he sent them in pairs. When reading the book of Acts about the missionary of the apostles, we see that they also traveled in groups of two or more. Jesus said, «**For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them**» (Mt. 18:20). He told us not to neglect the association with the brothers and sisters in Christ, and to use this time to sustain one another in love and good works (Heb. 10:24-25). He also tells us to confess our sins to one another (Jm. 5:16). In the wise books of the old testament it is written: «**As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another**» (Pr. 27:17) and «**Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken**» (Eccl. 4:12).

Some of my friends talk to each other, to share how they lead their Christian lives, resist temptations, and to pray for each other and support one another in the application of God's Word to their daily lives.

Sometimes change comes quickly. In other areas they may be slower. But God has promised that if we use these means in their power, He will change our lives. Be sure! He always keeps His promises!

Are children punished for the sins of their parents?

ANSWER: Children are not punished for the sins of their parents just as parents are not punished for the sins of their children. Each individual is responsible for his/her sin. In Ezk. 18:20 it says, «**The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child**». This verse clearly shows that the punishment for the sins of a specific individual will be incurred only on the person responsible.

There is a text, which has led some to understand that the Bible teaches about punishment of sin from generation to generation, but this interpretation is incorrect. There is a verse found in Ex. 20:5, where it talks about idols, «**Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me**». This text speaks not so much about punishment but about consequences. He says that the consequences of human sin will be felt for generations to come. God warned the Israelites that their children will be influenced by their parents' generation as a natural consequence of their disobedience

and hatred towards God. Children raised in such an environment would practice similar idolatry, thus following the example of disobedience given them. Their disobedience is so deeply rooted that it took several generations to fix. God does not require us to report for the sins of our parents, but we sometimes suffer as a result of the sins committed by them, as illustrated in Ex. 20:5.

As shown in Ezk. 18:20, each of us is responsible for his own sins, and we will have to pay the penalty for them. We cannot share the guilt with someone else, as no one else can be responsible for them. However, there is one exception to this rule, and it applies to all mankind. One man took upon himself the sins of others and paid the penalty for them so sinners could become completely righteous and pure before God. That man was Jesus Christ. God sent his son into the world to trade his holiness for our sins. «**God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God**» (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus Christ takes the punishment for the sins of those who come to him with faith.

What is sin that leads to death?

ANSWER: 1 Jn. 5:16 It is one of the most difficult verses to interpret in the New Testament. «**If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life — to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that**». None of the existing interpretations, are capable to answer all the answers regarding this verse. The best understanding can be obtained by comparing this verse to what happened to Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-10, also 1 Cor. 11:30. «**Sin unto death**» is a conscious, deliberate, sustained and unconfessed sin. God, in His grace, allows His children to sin without punishing them immediately.

However, there comes a moment when He no longer allows the believer to live with unconfessed sin. When this moment comes, God sometimes decides to punish a Christian, even to the point of taking away his life. This is exactly what he did in Acts 5:1-10 and 1 Cor. 11:28-32. This, may be what Paul wrote about to the Corinthian church in 1 Cor. 5:1-15. We need to pray for Christians who sin. However, there may come a time when God will no longer hear prayers for a sinning believer with respect to which, according to his definition, the punishment is inevitable. It is difficult to realize that it may be too late to pray for the person. God is good and just, and we have to let Him decide when it will be too late.

<http://www.gotquestions.org/Russian/Russian-Q-sin.html>

FROM THE HISTORY OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

This is a story about how God can change the stony human heart, how a sinner and prostitute entered the kingdom of God ahead of many, how mysterious the ways of the Lord are, and how a young woman caused hundreds of millions of people to talk about her, finding life at the very door of death.

By half past seven in the evening it was all over. A specially invited doctor dryly declared death after inspection. The lifeless body of a dark-haired woman lay, still fastened with thick leather straps to a gurney, in a small, tiled room with blank walls and two openings resembling windows, equipped with special glass, transparent from only one side. The people who stood behind them, watching the gradual appearance of death, slowly began to disperse... On February 3, 1998 the death sentence of thirty-eight-year-old native of Texas, Karla Faye Tucker, was fulfilled. It was imposed for a murder committed by her fourteen years earlier.

The walls of a special unit of the Texas prison in the small town of Huntsville, sadly notorious throughout America as the place where the big part of all executions in the country, did not let through the sounds from outside. The hum of the enormous crowd gathered at the walls of the prison at that time did not reach through. Reporters and TV crews, opponents and supporters of the death penalty, empathizers, those who prayed, curious people and simple tourists...

The small town bubbled from all the arriving guests, and motels and restaurants were full to the limit with very different people. It was obvious that something special was going on. Indeed, in these several hours all of America froze by their TV screens in anticipation of the outcome of this drama, and the next morning all the newspapers published portraits of a smiling Karla on the front page. What attracted so much attention to this execution, a rather everyday American thing, and to this woman?

In order to get the answer, it is necessary to go back several decades, to 1959, when a pretty girl named Karla was born in a family living on the outskirts of Houston.

NOT A CLOUDLESS CHILDHOOD

«As a little girl, I did not yet understand that we lived as a family,» remembered Karla. But this bright time, remembered for the joys of swimming and fishing in the warm Gulf, did not last long. The parents constantly quarreled, and even got divorced several times. Together with the peace in the family, Karla's life kept going downhill. She tried drugs for the first time when she wasn't even eight years old. She practically had no relationship with her father, especially after she learned from her mother that she was not sure exactly who she was pregnant from... It must be said that he acted the same way.

At thirteen years of age, she began to travel around the country with the rock group The Allman Brothers Band and became seriously addicted to cocaine. In seventh grade, Karla was excluded from school. At the same time, her parents completely divorced, and she chose to live with her mother, Carolyn Moore, who became for her not only the one person who, as believed Karla, she was indifferent to, but who she wanted to imitate basically in everything. Imitate, despite the internal opposition to the wild and dissolute lifestyle that she led, and in spite of the confusion and pain in her heart. «I used to blame my mother for what happened to me,» she wrote in a petition for clemency. «She formed my attitude towards life and people, and became the cause of the most severe pain and disappointment. I often asked myself why my mother

stubbornly did not understand what she was doing to me...»

When she turned 14 years old (!), Karla's mother brought her to be in the company of men, so that she could teach her the craft of call girls. The desire to please her mother and to not «disappoint» her prevailed over her natural timidity and fear, and Karla, having gone through the «school» of sex, began, like her mother, a career as a prostitute. «I was accustomed to the conditions of the world in which my mother lived and raised me in the years when I was most susceptible... left to myself, amidst drugs, anger and fear,» she recalled in prison. «It was a way of life for people, amidst who I lived.»



the Houston County Jail, Christians organized the ministry of the gospel and a puppet show. The latter particularly attracted the inhabitants of the block Karla was part of, so that everyone went to the show. Not wanting to sit alone in the cell, Karla went as well, hoping to communicate with new people. «Throughout all the time I was there, I did not say a word and didn't even look at anyone,» she remembered. «But when I was going back to the cell, I suddenly felt as if something had descended on me. Yielding to the sudden impulse, I grabbed a Bible I saw and hid it». Karla never attended church when she was free, and especially didn't attend it here, in prison. She

of it, contacting, through letters, many different people in different corners of America. She protested against abortion and euthanasia, saying that she wishes to love, to have a family and raise children... The amazing changes taking place in Karla, of course, could not pass unnoticed for those surrounding her. But people had different reactions.

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

«As for Tucker's appeal to religion: I am ready to accept that it really took place, but do not understand what it can change,» wrote in one of the reports a BBC correspondent. «When a person is in prison, especially sentenced to death, their life really does change.

LIBERATED

THE DEATH AND LIFE OF KARLA FAYE TUCKER

ROAD TO NOWHERE

When Karla turned 16, she met Steve Griffith, and a year later they were married. In an article that the Houston Chronicle published on the day of the execution, this was how he described their relationship: «I was 19, and did not climb out of my Harley-Davidson motorcycle saddle. I worked six months a year and was convinced that the world around me was created exclusively for me... We got along pretty well, although we often brought fists into play when we had disagreements. Not a single man hit me as hard as she did. I did not have to fear blows from the back during brawls in the bar — she protected me. She was a bold woman...»

The couple entertained themselves by collecting weapons, spending time in the company of bikers, and playing American football without protective gear. At the same time Karla was, in his opinion, a good housewife: she cleaned the house, cooked food and send her husband out to work on time. She was also remarkably beautiful, even when she could barely stand on her feet under the influence of drugs. When she announced that she is leaving him, according to her words, in order to somehow figure out how to deal with her «wild tendencies», he seriously feared that the worst could happen. «When we separated,» he remembered, «I told my friends that either she would get killed, or she would kill someone». These words proved to be prophetic.

June eleventh, 1983 Karla and her sister decided to celebrate her sister's birthday. Stretching out the fun, from Friday to Sunday they



locked themselves in an apartment where they used heroin, smoked pot and indulged in other drugs.

Early in the morning on June 13, twenty-three-year-old Karla Faye Tucker, along with her friend Daniel Garrett, under the influence of methadone cocktail, «Valium», heroin, marijuana, rum and tequila, decisively headed towards the apartment of Jerry Dean, husband of Shawn Dean — Karla's best friend, who shortly beforehand left her husband after a severe beating. The plan was to get inside and steal Dean's motorcycle. On the way there, they recalled old grievances: Jerry once wheeled his bike straight into Karla's living room, staining the carpet with oil, and then completely

shattered the only portrait she had of her mother. Opening the door with a key, which Karla had once pulled out of a pocket of Jerry's pants while doing laundry, they quietly entered the apartment, convinced that the owner was not home. Karla knew the house perfectly well, since she used to live with the Deans for quite a while.

But things did not go as planned from the very start. The owner was at home, peacefully snoring on a mattress in the middle of the bedroom. Half awake, but recognizing his wife's friend in the dark, Jerry began to mutter something about not having anything against Shawn, that everything could be arranged, and the like, when Garrett ran up to him with a hammer in his hand. From that moment the events started to develop rapidly.

Karla locked in a fight with the owner of the house, but her friend struck him several times on the head. Karla turned on the light to better see what was happening. Dean's body sagged, and a strange gurgling sound was heard from his throat. In an effort to stop that sound, she grabbed a pickaxe that was lying nearby and finished him off with several crushing blows to the back. Garrett helped her in this too.

But the surprises continued. Suddenly Karla discovered that in the corner, under a pile of blankets, someone was moving. It was Debra Thornton, who, after a quarrel with her husband, went to a party, where she met Dean. Excited as a result of the drugs and the committed murder, Karla brought down a hail of blows upon her. Each time the iron pierced into the flesh, she felt a kind of sexual pleasure. «Yes, I felt pleasure from violence,» she stated in a television interview, recalling these events. «I was very attracted to wild and crazy antics that became a part of me in an attempt to conform to and be accepted by those who I communicated with». Inflicting more than 20 stab wounds to both of the victims, and leaving a pickaxe stuck in Debra's chest, the robbers got out of the apartment.

Later, Karla was repeatedly asked whether she felt guilt immediately after the offense. «No», she answered. «We didn't even leave the city; I not only did not feel guilty, but was proud of the fact that I at last showed my friends what I was capable of. I don't think I'll be able to explain it to someone other than myself, but in the abnormal life that I led, what had happened simply did not seem real to me...»

A little more than a month later, both criminals were arrested. Soon after, the court sentenced both to death penalty. Garrett, not waiting for the execution, died in prison in 1993 of liver cancer.

AND YOU WILL LEARN THE TRUTH

This happened three months after Karla was put behind bars. In

simply did not know that the Bible was given for free to those prisoners who needed it.

Arriving at the cell, full of pride for the successful theft, she huddled in the far corner of the chamber, so that she couldn't be seen with a Bible in her hands and have people think it was a sign of weakness, took out her prey and began to read... She did not know that what she was reading, or rather did not have time to realize it, when suddenly she found herself standing in the middle of the cell on her knees, and with tears streaming down her face, she prayed, asking God for forgiveness.

«When I did that, all the unbearable heaviness of the incident descended upon me. That night I realized for the first time with all the deadly precision, what I had done.



For the first time in many years, I began to cry then, and to this day tears are a part of my life,» wrote Karla fourteen years later.

Surprising changes began to occur in her. From a cold-blooded killer, who initially flatly denied her guilt, Karla evolved into a full of repentance and emotional woman with a quiet and soulful voice. At the trial, she fully admitted her guilt in both of the committed murders, and in the final statement before the announcement of the verdict declared that even is she herself was hacked to death with a pickaxe, it would not be enough to atone for her guilt. «I tried to do good all these fourteen years not because I was in prison, but because my God expects that from me,» she would write later. «I have learned to distinguish between the good and evil, and am called to stay by what is good».

Karla tried to contact relatives of the victims of her crime, so that she could at least in some measure give back good for the evil. Working in prison, she began to collect money for the education of Debra's orphaned son, but he refused to accept it. She also tried to speak as much as possible to those around her about the marvelous Lord, who was so kind to her. Karla talked about the Way, the Truth and the Life with the prisoners in her prison and outside

There is a lot of time, and almost nothing distracts from thoughts about their life. Each contact with the outside world leaves a deep impression... In addition, religion can serve as a reason for leniency. Thus, it is not surprising that many sentenced people choose this path». Apparently, the members of the State Council on the decision of pardon thought the same way, voting with a score of 16:0 with two abstentions against the postponement of death sentence for Karla.

However, those who knew her better, had a different opinion. «What is supposed to happen is will just be revenge, which does not make sense. Before us is not the woman who committed those terrible murders, — these words belong to the director of the largest Christian Broadcasting Network

CBN and former candidate for US president, to the evangelist Pat Robertson. And he always spoke in favor of the death penalty.

Richard Cizik, political analyst of the National Association of Evangelicals of the United States, claimed that Tucker's execution had provoked a wave of «moral protest» among evangelical Christians, loyal to capital punishment, precisely because the «deep spiritual change in this woman was so obvious». Should the one who in Christ has become a new creature, for whom «the old has gone, the new is here!» (2 Corinthians 5:17), living in a Christian society, fully pay the bills of the old life? Here the theological question, it seems, has acquired a strong practical color. Not only Robertson, but many of the leaders of the conservative wing rose to her defense.

There were many appeals to the country's leadership for leniency in the case of Karla, including from Pope John Paul II, Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi, the UN Penitentiary inspector Bacre Waly Ndiaye, the European Parliament, and even... the brother of the killed Debra Thornton, Ron Carson. He, becoming a close witness of what happened to the murderer of his sister, himself turned to Christ.

(Ending on pg. 9)

FROM THE HISTORY OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

(Continued from pg. 8)

LIBERATED

THE DEATH AND LIFE OF KARLA FAYE TUCKER

Certainly, Karla requested commutation of her sentence. «I ask you to allow me to pay off the community by helping other people and contributing to the prevention of crime and suicide». Karla wrote in a letter to George W. Bush, who was then the governor of Texas. «I cannot bring back the life I have chosen. But I can now, if I may, help save lives. This is the only real compensation that I can give, and I want to do it by any means». After all, she thought, the Savior prayed to the Father in heaven for that cup that was prepared from the beginning to pass Him. With the outcome of her sentence, Karla had fully believed in the will of God, and was ready to gladly accept any outcome of the case. There was flowing and seething life, and joy that radiated from Karla's whole being that spilled on those who were around her. Rivers of Living Water took the start in her heart, noticeably washing all of those who were near Karla.

Some of those Living Waters had head-to-toe shower ice spray on those who came to interview Karla. Larry King, one of the most highly paid journalists on the planet, when chatting with Karla few days before her execution on CNN program, was frankly discouraged and stumped by her answers. Elegantly formulated questions and professional pressure was faced with childish simple testimony about Christ. The expected trilling interview with the taste of death, failed.

Other of these Living Waters carried away in the whirlpool of returned love. Dana Brown, who was carrying a missionary in prison where Karla was a prisoner, wrote: «I have never met a woman, and in general a man, like Karla. From the first moment I met her, I always felt the presence of God surrounding her». Soon Dana confessed his feelings for her and they married in 1995 through trustees, because under the law those who are under

a death sentence do not have the right to participate in such ceremonies. It was a wonderful marriage. The couple saw each other often, but they were always separated by a transparent wall of bulletproof glass.

Karla was happy with her life that she suddenly found here in prison on the threshold of death. She realized that she was greatly loved by the Lord and her husband. Karla spent a lot of time in prayer and meditation, cherishing the dreams to have a child, to devote her life to the child, to serve the people with lost souls, which she was some time ago, and she wrote a lot. But the fatal execution date which was 3 February 1998 relentlessly approaching.

THE LAST HOURS

Nearly fifteen hundred demonstrators, those for and those against the death penalty, with fifteen hundred reporters and TV crews filled the small town of Huntsville a few days before the scheduled execution of Karla Faye Tucker. All possible interviews, selected angles of filming, gathering of all necessary facts have already been taken by noon of February 3rd. Press with video cameras and demonstrators with posters were ready, taking starting positions around the prison building. A few got bored waiting for half past six in the evening, which was the time for which the procedure of enforcement has been appointed.

The locals have become accustomed to this phenomenon, all the more since Texas was re-introduced to the death penalty going ahead of technology and humanity of a society to replace the «good old» electric chair and lethal injection. During the enforcement of the sentence, there is no more

of dimmed bulbs in the homes of residents and nasty smell of burned hair no longer surrounds the prison building. Instead, a hospital-like stretcher where belts are strapped to the victim, sterile clean sheets and a syringe with cloudy liquid. No smoke, no dying convulsion of the victims, all is calm and quickly; only 18-20 seconds is needed for death to begin. Among the thirty churches that exist in Huntsville, no community has ever gathered for service during the execution. However, on February 3 at 5:30 pm, when Karla Faye was strapped to a gurney, the people of the Church of St. Stephen, along with brothers and sisters from other churches gathered for prayers. The service was not an expression of protest or the approval of the death penalty; it was people asking God about who died, about those who were already dead, and those who are left here on earth.

People also gathered in the prison itself. Places near translucent windows of the room where the execution takes place, were occupied by invited officials and relatives of the victim and the perpetrator. Wheelchair widowed husband Debra was parked near the glass. While waiting, he glanced nervously at his watch. «For this moment I prayed for many years, — he told reporters at the entrance to the prison. — We had all this time to accept the fact that this monster was in front of our eyes».

Only at sixth-thirty came an official response from the governor, George W. Bush, about the latest indulgence for Karla, a 30-day stay of execution. Bush refused. Prior to the latest refusal, same petitions Karla wrote where she was asking to replace the death penalty with life imprisonment, and the commutation of the sentence twice

to cancel the penalty. The technical preparations started only after reading the official paper.

With the entrance of St. Stephen deacon, who usually organized Sunday Bible classes in the prison, read aloud from the fourth chapter of Genesis, the story of Cain: «Sin lieth at the door... Am I my brother's keeper... the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground... my punishment is greater than I can bear... And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.» Those who gathered at the walls of the prison, too, remembered the first fratricide. «Hands off Cain» was written on the poster on one side of the crowd. «Why do you need an injection?! Use the pickaxe!» was written on the poster on the other side of the crowd.

After the Book of Genesis, a young man working as a prison guard read a passage from Chapter 23 of the Gospel of Luke, about a criminal who was crucified next to Jesus, «If thou be Christ, save thyself and us... we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds... Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise».

...Behind Debra's husband stood her brother Ron and, without blinking, looked at the place of preparation through the glass. God works in mysterious ways. His sister's death opened the way for him to the attainment of peace in Jesus. If not for that, he still would have been a prisoner of anger and bitterness from the loss of fourteen-years ago crime, which his family members still experience. Now they do not even talk to him, he told reporters. «I can understand them. I do not know just how they are going to live with this pain that will stay with them forever».

An elderly retired officer, who once was involved in reviewing of cases for prisoners, invited the community of Church of St. Stefan to prayer. People prayed of the sincere repentance of Karla Faye, her strong hope in Christ, for eternal peace for the victims, for forgiveness in their hearts for their families, for guards, Karla's prosecutors, for chaplain Jim Brèzzila, who was with her until the end, for judges, lawyers and jurors, for a Commission to review the cases, for Governor, for those who does the injection of chemicals.

At 6:25 in the evening with grace and ease, Karla jumped up like a gymnast on the gurney and said a prayer: «Lord, help them easily find my veins». When the straps tighten around her body, she turned her head to the window and said her last words: «I would like to say to all of you, the Debra Thornton family and Jerry Dean's family that I am so sorry. I hope God will give you peace with this». «Darling, I love you, — she said to her husband. — Ron, give Peggy a hug for me. Everybody has been so good to me. I love all of you very much. I'm going to be face-to-face with Jesus now». «Warden Baggett, thank all of you so much. You have been so good to me. I love all of you very much. I will see you all when you get there. I will wait for you». Then, she moistened her lips, she relaxed and closed her eyes and started gently humming something under my breath in anticipation of the deadly procedure.

When sodium thiopental was entering her blood through the system connected to her veins, Karla went into a deep sleep. The ensuing potassium chloride stopped the heart, and Pancuronium bromide stopped the breathing. Less than a minute later, Karla was dead, and her soul hurtled back to the Lord, whom she loved and who she was able to find only in prison, on the edge of her death.

The article used materials of the American press.

Interview with Larry KING

Joy in the Lord

Excerpts from an interview with Karla Faye Tucker in the program «Larry King Live» channel CNN January 14, 1998, 20 days before her death

KING: Tell me, do you feel worse with every day with anticipation of the punishment?

TUCKER: No. It gets a little more exciting every day.

KING: Interesting choice of words, Karla. Exciting, how?

TUCKER: Just to see how God is unfolding everything. Every day something new comes up and it's exciting to be a part of it because there's a lot going on, and it's going to affect a lot of people. And it's a blessing to be a part of it, and it's exciting to know that God has a plan for this.

KING: Have you been angry with God that He did not let you find Him before the murder?

TUCKER: I definitely asked Him about it. And now, I ask, «Why these things have to happen to a man, that he may know thee, O Lord?» And I just believe in His sovereignty, and that He knows what to do.

KING: You're asking about the commutation of the sentence. Your chances of success are minimal, but you remain optimistic. Why?

TUCKER: Because my hope is in the Lord. I am firmly convinced that He has a purpose for everything. If His plan is that my life must go on, He can change the heart of the governor and the commission to review the cases. It will help them to see what

can be done to mitigate the sentence.

KING: And if they do not change the sentence, will it give rise to doubts as to whether it is your faith?

TUCKER: No.

KING: And you will enter into that room? Bravely?

TUCKER: I'll go in there, continuing to talk about the love of God. If He allows it to happen, then it is correct. He had saved my life. And His mercy has given me another chance that I did not deserve. Therefore, whatever He wants to do with my life right now, I'll go with Him and the path He will show. I'm just very grateful that I received this chance.

KING: How do you prepare for the time when you may no longer be here?



Larry King Live:

«You have to explain that to me a little more. It can't just be God?»

TUCKER: By the grace of God, I know that in any case God will take me through everything and I will be able to handle it. Nobody in this world is exempt from pain and suffering. There are people where death is surrounding them from all sides every day. How do they cope with it? I do it by the grace of God, because I know that He is with me and that it is not my last stop, you know? And my heart is ready to leave. When I think about what Jesus asked, before going to the cross, and He asked God to take this cup... And if He could ask for it, I too, should not be ashamed of such a request. I would like to be able to live on. There is a lot of love in me. Jesus gave it to me. There are many people out there who do not feel they are loved, and who need to know that they are loved. They are worthy of love. And I can give it. I want to be with my husband, you know? I want us to be able to minister together. In fact, I

can do it right here. I can and will do it always, every day, no matter when I leave this earth. And I'm not ashamed to say that I would like to live on and to share that God's love with people.

KING: So, you are not discouraged.

TUCKER: No.

KING: You have to explain that to me a little more. It can't just be God?

TUCKER: Yes, it can. It's called the joy of the Lord. When you have done something that I have done, like what I have done, and you have been forgiven for it, and you're loved, that has a way of so changing you. I mean, I have experienced real love. I know what real love is. I know what forgiveness is, even when I did something so horrible. I know that because God forgave me and I accepted what Jesus did on the cross. When I leave here, I am going to go be with him.

DENMARK RESPECTS HUMAN RIGHTS



The Scandinavian model of social order is perhaps the socialism we once dreamt of but failed to establish. It can be discussed without end especial when you look at this wonderful life with your own eyes.

I was fortunate to visit Denmark for educational purposes through the Civil Society Development Project in Ukraine along with representatives of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe with the cooperation of the Danish Institute of Human Rights. Representatives from private organizations attended in order to implement projects that were supported by the grant programs that the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs funded.

We spent the first 5 days getting to know this wonderful country, comparing it to ours and tried to understand why there was such a colossal difference between us. Why is no one stealing, taking bribes, yelling at their children, not hitting or interrogating the detained but rather spending great amounts of money on teaching the disabled and treating the prisoners nicely? Yet, it was difficult to understand.

The trip's organizers wanted us to see as much as possible so they offered to take us to a Danish prison, the Copenhagen City Hall and the Center



for Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. I was particularly interested in the prison that was repeatedly mentioned during our stay.

There are two types of prisons in Denmark: closed and open. We were able to see and go inside both types. I can confidently say that they have nothing in common with ours. The closed prisons contain prisoners that were sentenced to more than 5 years or violated the conditions in the open prisons. We



visited the Vestre Fængsel prison that is located in Copenhagen. It has 750 spots for prisoners and nobody remembered a time when that number was exceeded. During our stay there, there were 550 prisoners and each prisoner had their own cell. The prison also has a large number of staff members: 550 overseer, 7 doctors, and 25 nurses. The head of the prison is even concerned that the prisoners spend too much money on purchasing sweets from which teeth spoil and so the prisoners end up visiting a dentist once a week. The prison's territory has a church where

they can even be wedded. There is also a gym, library, store, a hospital ward, and an area for walks that had to be protected with a fence that



would somehow prevent drugs from entering the prison.

We were curious whether there was a psychologist amongst the prison staff. Yet, the Danes realized, a while back, that one person cannot physically help a few hundred prisoners and that is why the overseers, 30 % of which are women, are prepared more thoroughly prior to working there (compared to the post-Soviet prison system). In order to work in a prison and get paid a descent sum (3,000 euros a month), it is necessary to complete a special 3-year course. These courses train the personnel how to find common ground with the prisoners and how to act when a prisoner arrives to prison because it is obvious that prisoners arrive in a stressful state and they need a special and individual approach. Not everyone can work as an overseer and consciously spend most of their life in such a facility. This is where a huge problem lies. If a person completes the 3-year course and realizes that this job is not suitable for themselves, all of the skills and knowledge that they attained will remain completely unclaimed outside of the prison system and they will have a difficult time finding a job with good pay. The head of the prison understands that this problem exists and is trying to do everything to resolve this problem.

Our group, that visited the prison, had a person who worked around 15 years in the Ukrainian prison system. He was amazed that the prisoners were dressed in regular clothing that they brought with themselves from home or clothing that they received from their relatives. Hence, the government does not have to pay a single penny for prison-uniforms and in return the convict feels more comfortable in personal clothing. Although the overseers wear uniforms, they do not carry weapons, except a truncheon that is rarely used.

During their time behind bars, a prisoner does not forget their basic skills: how to prepare food and go to a store. Yes, go to a store since there is a store on the prison territory in which a prisoner can purchase everything their heart desires (exception — alcohol) and what they can afford since they earn money on their own. Upon their arrival, they receive 50 Danish krone (7 euros). Aside from that, they work

and receive 10-35 Danish kroner per hour. Their work day is from 8am till 3pm. Those that did not graduate high school (most of the prisoners are immigrants do not know the Danish language nor can they write or read) can attend the school, instead of working, for which they are paid: education is strongly encouraged.

If this closed prison had a grating, a high fence, and a strict system for entrance then the open prisons are more like a suburban boarding or a pioneer camp for adults. Trees, pathways with lush bushes, lawns with fresh cut grass, one story long homes, a store, library, a gym... a few men and a female sunbathing under the sun and upon encountering the prison director they smile and shake his hand. Truth be told, this friendliness was a pleasant surprise. After all, the post-Soviet setting always considered that the prisoners should be kept in fear and should be treated in a condescending manner; and so it is unspeakable to see prisoners and their overseers have a warm relationship.

The prisoners are very independent. They clean their rooms, do their laundry (with washing machines), feed themselves, go to sleep when they want to... their barracks close at 10pm but there is no set bedtime. They can walk as much as they want inside. They can watch television, drink tea in the guest room, socialize, listen to music or simply sit in their room. They live alone in single-like cells. Yet, they are not really cells. They are small rooms that ace a bed, closet, table, sink, mirror, television, mobile phone, personal computer, shelf with books, ventilator, and a scenic view from their window: fields, woods, singing birds...

Another distinguishing feature: in Ukraine, prisoners are sent as far away from home in order



for them not to think of home or have the desire to escape. In Denmark, everything is contrary. Every third weekend, the prisoners that do not break any prison laws have a vacation. They can visit home on Saturday and return on Sunday. It's natural that only a few of them do not return because if you do not return on time, you will be transferred to a closed prison where the conditions of imprisonment are more strict. The Danes explain that the prisoner is already punished and so it is pointless to separate them from their relatives. Most importantly, if their families have children then the children should not forget their parents. Because of this, the prisoner wants to behave well to get their vacation and eventually return to their family faster.





LIFE IN A DANISH PRISON

Throughout my time exploring these conditions, it seemed like there were no problems that existed. However, there are problems. It is just that there problems seem so meaningless compared to our prisons' problems. Nonetheless, the Danes note that it is very difficult for them to fight drug sales on the prison territory. This is a serious problem because the open-prisons practically lack the ability to prevent drug transfer. In fact, after their arrival from their weekend vacation they are not subjected to a humiliating inspection. In addition, there are only 6 overseers that stay over night making it impossible to supervise everything. Those that renounce drugs and alcoholic beverages are rewarded. They are moved to family-based homes where they can stay with a child under 3 years of age. Afterward, the relatives are required to take the child from prison so the child is not deprived of freedom.

Well, we have something to strive for. Little by little, we need to try to attain these unbelievably comfortable conditions in our prisons that frankly are simply humane.

Anna GOROBTSOV, <http://helsinki.org.ua>

* * *

There is a widespread opinion that Danish prisons are more comfortable than Eastern European hotels — a catchphrase. As the Copenhagen Post states, «Even if this is partially true, such a reputation among the Scandinavian nations has an explanation».

«So Denmark spent more money on its prisoners' maintenance and rehabilitation than many other countries averaging to 497, 495 Danish kroner (72,100 dollars) per prisoner per year», wrote a newspaper.

For comparison purposes: according to the latest report from the Council of Europe, Ukraine spends approximately 1, 100 dollars per year (example found by editor).



The rehabilitation program in the Danish prisons is built on conditions to create an environment that would be as close to a normal lifestyle as possible in order to avoid negative side effects after prisoners regain their freedom. That is why they are called open-prisons. For example, they are granted the opportunity to complete their education and attain a diploma. They are offered a variety of professions and are even given the chance to partake in their local business which helps them actively continue their practice after leaving prison. They also have an opportunity to start their own business and continue to work with it after they leave prison.

Danish prisoners are allowed to use their cell phones under the condition that they will use them in their cells and pay for their phone plan on time. The latest report stated that in 2014, there were



1,931 smart-phones brought to the prisons illegally. The administration admitted that the open-prisons, where prisoners can openly move about, are difficult to keep track of.

The drug usage in Denmark's prisons is also critiqued; although, it is not as widespread as is believed. Of 40,000 random annual checks, only 8 were found with drugs, and majority of that consisted of marijuana. This violation results in a citation that prolongs their prison stay for an additional 30 days and isolates them in a single-cell in which they can ask for a television. Drug-addict prisoners are not recommended for early release or parole.

Even though Danish politicians regularly state that the prison population is increasing in immigrant prisoners especially from western Europe, this is not true. According to the representatives of the Danish Service of Correctional Institutions, a significant inflow of immigrants does not exist. Immigrants only account for 37 % of the prisoners but there are no records of their nationalities. In addition, dangerous foreign-prisoners are deported back to their homeland.

Such comfortable conditions can also cause harm believes a former prison overseer, Liz Winter, whom now works as a volunteer at the largest Danish Prison Museum — Vestre Fængsel. According to her words, some prisoners start viewing prisons as hotels where they can live comfortable and receive hot food. «When they go out into the real world, they purposefully commit a minor felony and return behind bars. Though, most of these cases account for homeless and drug-addicts», explained Liz Winter.

Despite the prison's comfort, Danish



prisoners are Europe's champions for escaping prison. The Council of Europe shows statistics from 2007-2011 in which there were an average of 35.8 runaways for 10,000 prisoners in Denmark. In comparison, these statistics show Italy with 1.5 %, Germany with 1.6 %, Spain with 1.7 % and Europe on average — 2 runaways. In 2013, 68 prisoners escaped the Danish open-prison whom valued freedom more than a free meal.

«The main cause of this particular approach to service in correctional facilities in Denmark is the fact that those who serve their term are less likely to become repeat-offenders compared to other countries. Only Norway has a less percentage of repeat-offenders than Denmark. Norway only has 20 % of repeat-offenders while Denmark has 28 % repeat-offenders, America has 60 % of repeat-offenders, and on average there are 50 % repeat-offenders around the world. Seeing these results from rehabilitation, one can conclude that money did not go to waste», concluded Liz Winter.

According to statistics, for every 100,00 Danish people, 71 are imprisoned. In United States there are 707 prisoners for every 100,000 Americans. The Danish correctional staff counts 4,900 people. Danish prisons only have 4,160 spots and an average occupation consists of 98 %.

<http://flashnord.com>



Interview with Kent Hovind

Kent Hovind — American evangelist and young earth creationist. He is known for his seminar on «scientific creationism,» which declares the insolvency of the theory of evolution, colliding with scientific data. Kent Hovind has been charged in various criminal offenses, including false bankruptcy, threatening the represen-

and answering myself many questions, such as: «What did I do?» In general, I went through the same thing, through which pass all when you first go to jail. I hope that my experience will prepare others for what is to come. We are heading towards a worldwide «prison planet», which is coming to America very quickly.

— **What role did your relatives play, when you find yourself in extreme situations?**

— People who are close to you — a wife, children, possibly neighbors — they can be a great blessing, or, on the contrary, frustration. King David's wife turned against him. He was just happy and praising God, but his wife mocked

the prophets. We know what the prophets did, for example, Elijah, Elisha. God told Jeremiah that he should not marry, because soon there will be problems in the world. God said to Ezekiel: «Ezekiel, your wife will die today, do not cry». This is an odd biblical text. Hosea's wife also left him. So relatives can be either a help or a great burden when there are such circumstances. Exactly the same things happen when a person goes to prison.

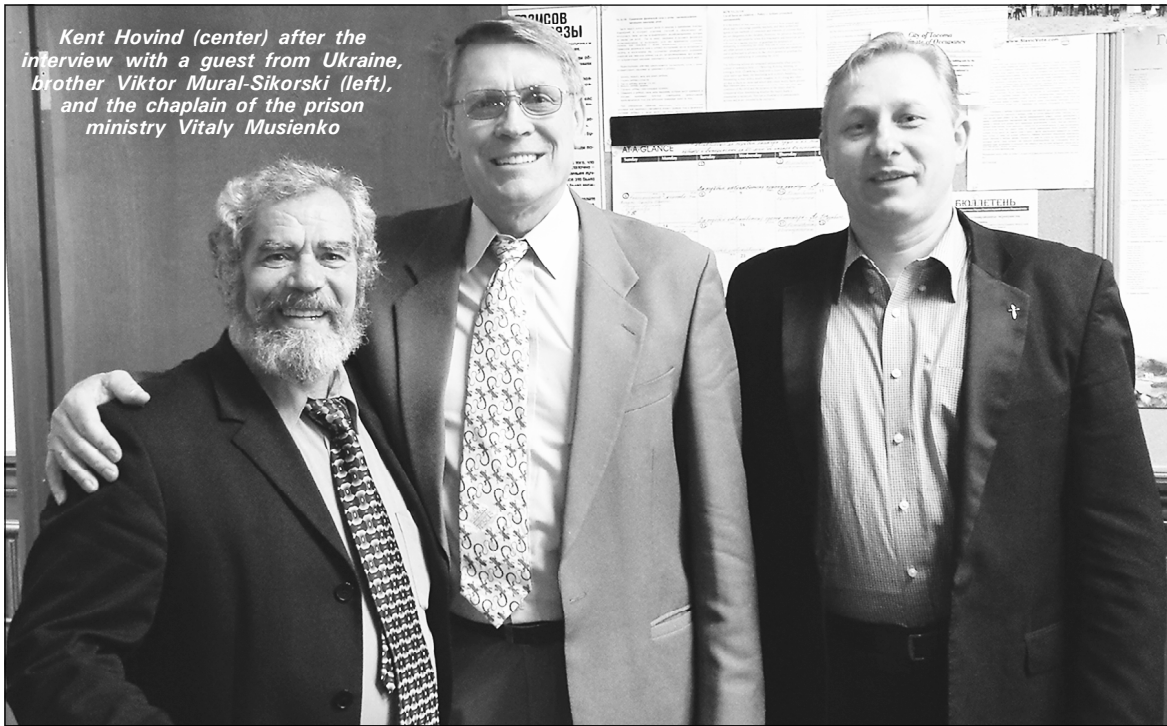
— **What are you currently working on and what are your plans for the near future?**

— I really liked and enjoyed the Dinosaur Park, which was placed in my back yard. For its location, we have about five acres, and about one hundred thousand visitors a year from one hundred and twenty countries. My plan is to make the park even bigger, and for this purpose we are seriously engaged in the search of land in Alabama.

— **Brother Kent, what do you wish to say for the edification of the readers of «Prisoner»?**

— Jesus told us: «In the world ye shall have tribulation; But take heart! I have overcome the world». This world is not our home. This world is temporary. According to the Book of Revelation, it's all going to burn in the fire. Therefore, I would encourage all people to become as close as possible to the Lord. He promised in the Gospel of John, that we will have tribulation and everything will go bad. Maybe it will happen in the near future, but after that we will have forever, where there will be no crying, no tears, where everyone will be happy! The main thing — firmly believe and following Him. As Jesus said, «...let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me».

Interview by the chaplain of the prison ministry Vitaly MUSIENKO, Washington, USA.



Kent Hovind (center) after the interview with a guest from Ukraine, brother Viktor Mural-Sikorski (left), and the chaplain of the prison ministry Vitaly Musienko

tatives of the authorities, filing false complaints, construction without obtaining permission from the authorities, as well as various tax crimes, including in 2006-non-payment of taxes from employees' wages. In the latter case the jury found Hovind guilty of failing to pay more than 430 thousand dollars to the federal budget, and on 19 January 2007, he was sentenced to 10 years. In the summer of 2015 the court made a request for early release of Kent Hovind. Today Kent Hovind has kindly agreed to give an interview for the readers of the newspaper «Prisoner».

— **Dear brother Kent, could you tell us how difficult it was to accept your situation at the beginning of the sentence?**

— I think that all who are in prison are going through an emotional roller coaster. Some days you feel great, and other days — badly. Sometimes in the same day you go through emotional swings. Why does God allow it? One thing that really helped me — is to write short stories, letters to the different characters of the Bible and God. I called these letters, «My God». They will soon be published, all my work in 2007, there are about 60 stories that I wrote. I wrote to John the Baptist, St. Paul, Joseph, and so on. For example, about how Joseph felt when his brothers sold him into slavery. I did not know of his feelings, but I tried somehow to compare myself to him, and so I wrote like back and forth. I read this story many times in the Bible, asking

— **What specifically helped you get through this long term of imprisonment?**

— Of course, Bible reading, and prayer, as well as the understanding that many other Bible characters have gone through the same thing. For example, Joseph — 13 years in Egypt, Daniel — 70 years in Babylon. Many others have felt much worse than me. And the knowledge that other people have gone through more severe test than me, helped me to resist and not to fall. As it is written, everything that happens to us, makes us better, and therefore, we are thus able to serve others.

— **During your imprisonment, did you find more friends and followers, or vice versa?**

— Yes, I had a Bible study in my cell four times a day, after each meal and evening. I brought about 800 people to the Lord and acquired several lifelong friends. On the one hand, this is very good, but on the other — bad as a prison — this is not a pleasant place. But God used it for the benefit of all.

— **Have you been able to continue to work on creationism in prison?**

— I have collected a lot of material currently used in my seminars. During imprisonment, I was able to read many books, about 1800. I made a lot of research, in particular, what the Bible says about the end times, or as the world comes to an end, the future, ascension, and so on. The prison is the ideal place to explore, for example, about half of the Bible was written out of prison or exile.

him. People react in different ways. I learned a lot of stuff about the founding fathers of America. George Washington's wife was with him everywhere, even during battles. Ben Franklin's wife had left him when he went to France for 12 years. While fighting for political freedom in America, his wife left and ignored him. I would probably write a book someday about the wives of



Kent Hovind with the Pastor's children Aleksandr Borisenko

Dear readers of «Prisoner»!

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

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

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



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PROVERB

Seek and find!

One farmer lost a 50-ruble note on the threshing floor. He was not rich, and this loss was quite palpable to him. He turned everything on the threshing floor, everything, every straw, until finally, after several days of searching, he found it. Oh, how glad he was back then! Soon after, he came to a Christian service and was moved by the preaching of the Gospel. At home, he told his wife: «I would like to be a believer in Jesus Christ, but I do not know where and how to find Him». The wife said, «If you're looking for him as jealously as you sought the money in the threshing floor, you would have found Him».

ATTENTION!

Dear Readers, «Prisoner» is currently distributed in two languages: Russian and English. «Prisoner» is published in Ukraine and USA. However, the newspaper is published and distributed solely by means of free-will donations. For all who wish to contribute to the publishing of «Prisoner», you will find information included in the last column of the newspaper. For American Christians who would like to donate and render assistance in prison ministry, we have printed a section you can cut out, list your donations and specify where you want us to direct your donations. May Lord 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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