



PRISONER

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

(John 8:32)

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«...Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath» (James 1:19).

How often do we not know how, and sometimes just do not want to listen to others? How often are we hasty to words and anger? Today, there are many speakers and talkers, but there are so few the laborers. Few transition from speakers to laborers, and if they do, they do it largely for their own benefit. There is no lack of babblers and talkers in the present. What is sad is that not only did politicians learn to speak charmingly but so did some church leaders. Both are allegedly fighting for good and defend the interests of ordinary people, but ultimately, these interests are not being met. Politicians lie in many ways, but at least they do not hide behind God. It is much worse with the people of faith, for a lie with a religious base – is the worst lie because they use the name of Jesus Christ

Amazingly everyone today lives exactly as people lived in the days of Noah before the flood. That is, they do not attribute any importance to the fact that, by all indications, the end of the world is very close. Yes, of the day and hour no one knows, except God. However, it is necessary to be ready to meet Him now, this instant. The last sign of the approaching end of the world is practically filled, as already the gospel has been preached to the uttermost parts of the earth. But even in this God has manifested His care and mercy to all mankind, for He has given the opportunity to hear about the good news to almost everyone. No one will now be able to reproach Him that he had not heard the gospel. Today, more than ever, all believers need to watch and pray. As it is written, **«Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect»** (Matthew 24:44).



for cover. Today, there are very few church leaders with a clean reputation because their personal interests are above God, hence the endless stream of verbiage. The Lord warned that it would be this way in the last days: **«...Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, and say, «I am the Christ» and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. Watch that ye be not troubled: for all these things must, but this is not the end: For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places; yet it is – the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake; and then many will be offended, and will betray each other and hate one another; And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many; And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold; But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come»** (Matthew 24:4-14).

Reading the forewarning of Jesus Christ one can say that this does not apply to the present day, as everything that is said has happened almost in all ages. There were wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, nations against nations, and false prophets were many. This all really happened and happened not once. However not once was the prophecy fulfilled in which Jesus Christ brought forth the end of the world. He said, **«And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come»**.

Anyone with even the slightest interest in the history of mankind can see a simple thing: the gospel has never been so preached throughout the world, as it has been just in the last two decades. Doors have been opened for missionaries almost everywhere. Today, perhaps, there is no place which the Good News has not visited, for even the tribes most remote from civilization have been visited by missionaries more than once.

The Lord said: **«But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be»** (Matthew 24:36-39).

Could all this happen today or tomorrow? Yes, according to the latest sign, it can happen any day and at any time. This coming will be triumphant. Jesus clearly described what His coming to earth to take His people will look like: **«...For as the lightning comes from the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man»** (Matthew 24:27).

What a pity that today most humans live as carefree as those who lived in the days of Noah. Moreover, it is as if people today are losing their minds. The desire of the majority, including believers, is focused on prospering with material goods. People began to talk a lot about love, but are completely unable to love others. Their ears are tuned only to sweet flattery, but the essence of love they do not hear. The desire of earthly goods obscures the minds in many. People ask God for many things, but do not receive anything. The Apostle James in his message very clearly expresses the cause of human misery. He says: **«You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, «The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously»? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: «God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble». Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up»** (James 4:2-10).

The Apostle James in his letter to believers gives a very vivid instruction. He calls everything by name and clearly points to the shortcomings which are among the believers. Today, many Christians remain without an answer to their prayers, because in the same way as before, they ask for the wrong purpose, that they may fulfill their own lusts. The apostle openly calls these Christians double minded and advises them to clean their hands and fix the heart. Even more sternly, he calls them adulterers, thereby emphasizing their depravity and friendship with the world. In the present day life of many Christians, it is not much different from that picture centuries ago, when the apostle

James denounced the believers. Moreover, today many churches are using faith in God as NLP (neuro-linguistic programming), thanks to which people turn into willing slaves. For many church leaders, worldly interests have risen above the interests of God. Many today speak of God and love, but in many ways these are just pretty words. The Lord Himself spoke about this through the prophet Isaiah: **«...This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, but in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines, the commandments of men»** (Mark 7:6-7).

Unfortunately, in many churches the commandments of God are being increasingly replaced with the commandments of men, while treating Scripture as profitable for manipulation. Colors of the world captivate and distract a significant number of Christians. The ranks of the believers are increasingly being joined in the same manner people used to join the communist party in the Soviet Union. When Jesus Christ was on earth, He expressed this thought: **«When the Son of Man cometh, will He find faith on earth?»** (Luke 18:8).

It seems to me that today, more than ever, Christian people should seriously think about the fact that the end is not far off. The last indication that it will happen soon is already at the stage of completion. Perhaps, after all, it is time for all Christians to move from words to deeds. Enough already with the arguing and quarrelling with each other whose church is right and whose is not. The Lord has designated for all only one true church – Christian, where the foundation is based on only two commandments: love God and your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39). And, just relying on this foundation, Christians will be able to gain eternal life. Nothing will draw us so close to God, as the fulfillment of these two commandments.

«The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up» (2 Peter 3:9-10).

«Because you say, «I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing» – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. «He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches» (Revelation 3:17-22).

I. GORIK.

FREEDOM ZONE

(Interview of Aleksandr Shevchenko with Sergey Gavrilov)

«We are waiting for changes...» — Viktor Tsoi words reflected the mood of the Soviet people during the years of Perestroika. In the mind of the public matured an understanding of the need for profound changes. They protested against the outdated social system, they wanted genuine democracy and individual freedom. It was increasingly difficult for soviet intellectuals to put up with the suppression of the free development of culture, the isolation of the country from the outside civilized world. Any influence of the West was perceived as a wind of change. With the emergence of the «Beatles» youth was embraced in a radical revolution. Although the Soviet Union had remained aloof from the turmoil suffered by the people of the western countries, trends of the 60s reached us. Rock concerts had become a necessary element of everyday life. In tandem with these concert drug use multiplied. Almost anyone could easily be convinced to try a new drug just because «everyone is doing it!» Nobody at the time had any idea of the consequences of this kind of freedom, which brought theft, mass death and endless prisons.

Memories, images of our childhood, our continued efforts to link past, present, in order to prepare us to meet the future. As an adult, we walk down the memory lanes of our childhood, remembering forgotten melodies.

Sergey Gavrilov was born on a train, which at that time was passing Ufa. The first thing he heard in his life was the sound of knocking wheels. His birth was recorded 3 days later in Chelyabinsk, the first stop on the train. When Sergey was 6 years old he moved with his parents to Tajikistan, a country located in Central Asia. He had an ordinary childhood, was an excellent student until 5th grade, champion in chess among school children.

Remembering his younger years, Sergey sees himself as a teenager who wanted to dress well but who did not have that opportunity. Although both parents worked hard, the family lived below average standards.

At that time Tajikistan was the trade route between East and West, through which drugs were trafficked from Afghanistan. This trade route became an outlet for Sergey into adulthood.

— **Sergey, how did it all start?**

— At around 11-12 years of age I first tried hashish. At first, it was interesting. At that time the phrase «drug addict» was mysterious, even mystical. There was no drug problem at all in the Soviet Union. All the girls gasped with delight: «Oh, look, a drug addict!»

— **Really?**

— Yes, yes in 1976 it was even considered cool! After all, no one knew the consequences, it was all just beginning. They did not know yet, that people would get sick, and then they would start to steal and rob. They did not know all of that yet!

— **Meaning, it was like a privilege?**

— Yes! Typically, the people that used drugs were those who came from a privileged background. The drug user would sit in the courtyard with a guitar, a bong — he would sing, share stories. Guys would gather around him in awe. Within 3 years it was no longer interesting for me anymore. For me, cannabis had become as though a fortified cigarette and nothing more. In the morning I would leave the house, stuffing a pack full of hashish, it would only last me to the evening. I wanted something stronger.

— **How about health, how was your health?**

— It was fine, all the guys smoked basically the same stuff.

— **But it also makes your heart have complications.**

— Nothing, I was fine. I even ran and engaged in sports. I enrolled into sports college: I loved basketball. And then... I used the needle for the first time. Then the second time, third, fourth. When we had the exams in 10th grade, the police came and took me away in the middle of the exams — that was the first conviction. Since I was underage, I was given probation. I had a total of five convictions, three of those five convictions I was given time in jail. I eventually had to go to prison. It is said that prison changes people (corrects them). That is nonsense! Then I had the second sentence, came out — again the same thing. Then I had the third sentence...

— **How about prison, what is prison? How were the conditions? Especially there in Tajikistan.**

— Every normal person has a fear of the prison at first. And that is why a person tries to not violate the law somehow. However, when he goes to prison for the first time, he realizes, it is possible to live there. Even more, you can live well! The only thing missing are women and freedom, everything else is the same. A lot of people live in prison in such a way, that they do not even need freedom. On the outside, in freedom, he does not know what to do, and there in prison they do laundry for him, take care of him, they cook for him. He literally lives as though he is in his own house.

— **How do people motivate themselves? To live another day, another month... In the name of what, for what?**

— Some just for revenge: he got sentenced, he was framed and he dreams to get out, to get revenge.

— **Meaning he lives for the sake of revenge?**

— Yes, that motivates him to survive. Others have a close, dear person, a woman he loves, a mother — it motivates him to survive. My sister would come visit me in prison once in two months. She would bring a piece bread, a pack

of cigarettes and some grapes. In reality, that is nothing, but once in two months I realized that someone cares about me, I have someone waiting for me! And that is what motivated me — I survived.

— **The prison system itself, the authorities... Sometimes it seems that the system is even more powerful than government agencies. Does it only seem like it, or is it so in some cities, some places?**

— It depends on how long the person is stuck there for.

— **What is the spirit, what is this system? It is in the name of what?**

— Well, first of all, it is a rebellion against society. It is disagreement with the laws of society.

— **Is the disagreement fair?**

— There is such a thing as «trying to be a Robin Hood». For example, the son of the Secretary of the State ran over and killed a person, everything is fine for him and he does not get in trouble! The desire to go and punish him, punish the wicked people. Something of the catch you take for yourself and the rest into the «common fund» — there is such a thing as a thieves depository, which you contribute to. That was the main idea. Then, with time, we started robbing even the elderly. In theory the idea was right: person — being sort of like Robin Hood, restoring justice.

— **Sergey, we talked a little bit with you here, how about during the war in Tajikistan, how was that situation?**

— North against South; just as it was in the United States, it was like that there too. The developing north and the harsh south. It was a battle for power, as usual. At curfew, you could not leave the house. If you are driving your car, they stop you, you simply get thrown out of the car, they sit down and drive off. They could walk into your house anytime. Everyone had weapons. People stood in long lines at bakeries for a loaf of bread. People would commit suicides by jumping off balconies.

My mother-in-law tried to hang herself twice because she had nothing to feed her children with. She would look at her hungry children and then simply walk away and try to hang herself. My wife's little brother once told us how he found 5 little meat dumplings in a trash can, someone threw them away. It was a big celebration! Big feast! They could still boil them, fry them and eat.

— **Sergey, I understand what war means in the country, especially as it was a civil war, however how did these military operations that were going on outside affect your life in prison?**

— I want to say, that if it was hard for people outside that were free, then what can I say about prison. If free people were dying of hunger, then what about the prisoners? Out of 1,500 people only 300 survived. Only 100 inmates were released during a 2 year period. It was considered normal to wake up in the morning and your roommate is already dead and cold, it did not surprise anyone. I myself weighed only 83 pounds. You could not walk on your own anywhere, you would fall, you needed to walk with someone else to hold each other up. During the summer there were no leaves on the trees, or any grass as everything was picked, and eaten.

I am thankful to God that I went through that lesson. There are a lot of things to value today. I now understand the value of a piece of bread; I understand the value of life. That situation is what probably prompted me to seek God. Also what really affected me and prompted me to seek God, was that terrible sicknesses came back that haven't existed in hundreds of years — all terrible cases of typhoid, diphtheria and tuberculosis.

— **Sergey, you noted correctly, that all of this served something for you — every one of your life situations. How about you, did you seek God within, did you turn to God?**

— I think my first steps toward God began when I was in town a car abruptly pulled over. Officers run out and put a gun to my head and handcuffed me. I was sentenced for the third time. Coming in to the prison, I open the cell door and I saw 40 guys in a room designated for only 20. They asked me as always, «What now, Sergey?» I answer: «Hey, eight years, fine with me!» But then I lay down, hid myself under the sheet, and was thinking to myself: «Eight years — 96 months. Oh dear mother! I am now 31 years old; I will get out at almost 40. No home, no country, no flag, no wife! Will I even get out at all?!»

While I was sitting there, I really loved to read books; there is nothing else to do there anyways. There was this hero of a book I was reading, I really liked him — what a guy! I even wanted to be like him. He said that every self-respecting man should read these 10 books in his life: Dickens, Ernest Hemingway, Bulgakov, Ilf Petrov, Stendhal... even the

«Capital» by Marx and the «Anti-Duhring» by Engels. Last on the list was the Bible. I looked at the list, thinking: «So, I read Dickens, read Hemingway, read Bulgakov, read Stendhal...» Marx and Lenin collection I have always kept on the bedside table. You know why? When there was a «search» in the prison, they would find that I have these books, and they would look at you as though you were of a higher breed. In their eyes, you are not like those other dumb inmates, you're smart, because you have such a book on the nightstand! They themselves have never read them. Then I thought, well I never read the Bible. But what will I take from it? Book of popes and old people. But purely for the sake of self-respect, I decided to read it. At the time of Gorbachev's leadership, it was beginning to be allowed for representatives of churches to visit prisons. The prison I was at, church representatives came once a month, however, I did not know that yet. It was allowed for inmates to have the Koran, because Tajikistan is an Islamic country. The Bible was also allowed. The prison had a mosque and a prayer room. I asked for a Bible and they brought it to me. I started reading, and here was a blow to

Christianity». In an Islamic country, the mosque is also laughing. To me it was upsetting. When the Christians would leave, the inmates would live immorally.

One day I was reading the gospel and came upon the place where it was talking about the purification of the church by Jesus Christ, when the good and gentle Jesus took a whip and gave such a show there! On all the icons of Jesus, the face of Christ is humble, and I suggested drawing a single icon, where Jesus is angry. I myself would look at the icon, at least once a week to remember the holiness of God, the wrath of God, the jealousy of God. The Bible says: «Till jealousy loves the Spirit who lives in us». When loyalty is lost in love, jealousy comes in!

So I got jealous! However, I did not have a lash, just a couple of mops and a couple of bats. I flew into the prayer room and started cleaning. Of course there were screams, shouts, beaten heads...

— **This was during a service?**

— No, it was a normal day, they were just sitting there and relaxing. Well, I had to interrupt their rest. Of course, I had to go into the hole again, and when I came out of it, the warden called me: «What kind of a Christian are you?! What are you doing? Even though I would have done the same thing!» I replied, «these people need it; they turned the church into a laughing stock». I told him why I did it, that Jesus had done the same thing. Then I showed him the place in the Bible where Jesus cleaned out the temple. He read it, then said, «Oh, okay! Now you, the temple cleaner, will go there, sit down, and will conduct all the services. And there better be people!»

— **In what was the interest of the authorities?**

— The interest of the authorities was that people were coming in from the outside to perform the services; this was considered a good thing.

With the collapse of the communist regime, the church got permission to openly preach in various sectors of society. In many prisons and prison camps, chapels and prayer

rooms showed up right away. The results of studies showed that convicts were showing great interest in matters of faith. In the public mind, and most importantly, in government policy, a re-evaluation occurred regarding how they viewed the Church. The former justice minister, now a deputy of State, Pavel Krashennikov sent a thank you letter to the Board of Trustees of the correctional system with the words: «We are confident that the ongoing joint work with Christian education will help the citizens of our country who are in conflict with the law, get on the right road. It will contribute to their moral purification and spiritual rebirth, as for the staff, they are to treat their inmates as brothers, as commanded to the people by Jesus Christ».

It was a joy to see how after so many years of open persecution of the Church in the Soviet Union, the leaders of the prison system were not only approving it, but were also recognizing the importance of the role of the Church in the treatment of people behind bars. The creation of a prison temple/church had significantly changed the situation of prisoners. Humanitarian aid poured into prisons.

So I went to the prayer room and started to minister there. Truthfully, I did not know anything yet. However, there were a lot of spiritual Christian books that visitors would bring from church. Sometimes, an inmate would run in first thing in the morning and ask me a question: «Pope how is this or how is that?» Some would call me Father and others even — Father Pope. They would address me in interesting ways. They would often come in with questions, I was considered a pope already — I was supposed to know everything! But I did not! So, I would answer: «Listen, I am busy now, come back in the evening». Then I would «dig» in literature until the evening, in order to answer the questions. Then in the evening with a smart expression, I would answer: «Well this is simple; it is like this and like that». By answering other people's questions, I myself learned a lot about theology.

A prayer room in a prison is a blessing! It is a huge blessing. It was my monastery. I was a leader for 5 years in the prayer room, for five years, I learned to pray. To this day, the guys who became believers, when they came out of this prison, came out knowing how to pray. We made a rule in our prayer teams, Sergei Bessarab and I. If a man says that he is a Christian and knows God then he needs to have callouses on his knees from praying! After my release, and when Sergei was released both of us were ministers. We had an effective, productive prayer team. Many wanted to get into our team. When another candidate would approach us and say: «Take me into your team», I would send him to Bessarab. Then Sergei would insist that he showed him his knees. «Listen, your knees are soft like a woman's



TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

face! Go learn to pray first and then come back».

— **Sergey, how was the process in general? As I understand it, without interference, without direct mentoring, was it a personal journey to know God?**

— For the most part, yes. I began to prepare every day, it was not just a prayer meeting anymore, we began having full services: two or three times per day. People reached out, started showing up. Then God said to me: «Go out to the barracks». «How can I go, Lord? I already sat with them for 20 years. If I go there — people will just laugh at me. They will say: «Serg, calm down, we know that once you get out to freedom — everything will be the same as before. Tell this to others, but we know you, and you know us». Whoever came to the prayer room, and would ask something — I would calmly answer, but to go myself — I did not have the courage. My third term, everyone are wolfhounds, there is a strict regime, some are at 5th, 6th conviction, and I have been with them almost since childhood, I've been serving prison time side by side with them. But God was practically pushing me out there. So I got ready and said, «Lord, I'm going!» This was my first evangelistic sermon. I will tell you a little about it, because it is interesting. I went to the hospital and walked in with my closed eyes, wherever God would lead me. I opened the door, came in and stood in the center and opened my eyes. I look around, sick people, about 10-11 Tajiks and 1 Georgian, no Slavics. «What did I get myself into?» I thought to myself. The Georgian was very authoritative and respected. He was sentenced at 17 for three years, he was now 38, and he was still not freed yet. He was getting more and more time in prison, he was fair, fought with authority for the rights of men, a revered leader. Almost a kingpin in law. I stood in the middle, and they asked me: «Well, what is it, pope». I answered: «I want to tell you something». I knew that when you memorize the Scripture and tell it by heart, it has a strong effect on the prisoners. I beautifully quoted Psalm 22 about the Good Shepherd, and then linked it with chapter 10 of John's Gospel, where Jesus says that I am the door of the sheep. I got so carried away that I forgot where I was. And I said, «Guys, if you only knew how great it is to have such a shepherd! How cool to be a sheep in the flock of the Lord «All of a sudden I heard a voice from behind, it was the Georgian: «Wait, listen, I do not understand. You — a sheep?» That was followed by an outburst of laughter. The word «sheep» in prison basically means slave — a nobody. Everyone started pointing at me and laughing. I faced a choice, I could say «Hey! You misunderstood» or to say, «Yes, I am a sheep». I said, «It turns out, I am a sheep...» The laughter became even louder. I realized, that I just signed my own fate until the end of my prison sentence. I got confused; the Bible fell from my hands. As I picked it up, I prayed internally, «Lord, what is this?» Then I remembered the words of Christ that in such moments do not think what to say: the Spirit of God will lead you. When I picked up the Bible, my gaze fell on the spot where it was opened. I began to read, in order to somehow brighten up the situation. It was the 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel, a passage from the 31st verse. It said that when the Lord will come and the holy angels with Him, the nations will gather, and God will divide the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats... I realized that the Lord gave me a hint, so I tell them, «Well, guys, you understand, right? The world is divided into two parts: there are sheep, and then there are goats. I am a sheep. Who are you?!» The word goat «in the criminal world» is worse, way worse than sheep! So, what should they do now? They laughed over a sheep, but to be a goat — you'd get killed for it! There was a new burst of laughter, and everyone looked at the respected Georgian. He left, slamming the door.

Three days later, I get called into the infirmary. I come in, the Georgian was there. «Hey, sit down. Well, what's more about your shepherd, tell me». I began to testify to him. Turns out the Georgian received a blood transfusion that infected him. When he realized that he had a life threatening infection, he invited me. By the time he repented, and until the last day of his life, he told everyone about Jesus Christ. Everyone was in shock: the authority, the coolest man in the whole prison was testifying about Jesus. He told everyone how important it is to be Jesus's sheep! When he was dying, I sat beside him, holding his hand, we prayed and he thanked me.

How much you know God that is how much you will sacrifice yourself for Him and devote yourself to Him, not a drop more. How much you know God that is how much you will serve Him. How much you know God that is how much you will live for Him, not a drop more! Like the wisest man Solomon said: «In all your ways acknowledge Him». I pray not just to pray but to know God. I read the Bible, not just for information: I need transformation of my mind in order to know God. Even ministry for the sake of ministry — that is hypocrisy! I try to know God in all His ways; I try not to lose that focus. The motto of my life is simple: to always keep what is important as the central focus. The most important thing in life: God and our relationship with Him!

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The tongue is an organ of taste and speech. The Russian language contains a great many proverbs and sayings about the tongue, words and of speech.

The Bible contains many references to the tongue in the literal sense, and to indicate any dialect (**Deuteronomy 28:49; Acts 1:19**), or people of different tribes and dialects (**Isaiah 66:18; Revelation 11:9**).

I. TO WHAT THE HUMAN TONGUE IS COMPARED TO

• The tongue can be like a sharp sword (**Psalms 64:2-3** — *Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked, From the rebellion of the workers of iniquity, Who sharpen their tongue like a sword, And bend their bows to shoot their arrows — bitter words; Psalms 57:5* — *My soul is among lions; I lie among the sons of men who are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword*), a razor (**Psalms 52:2** — *Your tongue devises destruction, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully*), or a snake (**Psalms 140:2** — *Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men; preserve me from violent men, who plan evil things in their hearts; they continually gather together for war. They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; the poison of asps is under their lips*), that is they are able to use hurtful words as stingers.

This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

• **To ruin: Psalms 51:2** — *Your tongue devises destruction, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.*

• **To be disingenuous: Job 15:5** — *For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty; Proverbs 26:24-25* — *He who hates, disguises it with his lips, and lays up deceit within himself; when he speaks kindly, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart; Proverbs 17:20* — *He who has a deceitful heart finds no good, and he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil.*



MY TONGUE, MY ENEMY

• The tongue can shoot lies like a bow (**Jeremiah 9:3** — *And like their bow they have bent their tongues for lies*), and wound with lies, as an arrow (**Jeremiah 9:8** — *Their tongue is an arrow shot out; It speaks deceit; One speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart he lies in wait*).

• The tongue can be used as a weapon of attack (**Jeremiah 18:18** — *Then they said, «Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come and let us attack him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words»*).

II. HOW PEOPLE USE THE TONGUE

1. The tongue can be used for personal gain.

• **To flatter: Psalms 5:9** — *For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is destruction; their throat is an open tomb; they flatter with their tongue; Proverbs 28:23* — *He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward than he who flatters with the tongue.*

• **To slander and gossip: Psalms 14:2-3** — *He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; Proverbs 25:23* — *The north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue an angry countenance; Proverbs 11:13* — *A talebearer reveals secrets. But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter; Luke 12:1-3* — *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops; Proverbs 26:20* — *Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.*

• **To speak evil: Psalms 50:19** — *You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit; Psalms 73:9* — *They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth; Proverbs 15:4* — *A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit; Proverbs 25:24* — *It is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman; Proverbs 26:21* — *As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife; Proverbs 26:23* — *Fervent lips with a wicked heart are like earthenware covered with silver dross.*

• **To lie: Psalms 109:2** — *For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue; Proverbs 26:28* — *A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it, and a flattering mouth works ruin.*

• **To argue: Psalms 30:21** — *You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the plots of man; You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*

• **To talk back: Hosea 7:16** — *They return, but not to the Most High; they are like a treacherous bow. Their princes shall fall by the sword for the cursings of their tongue.*

2. People can use their own tongue to sin (**Proverbs 10:19** — *In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise; Psalms 39:1* — *I said, «I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle»*), and can use their tongue to preach about the Lord (**Psalms 34:28** — *And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness and of Your praise all the day long*), and sing praises to God (**Psalms 126:2** — *Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, «The Lord has done great things for them»*).

3. The Biblical commandment of the tongue.

The Bible teaches us:

• **Withhold your tongue from evil: Psalms 34:12-13** — *Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit; 1 Peter 3:10* — *For «He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit».*

• **Guard your mouth and your tongue: Proverbs 21:23** — *Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.*

• **Harnessing your tongue: James 1:26** — *If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.*

III. LANGUAGE AS AN INDICATOR OF HUMAN HEART

1. The tongue — an indicator of a person's spirituality.

The tongue manifests that what is in a person's heart.

Matthew 15:7-8 — *Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: «These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me».*

Matthew 15:16-20 — *So Jesus said, «Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man».*

Luke 6:43-45 — *For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart[a] brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

Proverbs 13:3 — *He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.*

Proverbs 21:23 — *Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.*

2. A fool and a wise person are recognized by their tongue.

As a Russian proverb says, «That which is in a wise persons mind is in a stupid

persons mouth» and the Word of God speaks of this:

Proverbs 11:12 — *He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his peace.*

Proverbs 15:2 — *The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.*

Proverbs 17:28 — *Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.*

Ecclesiastes 10:12-13 — *The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, but the lips of a fool shall swallow him up; The words of his mouth begin with foolishness, and the end of his talk is raving madness.*

The tongue of a wise person brings healing: **Proverbs 12:18** — *There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health.*

3. The righteous and the wicked are recognized by the tongue.

Proverbs 10:20 — *The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little.*

Proverbs 10:21 — *The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom.*

Proverbs 10:31-32 — *The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the*

perverse tongue will be cut out. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked what is perverse.

Proverbs 12:13 — *The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous will come through trouble.*

Proverbs 12:19 — *The truthful lip shall be established forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

Proverbs 16:27 — *An ungodly man digs up evil, and it is on his lips like a burning fire.*

Proverbs 16:28 — *A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.*

Proverbs 17:4 — *An evildoer gives heed to false lips; a liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue.*

4. New Testament warnings about the evil that the unbridled tongue brings.

James 3:2-12 — *For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.*

And how and for what do you use your tongue? To utter false and insulting words or to glorify God and bear witness to the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ? What kind of person are you based on what you say, wise or foolish, righteous or wicked?

Do not forget that you will have to give an account to God for every idle word: **Matthew 12:36-37** — *But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.*

Therefore, use the advice of the Bible: **Romans 6:12-13** — *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

This article for the newspaper «Prisoner» was kindly provided by the Bible discussion club, Montreal, Canada
<http://www.cogmtl.net/Articles/099.htm>

Dear editors of «Prisoner»!

Technically I am a reader of your newspaper from the beginning. «Prisoner» is a multifaceted and fascinating part of the material that you offer the readers. From the first and up to the last page of this newspaper it can be read uninterrupted. I have never read newspapers as I read «Prisoner» by that I mean to read every single section. Surprisingly simple, this newspaper has such an effect I am bound until I finish reading it. Through «Prisoner» much can be learned and it is very interesting. I always look forward to the next issue.

Today I'd like to ask you to discuss again with readers of your newspaper a global problem of the massacre, which is so called abortion. In one of the first issues of «Prisoner» you have already touched on this subject, but we would like to see it raised more often as all the frenzy of infanticide continues. The statistics of these murders is horrifying. Let's somehow all work together to ensure that this human folly is as little as possible. People do not even realize what they are doing. All this is very scary, and if they do not repent and do not stop, then eternal life is not even worth dreaming about.

For the sake of the salvation of many innocent souls, please, once again touch upon this subject in your newspaper.

With the most sincere gratitude for your work,

Sister LYDIA, Estonia.

Dear Readers, we can not remain indifferent to the issue of legalized infanticide. Perhaps few people are aware that abortion is exactly the same as any other murder; the penalty for which is provided by the criminal code of many countries. The irony is the fact that for

Deliver those who are drawn toward death, And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, «Surely we did not know this», Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds? (Proverbs 24:11-12)



every murder a person is criminally responsible, but for abortion (infanticide) — no one is responsible.

Today we offer our readers material which when familiarized with which hardly anyone will be able to remain indifferent or careless. To say that it does not concern me, perhaps, it is too hasty. For infanticide occurring around us every day we are all to blame in various degrees. The fact that a woman aborts a pregnancy, invoking an abortion, here we are all guilty: parents, teachers, doctors, the church, and also those men who often provoke and encourage their women to this mindless crime. There is no need to turn away from this sinister problem, justifying ourselves with the fact that it doesn't happen in our family. Perhaps this is so. However, this happens all around us to people we see every day and know. And how important it is for people to give timely

reminders that the Lord came into the world not to destroy it, but in order that all might be saved.

The birth of every human being happens only by the will of God. Every woman is given in advance «the fruit of her womb», no matter how it is to happen. For each one of us comes into this world not by choice, but by the will of God. It is not for us, sinful people, to decide what to do with that which is conceived by His will. According to His will, Scripture clearly emphasizes that every unborn child is known by God and has already been written into His book, «My bones were not hidden from You when I was made in secret and skillfully formed in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my embryo; and in Your book all my members were written, the days they were formed, and not one was among them» (Psalms 138:15-16).

Can we then stake claim to that which was already determined by God and written in His book?! What right do we have to destroy what belongs to Him?! And is it possible to remain indifferent to what is going on around us every day: executions performed on unborn children — God's creations!

Looking at all this horror, let now even the mature soul begin to see clearly and to repent. We want to encourage more people to come to the defense of God's creations, passing the material of this newspaper from hand to hand, especially among young people. If you are blind let your eyes be opened before making a step toward the door of an abortion clinic. Abortion — is, unfortunately, legalized murder, but in essence no different from any other.

*Not allowing to come into the world,
We kill in the womb to this day —
That which is soon to be born,
To all in this world an innocent being
Who gave the right to this murder,
Where is our humanity and morality?
How can we speak of life,
If we destroy it the early beginnings
So ruthlessly and in cold blood
Life is cut short by a steel hand
Covered in blood, but rather quietly
The executioners penalty is performed
And no one is sobbing, no crying,
The head does not shake nor hurt
But a toast they say «For good luck!»
The it happened so smoothly
There is no heart or soul,
Who would shoulder the sin on itself.
You're murderers — no better than
Those who did the execution itself.*

I. GORIK.

ROOM OF FEAR

or What hides behind the doors of abortion clinics?

I do not know why it happened. I cried and cried, but no one heard me. I never see the sun, for I will now always see only night. Perhaps my mother did not like me and did not want to press me to her heart. She got rid of me. I am no more.

A person in a medical dressing gown is not perceived by mass consciousness as a source of danger. It is acceptable to trust doctors. Yet a pregnant woman coming to the antenatal clinic for a

every day they see these unborn children, with arms and legs and now forever closed eyes.

If the mother has conceived a long-awaited child, once she found out about it, she says: «I have a baby!» But if she does not want to give birth, then it is not a child for her but just a conception.

Today it is an indisputable scientific fact: human life begins at conception and with every microscopically small cell there is already a unique and unrepeatable

and additional problems that prevent living a life of pleasure. Men tend to think in the same manner. Only if they and all around them knew where to find the truth! Would those people be happy who by mutual agreement would kill their child, so that it would not stand in the way of their happiness? Would not the blood of murdered babies fall upon the whole family of the killer?

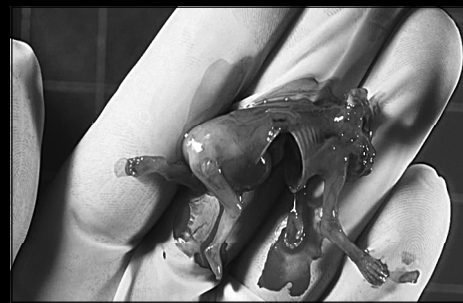
From the medical hippocratic oath only in the twentieth century the

of something like a vacuum cleaner sucking dust from the carpet and in the same manner a baby is sucked from the mother's womb. The woman's uterus is injected with a plastic tube with sharp edges. The child's body is cut into pieces and is suctioned out in a special container. One can watch on a monitor where it is clearly visible that the child is over and over again trying to dodge the vacuum suction by moving quickly. The frequency of the child's heartbeat

ABORTION MADE IN EARLY PREGNANCY



Аборт 8 недель



checkup may immediately hear: «Do not you want to have an abortion? What do you need a baby for? Why produce poverty? What? This is the second? You've lost your mind!»

Many go lightheartedly for the «termination» just like removing a tooth or pulling out glands. But many women ask the doctor: «Is this a child?» — «No, — he will reply — it is a product of conception, a lump of tissue». «Abortionists» (the so-called doctors, specializing in abortion) are lying, as

person, another just like it will not live to see light. Using ultrasound, doctors have learned to take pictures of unborn babies and see that children in the womb yawn, smile and cry.

The Orthodox Church speak through the tongue of St. Basil the Great saying, «They who deliberately destroyed the conceived fruit of the womb are to be condemned for a murder». Yes, murder is the interruption of human life at any stage.

The main reason that pushes women to abortion is that children are a burden,

following line was thrown out: «I will not allow pregnant women to abort but preserve in purity and holiness my life and my art».

We decided to hide inherently terrible things behind smooth, streamlined formulations. How many people know the reality that is behind the words «abortion»?

There are different ways to «interrupt conception». In the early stages of pregnancy people usually resort to vacuum aspiration. The method consists

doubles. Finally, when the body of the captured baby starts to break down, the mouth opens wide in a silent scream. It feels a wild pain, but no anesthesia for the fetus is provided during an abortion.

If pregnancy is further along, a sharp, twisted knife is injected into the uterus. This knife cuts the baby into pieces and then finishes clearing the uterine cavity.

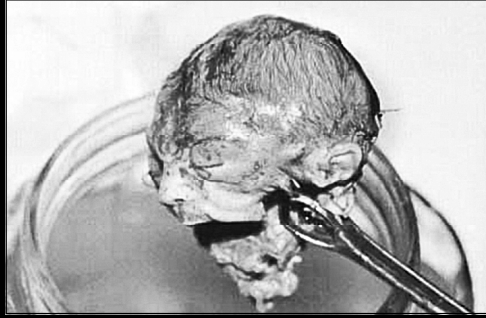
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ABORTION MADE AT A LATE STAGE OF PREGNANCY



(Ending. The beginning is on the 4th page)

SALINE ABORTION



ROOM OF FEAR.

or What is behind the doors of abortion clinics?

A tool similar to forceps, called the «abortionist» grabs a hand, a leg or another part of the child's body and with a twisting motion rips it off. The child's head gets crushed with forceps so the child could be removed easier. Often this horrible operation is accompanied by a severe injuries to the uterus causing profuse uterine bleeding.

After emptying the womb, the nurse collects all the dissected parts of the body to make sure that all was taken out and nothing was left inside. Then they throw the body into the trash or deposit it as a raw material for the production of cosmetics.

When the method of abortion chosen is saline amniocentesis, then a large needle is punctured through the abdominal wall of the mother to the amniotic fluid surrounding the baby and the baby is fed a concentrate of salt solution. For the baby it is the same as being immersed in a bath of acid. The child convulses for hours from the unbearable pain... and then comes out of the uterus, and in some cases, dies after birth.

At the end of the pregnancy, a caesarean section might be used for abortion. The doctor cuts through the mother's abdomen and then through the uterus and removes the living child who is deprived of life the way the murderer chooses. The child trying to

cry moves their arms and legs, the «abortionist» (forceps) grips the face, causing the child to die of asphyxiation, or the doctor drowns the child in a bucket of water.

In our time, the procedure is shown to be very easy, painless and harmless. However it is foolish to think that the fact that abortions are legal makes them safe and okay. There are cover-ups and lies with regard to post-abortion complication because infanticide brings considerable income. The worst thing is that this lie makes it comfortable for everyone.

Few women are aware of what awaits them during and after the abortion and the accompanying inflammatory and infectious diseases. During abortions some develop hemorrhages and if the doctor does not provide the necessary amount of blood death is inevitable. But even donated blood often only postpones the death of the patient for a few months. Often the curette (forceps) acting blindly, scrape too deep into the uterine lining. Then the scar that is formed often obstructs the fallopian tubes. With complete obstruction, the woman will remain barren for life. In partial obstruction the embryo begins to develop in the fallopian tube instead of the uterus, and if it is not noticed in time, it will be dislodge and cause death. In the

medical documents the cause of death will be listed as loss of blood, serum hepatitis, and ectopic pregnancy, but the real reason alone is abortion.

In early «interrupted» pregnancies a woman has a risk of a miscarriage and premature birth and with each pregnancy this risk increases. Physicians know how an abortion will affect the health of the next child...

When a woman is pregnant, her soul knows and is aware of the child growing in her body. And if the woman, whether yielding to others' urging or her own desire, and she ends the life that originated in her, she defiles the female motherly nature, turning the source of life into a receptacle of death. Such abuse of the inner being is not without consequences.

It is much easier to remove the baby from the womb of the mother than the memory of him from her heart. A quote in a book reads the following: «We wander knee deep in children's blood, but have the unscrupulousness to ask: «Why is our life so difficult and unfair? Why is it full of afflictions and diseases?» People are angry at God because He is «evil» and does not immediately exterminate all murderers. What would happen if he did?»

Mikhail FOMIN,

<http://abortamnet.ru/komnata-straha-abortion.html>

Today, the issue of abortion is a topical theme. Some do abortions, others argue about them, and the third group keeps silent. But it's hard to find apathetic or indifferent people towards this subject.

Interestingly, people in the western society that are against abortion are referred to as **anti-abortion people** («opponents of abortion»), while abortion supporters are called **pro-choice people** («defenders of an alternative choice»). If we call things by their names, it is necessary to call the supporters of abortion **anti-life people** («enemies of life»), and opponents of abortion — **pro-life people** («advocates or supporters of life»). However, in our sinful world everything is turned around. And people's attitudes towards abortion are not an exception.

Nevertheless, today we offer you the chance to look with new eyes on this issue and understand that not all is as easy as many are accustomed to think.

Biological facts about prenatal embryo development

The essence of all disputes and debates on abortion is the question of the status of the unborn child: are they fully human? Defenders of abortion suggest that the fetus becomes a person long after conception and if not at the moment of birth, then just before delivery. In order to make any conclusions about this it is necessary to first consider the biological facts of the human embryo.

FIRST MONTH

Pregnancy begins with conception: the male sperm fertilizes the female egg. As a result a **zygote** is formed (single-celled organism) — a phase in the development of the human body, through which every one of us has gone through as well as going through infancy, childhood, adolescence, young adults, and so on. To call this biological organism — a fertilized egg would be wrong, as the sperm (part of the genetic father) and egg (part of the genetic mother) have ceased to exist by themselves in the moment of conception. There is no doubt that the zygote is a biologically living organism, as it meets the four criteria by which we assess living beings: 1) metabolism, 2) growth, 3) reaction to the stimulus, 4) the reproduction (multiplication).

The question arises: «Is this a full human being?»

Answer: The evidence suggests that it is!

Firstly, the human embryo, the result of conception, starting as a zygote, is a sexual **product of human parents**. It is a living organism created by humans and thus, it is human.

Second, the human embryo is a human being, not only because it was born from a human, but also because it is a **unique human person**, same as any of us. Being the product the merge of a female egg (having 23 chromosomes) and the male sperm (having 23 chromosomes), the embryo is a new life and even though very tiny, it has a unique personality.

The zygote has its own unique DNA (46 chromosomes), not a copy of the father or the mother. From this moment and until the death of the body it does not need any additional genetic information in order to make it an individual human person. All the genetic evolution and structure of this person were there from the moment of conception, including its unique physical characteristics: gender, eye color, bone

What does the Bible say about abortion?

structure, hair, skin color, predisposition to certain diseases, and so on. In other words, the human genotype (inherited genetic quality) is determined at conception and remains unchanged throughout the subsequent life of the individual. The only thing that is required for the growth and development of the body as per the preset at conception — is oxygen, food and water (same as the rest of us). Thus, the development of humans as individuals begins from the moment of conception.

Each of us needs to learn the following:

- You are not a descendent of the zygote, you were the zygote.
- You are not a descendent of the embryo, you were the embryo.
- You are not a descendent of a teenager, you were a teenager.

Whether we like it or not, each of us has gone through all the phases of human life. Yet none of these phases made us a greater or lesser extent human. Around the **third week** of pregnancy the heart begins to beat. The other organs that begin to form in the first month are the liver, kidneys, digestive system and the umbilical cord. Despite the fact that at this stage of formation, the body is no larger than a pea, it has a head and forms a face with ears, mouth and eyes in its state as a growing embryo.

By the end of the first month (26-28 days) a complete embryo is formed with arms and legs. The brain and nervous system of the body begin to form after the 18th day from conception. And this is very important because the nervous system controls the actions of other vital body systems.

By the end of the 20th day the foundations of the child's brain have been developed, and his spine and the nervous system are formed. By week 6, the mother's body will change so much that her muscles will begin to monitor the movement and growth of the child, even though a woman may not yet be aware of her pregnancy. On the 30th day the central brain of the child is already noticeable. On the 33th day the cerebral cortex (the part of the central nerve system responsible for motor activity of the body and the intellect) becomes visible.

SECOND MONTH

Despite its small size, by the beginning of the second month of development, the baby in the womb looks like a little human. In most cases, the mother still does not even know that she is pregnant. Brain oscillations are recorded in the child **40-43 days** after conception.

During the second month the eyes, ears, nose and fingers get their usual form. Then the skeleton of the child develops; their heart beats and blood circulates in the small body. During this period, the child begins reflex movements and its lips are sensitive to touch. By the **eighth week**, unique to each child, fingerprints begin to form.

Most abortions are done during this period, in spite of the scientific evidence and the evidence that the formation of the human body in the womb occurs in exactly the same progression as the development of the child after birth from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth hood, from youth hood to teenager, and so on...

By the end of the second month (7-8.5 weeks) the child becomes sensitive to pain. It is useful to know, as most abortions fall in this period. On the basis of the development of the brain and nervous system, and expressions of pain on the face of the aborted fetus, doctors know 100 % that the child is sensitive to pain. Biologists concluded that most likely, a 56 day child already feels the pain that the doctors cause when performing the abortion.

Then after the abortion is done, there is a much stronger and longer lasting pain. The most severe and prolonged pain, according to some reports, will cause the child to release toxic alkaline chemical agents.

THIRD MONTH

The mobility of the fetus is the characteristic feature of the third month of pregnancy.

Despite the fact that the child's weight is not more than 30 grams, and his size no bigger than a goose egg, the child begins to make swallowing movements, opening and closing his eyes, gently moving, clenching fists, and wiggling his tongue. He also begins to suck his thumb. Organs continue to develop further. Salivary glands, taste buds and digestive glands are developing, as evidenced by swallowing amniotic fluid. The child also begins to expel waste. The baby's face is already similar to the parents.

FOURTH AND FIFTH MONTH

Rapid growth is the characteristic feature of the **fourth month**. The child's weight increases by about 6 times and is half the weight at birth. Height is about 20.5 to 25.5 cm. The child begins to hear the voice of its mother.

On the fifth month of pregnancy, the child, with the help of modern technology, if prematurely born during this period will be able to survive outside the womb. Some children even managed to survive birth at the 20th week.

The fifth month is also characterized by the fact that the mother begins to feel the movement of the child in the womb, although some mothers notice movement much earlier. The first movement is usually called «revival». This term originates from the time of the ancient and medieval scientists who believed that during this period the soul enters the body of the child. Without access to today's technology, in the past a mother would have presumed her child dead until the first movements of the fetus in the womb.

(Continued on the 6th page)

What does the Bible say about abortion?

(Ending. The beginning is on the 5th page)

During the fifth month of pregnancy the child forms hair, skin and nails. The child dreams (as evidenced by rapid eye movements) and is able to cry (in the presence of air). However, unfortunately under existing laws, abortions in this phase of the child's development are not only allowed, but are encouraged for whatever reasons the mother chooses.

LAST MONTHS

In the subsequent months of pregnancy, the baby continues to develop and the chances of survival outside the womb increases with each passing day. At this point, the child starts to react to sound, the mother's voice, pain, and flavorings placed in the amniotic fluid. Some experiments have shown that a child is able to learn, even before he or she is born. Childbirth occurs about 40 weeks after conception.

SUMMARIZING

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that those who oppose abortions believe that one becomes a person, at the moment of conception. The following are the four main reasons for this assertion:

1. At the moment of conception, a unique individual with a unique genetic code comes into existence. For normal growth and development the child needs food, drink, oxygen, and shelter.
2. Like the infant, child and adolescent, the embryo is a somebody, not something. He or she is not a potential child, but a child with great potential in the initial stages of formation and development.
3. The embryo is the product of human reproduction (human parents) and is a unique representative of the human race.
4. The same creature that begins its life as a zygote continues to exist in the womb before birth and after birth continues to grow and develop into an adult human body.

Do we know when a person becomes a person?

Often abortion advocates justify themselves with the phrase: «No one knows at what point life begins». This is an agnostic approach to the issue of abortion. In fact, such a statement makes no sense. To anyone who has at least some idea of the development of the child, there is no doubt that biological human life begins at the moment of conception.

A similar argument supporting abortion has four serious flaws.

1. This statement (that no one knows at what point life begins) is a double-edged sword; if no one knows at what point the embryo becomes a human being, then nobody has the right to ban Satanists (who believe that a child becomes a human being at 2 years of age) to sacrifice a 1 1/2 year-old baby to their idol. How do we know whether this child is a human being or not?
 2. On the other hand, if no one knows when human life begins, why not ban abortion altogether? We might kill a full-fledged human being who has all the rights to a human existence after all.
 3. The information in the previous section about the stages of fetal development of the child testify that we have all the prerequisites for the assumption and belief that human life begins from the moment of conception and continues until the moment of his/her death (inside the womb or outside). The unborn child is not a potential person but a person with great potential.
 4. Allowing abortion for any reason whatsoever at any time during the 9 months of pregnancy, advocates claim that human life begins at the moment of birth. Thus, advocates of abortion, use an excuse such as «No one knows...», which in fact is an unashamed lie. By allowing abortions, they in fact prove the opposite; if they really believed that «no one knows the moment human life begins», they would not be defending the practice of abortion.
- Conclusion:** All the facts and arguments in this and the previous section suggest that human life begins at conception.

The Biblical view on abortion

The most interesting thing is that some of the most influential abortion advocates claim that their beliefs are based strictly on biblical teaching. They claim that the Bible in no way condemns or prohibits the practice of abortion. However, these people forget that the Bible directly and openly forbids the killing of innocent people (Exodus 20:13). To prove that the Bible forbids abortion, it is necessary to find evidence that the Bible considers the unborn child a person.

THE BIBLE AND THE HUMAN PERSONALITY

In ancient times there were societies in which abortion was unacceptable. The Hebrew perspective on this question was based on the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. The Bible teaches that man (male and female) is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). As the crown of God's creation man is different from all other creatures living on the earth. The Scripture does not say that a man becomes a man with age or as a result of intellectual, physical or moral

development and acquisition of certain skills. Man received the right and the ability to be a person at the time of his creation by God.

The Hebrew word used by the Old Testament when speaking about the unborn child (Exodus 21:22-25) is *yeled*, which means child, as in a baby and a teenager. The Jews did not have a special word (and apparently they did not even need to have such a word) to describe the unborn child. The unborn child is considered a child like everyone else, only much younger.

The Bible refers to children, born and unborn, but nowhere in the Bible does it say «almost children» or «potential children», or «practically children».

Job describes how God created him and gave him life: **Job 10:8-12 (NKJV)** — *Your hands have made me and fashioned me, An intricate unity; Yet You would destroy me. Remember, I pray, that You have made me like clay. And will You turn me into dust again? Did You not pour me out like milk, And curdle me like cheese, Clothe me with skin and flesh, And knit me together with bones and sinews? You have granted me life and favor, And Your care has preserved my spirit.*

Located in the womb was not something, but someone, or rather Job, only younger. The very description of conception and embryo development of Job is interesting. Note the colorful comparison, which Job makes, *Hast thou not poured me out as milk curdled me like cheese*. Does this remind you of something? Sperm looks like milk and the zygote increasing in size recalls the process of milk coagulating into cheese. And with all this, Job said that it was he, Job, with which it all happened. Is not it amazing that God gives us such details of the origin of life in the womb!

God said to prophet Isaiah: *Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb...* (Isaiah 44:2). Man is man from his mother's womb, he does not become man during the process of organism development.

Psalms 139:13-16 vividly describes God's part in the life of the unborn person: *For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my all, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.* God made David as a person and an individual, not at the moment of his birth but before that. David says to his Creator: *You covered me in my mother's womb.* Everyone, no matter who his parents are, were «woven in the womb», by God Himself! And God knows the future of every person before he is even born (**Psalms 139:16** — *The days allotted to me had all been recorded in your book, before any of them ever began!*)

As a member of the human race who, in Adam, have sinned against God, every person is born already sinful (**Romans 5:12** — *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*). King David said: *Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me* (**Psalms 51:7**). The point here is not about the sinfulness of sexual intercourse, as some believe, but the sinful nature of man from the moment of conception, since sin is inherited through the father's seed.

OBSERVATION # 1

Thus, it turns out that man is sinful, not only from birth, but from the moment of conception! And who can have a sinful nature besides a person? Stones, trees, animals and even human organs do not have a moral nature, good or bad. Morality is a human attribute. And since we are talking about sinfulness from the moment of conception, man is a person, at the moment of conception.

Jacob was given precedence (supremacy) over Esau, when they were not yet born — neither having done any good or evil (**Romans 9:10-11**). When Rebekah was pregnant with Jacob and Esau, the Bible says, *And the sons struggled together within her...* (**Genesis 25:22, MKJV**). Unborn children are named in the full sense of the word, namely, «sons». The Hebrew word used in this case — *banim*, plural of the word *ben*, which is «Son».

God speaks to the prophet Jeremiah: *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations* (**Jeremiah 1:5**). How could God know Jeremiah and have a relationship with him when he was in his mother's womb, if Jeremiah was not a person — a man?!

OBSERVATION # 2

Our Creator has a close relationship not only with the born, but also with those in the womb of their mother, not yet born persons.

Luke 1:41, 44 — *And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost... For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.* Here we see a reference to John the Baptist in the womb of his mother, who was at the 6th month of pregnancy. The Greek word translated as «babe», — *brephos*.

This is the same word that is used in the later verses of the newborn Jesus (**Luke 2:12, 16** — *And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger... And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger*), and the children given to Jesus for a blessing (**Luke 18:15-17** — *And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein*).

The same word is used to describe babies killed by Pharaoh, in **Acts 7:19 (NIV)**: *He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our ancestors by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.*

For those who wrote the Old and New Testaments, a newborn or still unborn child was the same. The interesting thing is that John the Baptist, who in the womb of his mother, reacted to the presence of Jesus who was in the womb of Mary when Jesus was no more than 10 days from conception (**Luke 1:41** — *And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary...*).

The angel Gabriel told Mary: *...And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS* (**Luke 1:31**). Scripture teaches that man consists of three parts. Here is what the Bible says about the unity of his body, soul and spirit: **1 Thessalonians 5:23** — *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* From this, we can conclude that from the moment of conception, a man is already a human being with a human personality and a soul and spirit.

THE STATUS OF THE UNBORN CHILD

About miscarriages it is written: *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, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe* (**Exodus 21:22-25**). From this passage we can conclude that the life of the miscarriage is in equal value of the mother's life.

OBSERVATION # 3

from the perspective of the Old Testament law, culture and history, we can see that the life in the womb of the mother was equivalent to a person's life (child or adult) that is outside the mother's womb.

The most important in the Biblical law about abortions is that no such law exists. In the Jewish culture it was incomprehensible to even consider abortion. Hebrew women are not even allowed such a thought. That is why the law does not even have the article for such crimes. However, the law which meant the prohibition of abortion, reads as follows: *Thou shalt not kill* (**Exodus 20:13**).

Every Israelite knew that the child in the womb is a complete child. So the miscarriage was equivalent to the loss of a child (premature death), and abortion was the murder of a person.

What do you equate abortion to?

CONCLUSION

If you ever had an abortion, you are a murderer. If you in word or deed prompted a woman to have an abortion, you are an accomplice of the murder. The Bible says that murderers do not inherit God's kingdom:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 — *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

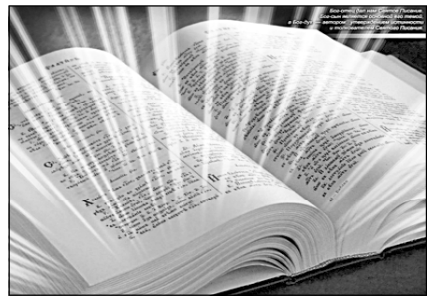
Revelation 21:8 — *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

Revelation 22:14-15 — *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

There is a choice before you: **be reconciled** to God through Jesus Christ who died for your sins on the cross almost 2,000 years ago, or **perish** and go to hell. Today the Lord commands everyone everywhere to repent. He does not want your death! He wants to give you a new life! Eternal life! All you need to do is repent from your sins and turn to Him for forgiveness. And he is faithful and just to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness:

Psalms 103:8-13 — *He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*

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PASTOR'S WORD

«PROSPERITY» TEACHING IN LIGHT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Prosperity teaching, is a teaching containing a mixture of Christ's teachings and worldly aspirations to attain wealth, luxury, influence, and excellent health.

In the past periods of suffering and trials for Christians in the former Soviet Union, when thousands of them were thrown in jails, teachings of prosperity and success were incompatible with a realistic Christian life. There were dreams and desires of different character, «If only my father returned home from prison», or «If only my husband persevered and returned from labor camp».

Yet the time passed when Christians felt like they were first class citizens... and now when there is no obvious persecution, when the doors for higher education opened and the opportunity to attain leadership positions came to be, Christians began to live no worse than worldly people. Though that makes sense. After all, Christians are responsible and hardworking. They do not lie. They are not corrupt and are not alcoholics. Even in times of hardship and Christian persecution, the army's storekeeper position was assigned to Christians because they were known for their honesty and integrity. Even without taking the oath to carry firearms, Christians were more honest than the soldiers that were sworn into service. It was similar in camps and prisons. The authority knew of this but still put-down believers. Yes, there was such a time: you were supposed to brand Christians in order to keep your job and position even though deep inside you would sympathize with them.

Now times have changed. Christians have experienced an enjoyment of freedom and have desired to enjoy worldly success. Yet this is wrong, because Christ and his followers were poor and in need. Even Christ's ministry was financially supported by wealthy women.

Luke 8:1-3 — *Soon afterward He went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.*

This is somewhat demeaning: Christ, God and Creator, the Owner of all... is materialistically dependent on people. It does not seem right. And to add on, who enjoys shortages and suffering? It is far better to live in luxurious homes, drive nice cars, dine finely... let others know us! Yes, this is not a bad advertisement for Christians, «All Christians are either wealthy, successful, or well-off». Not bad huh? Let others want to become Christians. For God is rich, He can bless everyone, and they will have what Christians have. This is our modern train of thought.

In order to comfort our conscious, we find backup Scripture. Since all of the New Testament warns us and speaks out against gaining worldly possessions, we turn to the Old Testament. It is a relief to find plenty of the necessary examples of wealthy people: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job. We can also add Israel's kings to this list. How are we not kings? For it is written, *and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth (Revelations 5:10).*

Of course we want to reign! We disregard that Revelations is talking about the future reigning with Christ, because we want to reign on our own. In order to accomplish this, Christians strive to attain influential leadership roles — government positions etc. Sadly, this is the direction many go, inspired with worldly passions, to attain more attractive appearance and attract

more believers (thank God not everyone).

It is difficult to retrieve someone who falls into this false teaching. Since mostly every church has people that are not «born-again», that are led by worldly passions, they take this deceptive bait. As a result, we run into people who are carriers of an infection, that carries the belief, «If a person is blessed by God, he will absolutely be wealthy». «If a person pleases God, he will not have any problems with health». «If a person is ill and poor this means they have no faith», and other similar declarations.

If we consider ourselves as followers of Christ, then let us take a closer look at some statements in light of Christ and the apostles' teaching.

«PROSPERITY» TEACHING IN LIGHT OF THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES

What did our Lord Jesus Christ say about wealth and abundance?

He said to them, *Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (Luke 10:15).*

Jesus said to his disciples, *Truly, I say to you, only with great difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:23-24).*

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. «Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep» (Luke 6:24-25).

Is there the slightest hint that wealthy people and those well-off will easily enter the Heavenly Kingdom? No, on the contrary, Christ said that it is almost impossible for the rich to be saved and those well off will endure hunger and need. It is also important to note something. One that is rich is not one who has success in work and receives a deserved reward for their work, it is the one who wastes all of their earnings on their own pleasure; similarly, Christ spoke about the rich man and Lazarus, in which the rich man's life is described, *There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted lavishly every day (Luke 16:19).*

These strivings for a dazzling life — the rich man's luxurious life, are especially not pleasing to the Lord; when a person brings himself above others, and puts to waste their means on themselves and their own fleshly pleasures.

You might of also come across people that are in debt up to their necks, but live the lifestyle of millionaires. If they buy something, they borrow money from others and buy what they love and make sure it is not worse than what others have, if not better. On the contrary, there are those with large salaries but you could never tell. They live humbly while their money goes to help the widows, orphans, missionary funds, and the establishment of evangelism ministry.

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, there is one important detail that comes out. When the rich man was in hell, he began to ask for help. In turn, he was told the reason he is now in hell. This was not the reason of his deadly sins, *Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish (Luke 16:25).*

By this example, Christ brings out the truth. A person reaps what he sows (**Galatians 6:7**). If he lived for his own pleasures all the days of his life, then he will suffer anguish in hell...

Further we will read what the apostles said about rich people: *Let the lowly brother boast in his*

exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits (James 1:9-11).

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts as if for the day of slaughter (James 5:1-5).

After all, God reaches out to everyone, and wealthy people come to church.

What does apostle Paul have to add?

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

This wise advice contains these main thoughts:

1. Humble your heart

Paul knew that wealth and success lift up a man and he calls out to oppose this tendency and not think highly of oneself. One's self-esteem is based on our spiritual level. A person that spends time in God's presence and beholds His holiness and greatness, will not be able to think highly of themselves.

2. Do not make wealth your support...

(do not put your hope into wealth that will soon wither away anyway).

It is no secret that an excess of wealth creates a sense of stability. With the help of money, we could solve many problems and even correct mistakes. Hence, rich people are often thoughtless in their decisions, which could be a tragic outcome for their soul. After all, the entrance to heaven is the same for the poor and rich. You have to answer for all that you have. If you have a lot, you will have to answer for it all. Will a person not then say that it would be better not to have anything in order not to give account for it all?

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:13).

3. Use wealth for good deeds

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).

4. To store up treasures in heaven

When we serve the poor, forsaken, orphans, we serve God Himself and by this we collect treasures in heaven.

And the King will answer them, «Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me» (Matthew 25:40).

WHAT IS THE FINAL PURPOSE GOD HAS FOR HIS CHILDREN: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EARTHLY OR HEAVENLY KINGDOM?

While on Earth, we only go through preparation, while we will live an eternity with Christ in Heaven.

If anyone serves me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there will My servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him (John 12:26).

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ... (Philippians 3:20).

Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable (1 Corinthians 9:25).

If a person's final goal is the Heavenly Kingdom, it is necessary for his life factors to go hand in hand with reaching the final destination — Heaven.

If Christ said that it is difficult for a wise man to enter the Heavenly Kingdom, then that is how it is. Firstly, Christ is explaining why the young man left with sadness and did not follow Christ. Secondly, Christ warned His followers of the deadly danger that comes with the striving for earthly riches.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

If God gives us material goodness, it is for us to learn how to rightfully use them. He needs faithful and responsible souls in heaven.

His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master (Matthew 25:23).

It is necessary to remember that we will give an account before God for how we use what He entrusts us with. The more earthly goods He gives us, the more responsibility we carry for what we have. From an eternal point of view, those who unrightly use their earthly resources, will not only regret how they spent it, but that they had it.

But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more (Luke 12:48).

REGARDING CHRISTIANS' PERFECT HEALTH

After sin in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve and all mankind became susceptible to the law of aging and sickness. Not one human served as an exception to that rule.

Patriarch Isaac became blind in his life.

When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see... (Genesis 27:1).

The pious King David had problems with his health in his 70s to the extent of shaking and not being able to warm himself.

When King David was very old, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him (1 Kings 1:1).

Illness did not pass by God's prophet Elisha and he died as a result of one of them.

Now when Elisha had fallen sick with the illness of which he was to die... (2 Kings 13:14).

Throughout the days of His life, Jesus Christ Himself, was not an exception. He lived through everything — not only the cross — death but also natural illnesses.

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isaiah 53:2-3).

Timothy, a blessed companion of apostle Paul, suffered from stomach illness and other ailments.

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your

stomach and your frequent ailments (1 Timothy 5:23).

Apostle Paul himself had an illness that regarded his eyes that it was highly noticeable. He would need the assistance of others to write letters.

...And though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus (Galatians 4:14).

I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord (Romans 16:22).

Apostle Paul would use artifacts that others would use for healing purposes. He left some with Trophimus, whom was ill. This was the case in which Trophimus's illness was allowed by God for a specific purpose.

So that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them (Acts 19:12).

...I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20).

I think these examples are enough to understand that even wonderful pious people suffered from illnesses in their life also. If you consider yourself a special person who should be spared the law of aging and death, then that is your case. If you are young still, then wait a little, do not judge the sick, because amongst them are Christians that are more worthy than you. Remember that health is needed by everyone and we can ask God for it, yet can we ask God for it, only for ourselves?

Should we go after perfect vision of the 120-year-old Moses, or the strong health of the 85-year-old Caleb (**Deut. 34:7; Joshua 14:10-11**)? Does that egoism drive us? God, give me special health because «I am one-of-a-kind»? Are prophet Elisha, apostle Paul, Timothy, Trophus, who were ill — not special? This is a great false teaching in our time.

What if we leave everything as is: let everyone live according to how they understand Scripture? And not according to what Christ Jesus taught us? Will harm be done from this teaching of «prosperity»?

Let us look at the dangers of this belief:

— Christians that orient themselves on this easy, wealthy life, without illness and suffering, usually leave faith behind in times of trials that occur to God's children on their way to heaven.

They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away (Luke 8:13).

— During periods of illnesses and trials, more intense spiritual growth happens. But followers of the doctrine of «prosperity» lose the ability to take lessons and come to perfection. Because they are focused on overcoming «accidental problems», they are not able to extract vital spiritual lessons.

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you (1 Peter 4:12).

— Preachers of «prosperity» are a stumbling block to true lambs of Christ.

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned into the depth of the sea (Matthew 18:6).

Therefore his people return hither... (Psalms 73:10) (they commit sin by taking example from the wickedness of the wicked, even though they prosper).

— Followers of the doctrine of «prosperity» could easily be cut off from the Kingdom of Heaven.

So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has, cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33).

No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money (Luke 16:13).

Let us finish with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ:

I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown (Revelations 3:11).

And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake (Mark 13:37).

Aleksandr BORISENKO.

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

At first in my life everything was fine. But after a while I began to drink heavily. At the time I was 26 years old. My Parents were already gone. There was only my older brother and sister. In 2000, my brother died. I was very upset by his death. I strongly condemned and blamed myself for his death. From that moment on I began to drink even more. I started having family problems and difficulties. I got lost in this life. I would drink and not be able to help myself: sin was stronger than me. From time to time I tried to not drink, but nothing worked. One day I came across a Chita newspaper «BNV». In it I found a page with the title «God is needed by all» I read a testimony of a man. I do not remember now who it was and what his name was, but I remember his two pictures: one before he came to believe, the other 2-3 years after. I was surprised that in the first photograph the man appeared lifeless, his eyes dim; in the second photo there was life in his eyes!

At the time my wife and I lived in the country. I had a large bronze cross. When I read the newspaper article, I was inspired by it. I took the cross and hung it on the wall. With the newspaper paper in hand, I prayed to God for the first time. It was then I made the decision to go to church. There was hope, and faith, and a fire in my heart. In the newspaper I found the address. The next day I went to church.

I was very worried, thinking, «How can I come in? What do I say? How do I start?» When I came to church, a young woman greeted me. She immediately started talking to me and made me feel at ease to talk with her, she built a bridge between us. It became easy. Then she invited her brother Sergey and we had a long conversation with him. At the end he asked me to repent. At first I did not feel comfortable repenting, but after the conversation I repented. Sergey laid hands on me and prayed and said: «Be Blessed». At that point, it seemed to me that I felt God's touch. After the repentance we had another long conversation after which I left home as though on wings. Joy filled me.

For some reason, I did not completely leave sin. Even after visiting the Christian home group, I still was not completely free; I continued smoking and sometimes even drank. I joined Bible school, however, sin greatly tormented me. After a while I left the church. As it turned out, I was not ready to leave my sinful habits. Yes, I was saved;

I realized that God had forgiven me. A heavy load of sin was taken from me and all of a sudden I wanted to live. However, I said to God: «Thank you, God, for everything, but from now on I'll go by myself!..»

I was hired with the railroad. It seemed possible to live normally. But gradually I began to fill my soul with emptiness even though sometimes I read the Bible. I saw that I did not live my life by the scripture. The moment came and I said: «I take full responsibility for my actions and will live my life the way I want to».

Celebrating my son's birthday I began to drink heavily and rolled downhill again. At the time I worked at Chernov and held a job there for six weeks. I did not show up at home or work and continued to constantly drink. When everything ended I finally came home, divorce papers were waiting for me. But that did not stop me — I kept drinking. At first I did not notice my breakdown. It seemed to me that I drank acceptably with normal people. I was sure that I would never hit rock bottom. «Others fall, but never me!» so I thought. However, I rolled downhill lower and lower. I had no strength to resist. I realized that I was living wrong, but I could not change myself. Of course I knew

that there is a solution in Jesus Christ, and even drunk I talked about it with my drinking buddies.

During minor breaks in my drinking bouts I prayed and God gave me His hand, but I did not have the strength to hold on, and I continued to drink. It was a voracious sin.

While drunk, I smoked weed, and the «wheels», I drank and engaged in substance abuse. Sin just ate me! I sank lower and lower. I had an apartment where I existed... the apartment was inhabited by lice, cockroaches and other critters. I was unaware of it due to my state.

At night, I was unable to sleep

and had thoughts of suicide. I no longer drank for the feeling but I drank in order to not commit suicide. I could not change anything because I was in terrible captivity. As much as I desired death, it did not come to claim me. I woke up every morning and cursed the new day that came. «Again this morning!» I would say with anger.

I always needed to have alcohol on the table. Sometimes with the coming of the New Year I needed to toss the Christmas tree, but by the time I would come to my senses it would already be summer outside! My apartment was completely naked. The doors were all on the floor. Repeatedly, the police would catch me; I hid not only from them but from all people. I had lost all shame and stole from everyone, even from family members. All boundaries disappeared. I did not show up to many court trials. One day, the police showed up and took me to court drunk. I was condemned to three years for theft.

I spent one and a half years imprisoned and was released on parole. Now I thank God for the prison, because I understand that the prison was a blessing for me. It saved me from alcoholism. In practice, the prison was salvation for me. It was in prison that this awareness came to me. In prison, I began to cry out to God, I was remorseful for losing time in my life. I promised God that I would come

to church when I was freed. When I was released on parole, I viewed this as God answering my prayers. When I was released from prison, I went to church.

How did I repent? I do not remember what was preached at church, I do not remember anything. I only knew one thing; I needed to repent of sin! And when I went out to pray, I just hid my face behind my hand and cried... in strong regret. After that repentance God gave me complete freedom from smoking, from profanity. I often prayed. I remember when I read Psalms, I was distressed and repeatedly repented. My sister worked in shifts, and I waited for her to leave for work, so I can be left alone, to pray. I cried and cried, kneeling... My spirit encouraged me to pray.

I met with believers, spoke with Pastor Andrew and soon decided to undergo rehabilitation at the center so that I may fully establish, strengthen, and not to fall back into sin. It was God's path! I agreed to go through rehabilitation, even though my thoughts were different: «A huge debt for an apartment, you have to go to work». Even close relatives talked with me about the debts I had to pay off. I thought I needed to work and pay off my debts, but I thank the Lord for showing me the right path: I stayed in the center. Today I am a member of the worship team. I love to praise God Since childhood I played the accordion and guitar. I really wanted to be a minister of praise. I remember I was very worried when I went to the audition. I sang a song with a guitar:

«I shall not die, but live your truth. In close quarters, I cried — he heard me. They surrounded and strongly pushed me, but the Lord has supported, He is my protection. He Who owns my whole life! Lamb of God took my sin, gave Himself to be crucified!»

I sang the song and auditioned. Since that time I am in the service of praise. However, I want to do more. I want to be as close to God as possible!

In this testimony, I told only a fraction of the terrible things that happened in my life. In the Bible, in *Psalm 40*, it says: «...He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand...» My desire is that those who are now reading this testimony know that, no one but God can give the correct way out of your problems. Only in Jesus Christ there is a way!

Gennady VAHER, Russia.



«God, if you exist, help me, no one else can help me!»

My name is Alex, I am 33 years. Now I am a servant of the church, the assistant pastor of the church «Holy Trinity» of the city of Barnaul. I was born in Omsk and lived like most people without God. After serving in the army in 1991, I hit the «places not so remote» for robbery.

Believers came to the prison colony, they preached the gospel, but I did not attend these meetings because I did not believe what they would say. However, I could not help but notice that the prisoners who attended the meetings became different. One day, I struck up a conversation with two inmates who I concluded became different. One was convicted for murder, the other for robbery. They told me about the gospel. Now I understand that they were

sowing the word of God. Even then I thought, «Well, if my life ever gets rough and tight then I will come to God!» Maybe at the time God thought: «Without me it will definitely be tight!» And it sure was.

In 1995 I was released from prison. One month later I tried an intravenous drug, «hanka». Only two years I realized I had fallen into complete addiction. A year later I went to an Orthodox Church to be baptized as I thought this would help. It did not help. Two years of torture followed, I tried everything! I even went to a group of narcotics anonymous, but nothing helped. One morning I just cried and turned to God:

«God, if you exist, help me, no one else can help me!» There was no thunder and

lightning and I thought, «I guess there is no one, no one heard me». A few days later, as if by coincidence, I happened to be in church. There I heard the testimonies of people who had received freedom from every kind of dependence/addiction. I began to cry and pray. But the devil did not leave me without temptations.

Once I gave in to temptation and went to buy heroin. Inside me was a real war. One voice said, «Stop, who do you believe? He will cheat you again». Yet another said: «Do you remember that wonderful thrill? You're strong, just this once». I was ashamed before God, and I tried to extinguish His voice inside of myself.

I lost the battle, gave the money, and received the parcel



with heroin. I opened the package... I did not believe my eyes. The Heroin was wrapped in a piece of paper — it was a passage from the Gospel of Mark. The word spoke out to me. I saved the scrap of paper and still show people. The text that was written there: «so they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it im-

mediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy's father, «How long has he been like this?» «From childhood», he answered. «It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us». «If you can?» said Jesus. «Everything is possible for one who believes» (Mark 9:20-23).

Who can now tell me there is no God? Can someone tell me that he does not love me? He saved me; He showed me the way by His Word. I hope my testimony inspires others to seek Him. Glory to Jesus Christ forever!

Aleksandr BUCYK, Russia, <http://grace.rehab.ru>

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

Even the Prison Refused Me

My heart's desire is to bear witness to the glory of God! My name is Vladimir and I am 42 years old. I was born in the city of Belopole, in the Sumy region. When I was four years old, my father died. My mother was unable to be engaged in my upbringing, as well as my brothers'. We were three young children left to fend for ourselves. We were brought up by the street, and the world taught us how to live.

We learned to achieve our well-being through theft, fraud and force. And when they put my older and middle brothers in jail, people said, «Prison is crying for this one too». At age 18 I was sentenced to three years and was pleased that they gave me so little. Through those years I had already had a chance to try alcohol. I discovered drugs in the prison colony, and when I was released, I began to use them, not understanding and not believing that I would become enslaved. I had self-confidence, authority among friends, money, the pleasures of life. But the years passed... old friends left from my life, new ones appeared. I did not want to work, so I had to commit crimes. Drugs demanded money and time, which I didn't have enough of. And when I was in the isolator I had

time to think and ask myself a question, «What's next?» Prison, drugs, life — why all this? I made a decision to leave everything and begin a new life starting Monday. I got married, had a son, but more problems appeared, and I so didn't want to have them.

I tried to quit drugs several times, and was unable to do it. I tried repeatedly to end my life: I cut myself, poisoned myself, but Someone always kept me safe. And one day in intensive care, handcuffed, I opened my eyes. I realized that God saved me. I swore and cursed the police, doctors and anyone in the world who hadn't allowed me to die. All of it somehow looked funny. But the One who I now belong to saw all of it, and it was His grace in my life. I was in prison again, using drugs. I was released and continued my life in crime. There were no generally accepted norms of human morality for me, sin was destroying me as a person. I saw and understood the futility of my existence but could not change anything.

And when I was once again brought to prison, they refused to accept me. I had trophic ulcers, blood infection and other chronic diseases. The conclusion was: not accepted for treatment. I was brought back to the isolator and was told, «Go wherever you want». After that everyone turned away from me. Who needed me in this world? The One who nothing could

be taken from. I continued to exist, rotting and waiting for death. But God kept me safe.

And when my relatives bought me a coffin for 49 hryvnias, and assigned a place for me at the cemetery, I realized that was my finish. But there was the One who saw it all differently. He sent me a friend with whom I used drugs for many years. He became a believer

in the zone and began to preach to me about Jesus Christ. I listened just to not to offend him. I was awaiting death; he prayed and preached to me. When he brought me half-dead to church, I actually felt that there is a God and He is alive. I saw people who I had never seen before. Their faces testified that they were happy. And when I came out and knelt down (it was August 1, 1999), I began to repent and as for God's forgiveness.

I, exhausted, ragged, smelly and sick, was taken to a rehabilitation center. There people prayed and fasted for me. They took care of me as if I was a child. He forgave and freed me from bondage (17 years of drug addiction and more) and gave me a new heart. I received full emancipation without the aid of pills, without difficulty. God baptized me with the Holy Spirit. I was baptized, and now serve in the rehabilitation center with the brothers who prayed and fasted for me. I am happy, because I know who I belong to and who I believe in. He is my life. It is Jesus Christ. He cares about me. I love Jesus! Hallelujah!

Vladimir VOLOSOVETS,
Ukraine, <http://iscelen.org>



I was born in the city of Vladimir-Volyn, in the Volyn region in 1978. I was born into a normal family where the parents made every effort to bring me up and raise me a worthy citizen. Unfortunately, they were not true believers and did not have the power of God, which is able to change people's lives.

My mother gave birth to the two of us: me and my sister Tanya, who was two years younger than me. She did not have any more children. When we were young and went to daycare, my mother divorced my biological father (he drank heavily) and immediately married another man. Mr. Victor (my stepfather) lived with us and tried to raise my sister and me, but we did not listen to him. In the end, the street and local policeman brought me up...

At the age of 12 I first tried drugs, pricked myself with «shirka», which is opium. I had long since been smoking, and since then regularly used drugs. Despite the fact that I had everything I needed materially (we were financially set), I had another vice progressing — theft.

When I was 14 years old, my sister tried drugs and also started using them. It was considered «fashionable» back then. The devil quickly misled us teenagers, offering us a false pleasure in the form of opium. When my mother discovered that we were using drugs, she was horrified. Without thinking twice, she immediately took the two of us for treatment, but alas... Up until I turned 18, my mom took me for treatment of drug addiction five times. I was treated once, which cost a lot of money, but all of it was to no avail. After trying the drug several times and seeing how it was made, I immediately learned how to produce «shirka» myself. It is true how it is said: «What is great is achieved through studying and a lot of effort, but what is bad absorbs by itself». That's the way it is.

In the summer of 1996, at age 16, my dear sister Tanya died from a drug overdose. Moreover, the same drug addict that used drugs together with her, buried her. We found her only after two weeks. My mother nearly lost her mind; her only daughter died from drugs, and her son was a drug addict.

After the death of my sister I became even more addicted to drugs, to opium and tablets, since opium alone no longer pleased me. Before Tanya's death a criminal case was opened against me because I had stolen from an apartment. Taking pity on my mother after her daughter's death, I was pardoned. Soon I was caught again, or rather I was detained by

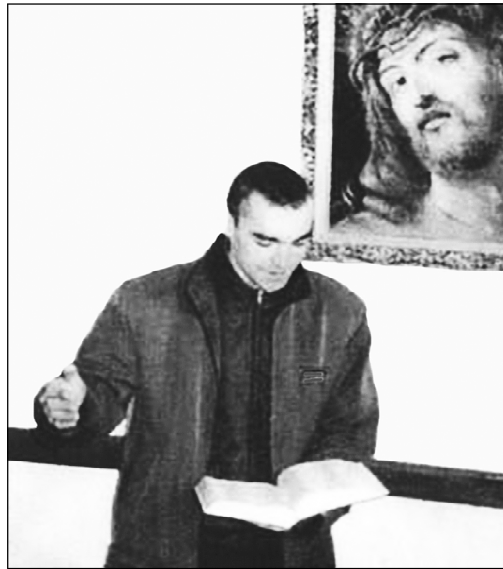
The Testimony of Anatoly Danyluk

police officers. I was arrested for the possession of drugs (plus theft). Trial. The verdict: two and a half years in prison of general regime. At age 18, I was taken to serve my sentence. At the time I thought, «This is the first and last time». In the zone I did not think about changing my priorities in life, but on the contrary, like a sponge, I absorbed all the bad and the ugliness, thinking that it was all normal. I was swept away by the romance of thievery, gambling, and that kind of stuff.

When I had served a little more than a year, my biological father was brought to the zone to serve a sentence for theft (my mother had divorced him years ago, and at one time before I was taken to the zone

I «fell in love», so to speak. We lived together, dreaming of a happy family life for many years. But she, as well as I, used drugs. Six months later, Natasha got pneumonia, which led to pleurisy and subsequently death. But her death did not stop me. I was once again caught for stealing. A criminal case, trial, and the sentence — three years. The zone, gambling, drugs, and so on. After some time, my own father was brought to the zone. Again we were in the same barrack... When I was released, I lived with my grandmother, who told me about God and called me to church. But I replied, «I'm not ready yet».

A month after I was released, police officers made sure I would get caught, by offering me poppy straws, which resulted once again in a criminal case. Trial. The sentence: three years of probation. I was isolated from society, but I did not cease to engage in self-destruction, continuing to use opium intravenously, pills, smoking marijuana and cigarettes. Nothing could stop me. I lived in a terrible way, or rather I existed, living in the dark without knowing the light. I lived how I could, in different drug addict dens. I brewed poppy at home, making the drug. I just kept using more and more drugs. In that life that was in the order of things. I kept going



lower and lower, but could not stop. So many convictions, sentences! But I did not care. And if I didn't have a dose, I was ready to do anything only so I could use some drugs.

God knocked on my heart, sending His children who spoke of His love, of His great love for us. But I had an idol — drugs. Somewhere deep inside my heart, I understood that there was a God, but He struck me as very distant and unattainable.

I wasn't out of jail for long. After the trial (this was in 2006), when I was producing drugs at home, the drug enforcement police came to my house. After searching the house, they discovered drugs. They made a report and opened a criminal case.

I will describe the way I looked at the trial: skeletally thin, right arm paralyzed up to the elbow, left leg

lower and lower, but could not stop. So many convictions, sentences! But I did not care. And if I didn't have a dose, I was ready to do anything only so I could use some drugs.

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sick (I walked with a cane for some time). These were the consequences of drug use. I no longer had veins where I could prick myself.

Trial. Sentence. I was given four years. My fifth sentence. But I thank God that I was placed in that specific prison. My mother died in late 2007. When I learned of this, something happened inside of me as if everything flipped. I felt so terrible. Going outside and looking at the sky, I cried out to God in the depths of my heart. There were so many questions inside my head. Why did my sister die first? Why did my mother die? She was only 47 years old. She wrote that she loved me and was waiting for me. But she didn't wait long enough. Why? Why are there prospects and support, a desire to not use drugs, but I cannot live a normal life? There were so many questions «why» that I could not count them. Why did my mother always forgive me even though I did not always do good things? Why was it that every time I was released, my mother sincerely believed that I would no longer use drugs?

More questions kept arising, but I could not find the answers... Something told me inside that I could only get the answer from God. And I began to seek Him. I went to an Orthodox Church, but the spirit of religion somehow shackled and distressed me even more. Despite the fact that I was imprisoned, I did even more bad things. I gambled, did drugs, smoked cigarettes, and so on.

At the same time, The Lord gave Vova and Sasha believers who knew me, the urge to come to the prison and talk to me. They preached to me, testified, and I listened very carefully. The word was sown. They told me that God is alive. They said, «The most precious thing brought to us as a gift of God through Jesus is eternal salvation. Accept it, and smile happily». I read the New Testament, hiding so that nobody could see me as I was ashamed. I went outside to smoke, thinking about what I had read. But through doing bad things I immediately drowned out the Word of God.

One Sunday, Vova and Sasha invited me to church. On Sunday, there are other Christians that come besides the Orthodox and Catholics. However, I did not want to go, but I had promised. So I had to go, even though the devil kept sowing bad thoughts.

I came to the service. After prayer, the minister, who was visiting from a neighboring church, began to preach about salvation through faith in Jesus and about repentance. I listened very carefully; it was as though every word touched my heart. Every word in the entire sermon was for me personally, as it is written, «...for your word has given me life» (Psalms 119:50). When we were praising the Lord by singing songs, tears were coming to my eyes and I almost cried. I could not understand why. What happened? This had never happened to me before. The Lord had touched me! After church I once again was captivated by the world and I forgot everything that was said.

In the evening before I fell asleep, as I was lying in bed under a blanket, I remembered church and decided to pray, to pray simply, not a learned prayer, but in my own words. «God put me on the right path», I prayed, «and in the name of Jesus set me free from drugs and all the sin in my life». And suddenly tears started streaming from my eyes. Not knowing why, I cried. I prayed about things which I had never thought of praying about, and the words themselves came out of my mouth. I prayed and wept, and when I could no longer cry I fell asleep. In David's Psalms, the Holy Spirit says, «The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, these O God, you will not despise» (Psalms 51:17). The Scripture also says, «For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved» (Romans 10:13). God is faithful to His word, and He does not delay. Two days later, on Tuesday, we had church for those who go to Bible school. The brothers invited me as well, but I had other (bad) plans.

But the Lord's mercy and love transcends all understanding, and my feet (thank God!) themselves carried me to church. I sat down on the bench and listened to the lessons, but I was not interested. «Why did I come here?» I thought. «They do not sing songs here. It's so boring». At the time, I did not know that the fate of every human being is in God's hands, and He, in His mercy steers the events of our life. Near the end, when the older brother, Yura, summed up the lessons during a brief sermon, my heart suddenly accelerated, as if I was running. I could not understand what was going on. Turning around, where Vova and Sasha sat, I wanted to say, «My heart hurts», but what escaped from my lips was, «I want to repent».

(Continued on the 10th page)

The Testimony of Anatoly Danyluk

(Ending.

The beginning is on the 9th page)

On February 19, 2008, I repented before the Lord Jesus Christ of my sins and He purified and sanctified me with His blood. He forgave me and delivered me from smoking, drugs, and cleaned my speech from profanity. The Lord has changed my way of thinking! Praise the Lord, Hallelujah! It is such a joy — words cannot express, you must experience it yourself! Rising after repentance from my knees, I felt that something changed in my life, put I could not put my finger on it. The first thing I did after getting up from my knees — I crumpled my pack of cigarettes and threw it out, knowing that I will never smoke again. I wrote a letter to my relatives telling them not to bring or send me cigarettes, because it was sin and death. I thought it would be impossible to get rid of the addiction so instantly! When I went outside, the Lord filled my heart with so much joy and love that I wanted to embrace the whole world, all people, without exception, and to share the love of Jesus, and give them at least a little of this joy. Thank God!

Before my trial I had a paralyzed right arm at the elbow and left leg ached so that I walked with a cane, but the Lord healed me. Thanks to Him, I am writing with my right hand in the same way as before, running. Hallelujah!

The Lord gave me time to think about life, but I did my best to lose it, leading a criminal lifestyle. In my 29 years with no family, children, because of my actions I become a social outcast, I had 5 convictions — my life has been destroyed. The Bible says that the devil had come to «steal, kill, and destroy» (Jn. 10:10), and so he stole my youth, killed my sister Tanya and her mother, trying to destroy my health and my life. But in His Word, God has promised me: «Taste and see that the Lord is good» (Ps. 33:9). Just sincerely appeal and taste, then «neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, no other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord» (Rom. 8:38-39). God — repairer of our ruined lives! He came to give life and life in abundance: an excess of joy, meaning and happiness — the life which I now have. He gave me what I asked him five months ago, lying under a blanket with a broken heart. He gave me freedom.

I will be glad in the Lord, if my testimony will support someone, strengthen and edify. I want to appeal to all. Do not wait until someone from your family dies, do not wait for ugly situations. Do not pull the time, open heart to the Lord and He will work in your life. Anyone who has no hope, turn to the Lord, repent to Him, accept Him into your heart and He will set you free and happy. Who fell away — sincerely confess, God is powerful to raise and support with His strong arm. He will show the way, though at times hard, but a blessed and joyful way. The way of life, the path of peace, the path of love. Jesus said of Himself, «I am the way and the truth and the life» (Jn. 14:6). Go for it!

I am happy to testify to you that it truly is! Let us give thanks and praise God for what He has revealed to us His wonderful plans of His grace and mercy. In His love and grace, He has revealed to us the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!

Anatoly DANILYUK, Ukraine,
http://www.bible-for-you.org/narko/sv_dan.htm

DISCUSSION CLUB

INTRODUCTION

Exodus 20:14 — Do not commit adultery.

Deuteronomy 5:18 — Do not commit adultery.

What is adultery?

There are two kinds of adultery: sexual and spiritual. Let us first turn to sexual adultery.

I. SEXUAL ADULTERY

1. Definitions.

Adultery — a sexual relationship with a man or woman who is not your spouse. Adultery — is an act of infidelity. An adulterer in the Old Testament times was a man who had sexual relations with a woman who was not his wife and adulteress was a woman who was with a man not her husband.

2. The punishment for adultery in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 22:22-24 — If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they shall both die, the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away the evil from Israel. If there be a damsel that is a virgin betrothed unto a husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them to death with stones; the

Matthew 15:19 — For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings.

B. The teaching of the apostles on adultery and debauchery.

1 Corinthians 6:13b — But the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 — Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.

1 Corinthians 7:2-5 — But, because of fornications, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife her due: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer, and may be

from the rule of Judah to this day. At that time Libnah also revolted from his rule, because he had forsaken the Lord, the God of his fathers. Moreover, he made high places in the hill country of Judah and led the inhabitants of Jerusalem into whoredom and made Judah go astray.

Ezekiel 16:26 — You also played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger.

Question to ponder: «Why did God command not to commit adultery?»

Answer: Because it is a sin against your own body. Because it is a sin against God. Because it is a sin against one's neighbor. Because it is a sin against your spouse (wife). Because it destroys the marriage and the family.

IV. MARRIAGE

1. Origin.

Originally, God created man and woman for each other, that they are both spiritually and physically united with each other. Only through this unity can man fully and completely comply with God's command, «Be fruitful and multiply». And then he said: *Because man leaves his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they*

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away the evil from the midst of thee.

Leviticus 20:10-21 — And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man lie with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you. And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it is a shameful thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of their people: he hath uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity. And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness; he hath made naked her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people. And thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister, nor of thy father's sister; for he hath made naked his near kin: they shall bear their iniquity. And if a man shall lie with his uncle's wife, he hath uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. And if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is impurity: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.

Question to ponder: «Why does God in the Old Testament command to kill adulterers and pervers?»

The answer: To uproot wickedness from Israel. Sin is a contagious thing. He acts and spreads among people like a virus. The death penalty was introduced by God to destroy sin and evil in the society of God's people.

II. BIBLICAL TEACHING ON ADULTERY

1. Old Testament.

Proverbs 6:32-35 — He that committeth adultery with a woman is void of understanding: He doeth it who would destroy his own soul. Wounds and dishonor shall he get; And his reproach shall not be wiped away. For jealousy is the rage of a man; And he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; Neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts.

2. New Testament.

A. Jesus' teaching on adultery and debauchery.

In the Sermon on the Mount he quoted the seventh commandment, and stresses that the lust is adultery in the heart:

Matthew 5:27-28 — Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

In other words, Jesus shows that the 10 commandments are actually much deeper than they appear at first glance. They are not only our behavior, but they relate to our thoughts, feelings and desires. Also pay attention to the fact that Jesus does not distinguish between adultery and sexual debauchery. In his opinion, sexual immorality in all its forms and shapes violates the seventh commandment.

Jesus calls the source of any wickedness:

together again, that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency.

Ephesians 5:3 — But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints.

Colossians 3:5-6 — Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 — For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God; that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter: because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified. For God called us not for uncleanness, but in sanctification. Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God, who giveth his Holy Spirit unto you.

C. The New Testament doctrine of the punishment for sexual immorality.

Some think that the New Testament is more gentle and humane in relation to the seventh commandment. The Old Testament enjoined to kill adulterers, whereas the New Testament only warns us that we have not committed adultery, and had no promiscuity. Dear friends, if you also think so, then you are deeply mistaken, and deceive yourself. God of the New Testament — is the God of the Old Testament. He is yesterday, today, and forever the same. He is not a man that He should repent or change his principles. Therefore, both the Old and New Testaments prohibit sexual depravity and warn sinners of the coming punishment:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 — Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Hebrews 13:4 — Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Revelation 21:8 — But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

III. SPIRITUAL ADULTERY

We have seen what the Bible calls fornication, idolatry and debauchery that is the worship of idols. And in this case, it is the idol of sex, the flesh and the desires of the flesh. However, it should be noted that the Bible also refers to idolatry (the worship of other gods and idols) as adultery. Jesus called the Pharisees «an evil generation and adulterous generation» (**Matthew 12:39**). In this case, Jesus did not mean that all Pharisees are not loyal to their wives. It was a question of their unfaithfulness to God. Similarly, the word «corruption» is used figuratively in the Bible to describe the infidelity of the people to their God.

Hosea 1:2 — When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, «Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord».

Jeremiah 3:8-10 — She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree. Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the Lord.

2 Chronicles 21:10-11 — So Edom revolted

shall become one flesh (**Genesis 2:24**). The Bible also says: *And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth* (**Genesis 1:28**). Jesus repeated in **Matthew 19:6**: *So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.*

Matthew 5:31-32 — It has been said that if someone divorces his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Question to ponder: «Why does God permit people to divorce if one of the spouses commits adultery?»

Answer: Because infidelity has broken the marriage.

Matthew 19:3-9 — And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, «Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?» He answered, «Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, «Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh»? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate». They said to him, «Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?» He said to them, «Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery».

2. UNITY.

Marriage — it is a relationship of unity: it is not me alone, but rather «we» together. The idea of unity can be traced throughout the Bible. Apparently, God wants to emphasize this.

A. Husband and wife — one flesh.

Genesis 2:24 — Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall be one flesh.

1 Corinthians 6:16 — Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, «The two will become one flesh».

B. God often refers to Himself as my husband and his people — his wife (often disloyal).

C. Jesus is called in the Bible the bridegroom, and the church — His bride. Jesus calls His Church the Body: **Ephesians 5:23** — ... *Christ — the head of the Church*; **1 Corinthians 12:12-13** — *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*

3. FAMILY.

The family is: the highest form of manifestation of intimacy in the relationship between human beings; institute continuation of the human race; institute of education of the younger generation. That is why Satan tries in every way to destroy the family.

CONCLUSION.

The seventh commandment protects the integrity of the family. God created the institution of the family in such a way that it is a reflection of the true, human relationships that strengthen and complement both spouses. The teachings of Jesus Christ proclaim the truth that any relationship between a man and a woman — family ties — are lifelong.

This article for the newspaper «Prisoner» kindly provided by Bible Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada <http://www.cogmtl.net/Articles/048.htm>

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CHURCH

What is the church?

ANSWER: Today many people consider a church as a building only. But this is not the Biblical understanding of the church. The word «church» comes from the Greek word «ekklesia», which is translated as an «assembly» or «gathering». The main importance of the church is not a building, but the people. Unfortunately, when you ask people what church they attend, they usually call themselves Baptist, Methodist, or something else; they are talking about denominations or buildings. But we read in *Romans 16:3-5*: **«Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus... the church that is in their house».** Apostle Paul mentions the church in their house and not a church building, but a gathering of believers.

The Church is the Body of Christ. In *Ephesians 1:22-23* it is written: **«And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all».** The Body of Christ is made up of believers from the time of Pentecost to the end of times. Body of Christ encompasses two aspects:

1. The Universal Church — consisting of all those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. *1 Corinthians 12:13* reads: **«For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit».** We see that every believer is a part of the Body of Christ. The true church of God is not a particular church building or a denomination; the Universal Church of God is all those who have received salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

2. A local church is described in *Galatians 1:1-2*: **«Paul, an apostle... and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia».** Here we see that in the region of Galatia, there were many churches that we call local churches. Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic and other churches are not in the universal meaning, but rather the local churches. The Universal Church consists of all those who believed in Christ as his Savior. Those members of the Universal Church should seek unifying relations and counsel in local churches.

Therefore, the church is not a building or a denomination. According to the Bible, the Church is the Body of Christ, all those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior (*John 3:16*; *1 Cor. 12:13*). The members of the Universal Church (the Body of Christ) are in the local churches.

What is the purpose of the church?

ANSWER: The text written in *Acts 2:42*, can be considered as a purpose to the Church: **«And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers».** According to this verse, the purposes and activities of the Church are concluded as follows: 1) study of biblical doctrine; 2) allowing believers to have close relationship and fellowship with each other; 3) observance of the Lord's Supper; 4) prayer.

The church is to teach biblical doctrine so believers could grow in faith. In *Ephesians 4:14* it reads: **«That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness».** The church should be a place of close relationships where Christians can give themselves to each other, respect each other (*Romans 12:10*), teach (*Romans 15:14*), sympathize (*Ephesians 4:32*), encourage (*1 Thessalonian 5:11*) and, most importantly, to love each other (*1 John 3:11*).

The church should be a place where believers can observe the Lord's Supper, remembering Christ's death and His holy blood shed for us (*1 Corinthians 11:23-26*). In addition, the breaking of bread carries the idea of sharing a meal. This is another example of holding forth on a close relationship in the church. The last purpose of the church, according to the verse mentioned above, is prayer. The church should be a place that motivates people to pray, accustom to prayer and apply prayer. *Philippians 4:6-7* encourages us: **«Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus».**

Another commission given to the Church is proclaiming the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ (*Matthew 28:18-20*; *Acts 1:8*). The Church is called to spread the Good News by words and deeds. The church should be a lighthouse in the community, pointing people to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Churches should establish a pleasant atmosphere for the spreading of the gospel and prepare its members for evangelizing the Good News (*1 Peter 3:15*).

The final task of the church is given in *James 1:27*: **«Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world».** The Church must serve all those in need, which includes not only spreading the Gospel, but also the satisfaction of physical needs (food, clothing, shelter) as necessary and appropriate. The Church must also equip believers in Christ with necessary means to overcome sin and remain free from the contamination of the world. This is achieved by the above mentioned principles — studying the bible and a Christian relationship.

So, based on the above verses and discussions, what is the purpose of the church? The illustration in *1 Corinthians 12:12-27* gives a very good answer: the church is God's «body» in this world, we are his «hands», «mouth» and «legs». We need to do what Jesus would do if He was physically on earth. The Church should be «Christian», similar to Christ and the followers of Christ.

What is the significance of the Lord's Supper (Christian Communion)?

ANSWER: To study in depth the meaning of the Lord's Supper is a thrilling experience. During the

YOU ASK,



WE ANSWER

traditional celebration of Easter, on the eve of his death, Jesus instituted a new and important ritual observed by us even now and resembles the highest expression of Christian worship. This is a symbolic service, done in the remembrance of the death and resurrection of our Lord, as well as partaking of His glorious return.

Passover was the most sacred holiday in the Jewish religious. It was devoted to the memory of the last punishment that befell on Egypt, when all firstborn sons of the Egyptians died and the Israelites were spared from death because of the blood of the lamb that was put on every Jewish family's door trims of their homes. After that the lamb was baked and eaten with unleavened bread. God commanded to celebrate this event throughout all generations to come. This history event is recorded in *Exodus chapter 12*.

During the celebration, Jesus and the disciples sang one or more psalms (*Psalms 110-117*). Then he took the bread and blessed it. Broke it and gave it to them, he said: **«...Take, eat; this is my body»** (*Matthew 26:26*). In the same way He took the cup, took a sip and handed the cup to them saying: **«Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins»** (*Matthew 26:27-28*). He concluded the supper with a hymn, and they went out into the night to Mount of Olives. It was there that Jesus was betrayed by Judas, as predicted. The following day He was crucified.

The Lord's Supper is recorded in the Gospels (*Matthew 26:26-29*; *Mark 14:17-25*; *Luke 22:7-22*; *John 13:21-30*). According to the divine revelation, Apostle Paul also wrote of the Lord's Supper in *1 Corinthians 11:23-29* (but please note that he was not present then in that supper room). Notice that Apostle Paul makes a statement that is not in the Gospels: **«Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup»** (*1 Corinthians 11:27-29*). We might ask, «What does it mean to participate in the Lord's Supper unworthily?» The true meaning and value of bread and wine can be neglected, which the huge price paid by our Savior for us. Or it could mean turning the ceremony into a dead and formal ritual, and participating in these symbols with unconfessed sin. Considering the warning of Apostle Paul, every Christian

should examine himself before eating bread and drinking from the cup. Also, Apostle Paul states in one of his books: **«For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come»** (*1 Corinthians 11:26*). This puts a temporary limitation on the ceremony until the second coming of Jesus Christ.

From these brief references we learn how Jesus used two of the most unsteady elements as symbols of His body and blood, establishing these two as memory of his death. They were not monuments of marble or bronze, but of bread and grape juice. He declared that the bread was a symbol of His body, which should be broken apart, although there were no broken bones, His body was disfigured beyond recognition (*Psalms 21:12-17*; *Isaiah 53:4-7*). Grape juice symbolized His blood, the terrible death he soon must die.

He, the sinless Son of God, became the executor of countless Old Testament prophecies about the Redeemer (*Genesis 3:15*; *Psalms 21*; *Isaiah 53*, etc) saying: **«This do in remembrance of Me»** (*Luke 22:19*). He pointed out that this ceremony should continue in the future. It also indicated that the Passover, which required the death of a lamb and prophesied the coming of the Lamb of God, who would take the sins of the world, is outdated. The New Testament took its place, when Jesus, the Passover Lamb (*1 Corinthians 5:7*) was crucified (*Hebrews 8:8-13*). In the system of sacrifices, the need for sacrifices was fulfilled (*Hebrews 9:25-28*).

Why is it important to go to church?

ANSWER: The Bible says that we should go to church to worship God with other believers and to study His Word for spiritual growth (*Acts 2:42*; *Hebrews 10:25*). Church is a place where people can love each other (*1 John 4:12*), encourage one another (*Hebrews 3:13*), motivate (*Hebrews 10:24*), honor (*Romans 12:10*), train (*Romans 15:14*), serve one another (*Galatians 5:13*), sympathize (*Ephesians 4:32*) and be good-hearted.

When a person begins to believe in Jesus Christ as his/her Savior, that person becomes a member of the Body of Christ (*1 Corinthians 12:27*). **For the «body» to function properly, all of its «members» must be present** (*1 Corinthians 12:14-20*). **Also, a believer will not be able to reach full spiritual maturity without the assistance and support of others believers** (*1 Corinthians 12:21-26*). **For these reasons, church attendance, membership and participation in church should be a regular aspect in the life of the believer.** It is not a requirement for a believer to visit the church weekly, but a believer in Jesus Christ must have yearning to worship God, study His Word and maintain friendships with other believers.

What is biblical separation?

ANSWER: Biblical separation is the recognition that God has called His believers to withdraw from the

world and be in personal and general integrity in the midst of a sinful society. Biblical separation is usually considered in two different spheres: personal and church.

Personal includes personally following a God-fearing standard discipline. Daniel practiced personal separation, when **«But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank...»** (*Daniel 1:8*). This was a biblical separation, as its standard was based on the Biblical understanding of the Law of Moses.

A modern example of personal separation could be the decision to decline an invitation to a party where there is alcohol. Such a decision can be made to resist the temptation (*Romans 13:14*), to avoid **«Every kind of evil»** (*1 Thessalonians 5:22*) or simply to follow personal convictions (*Romans 14:5*).

The Bible teaches that the child of God should be separated from the world. **«Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you...»** (*2 Corinthians 6:14-17*; *Also see 1 Peter 1:14-16*).

Church separation refers to the separation of church relations with other organizations, and the basis of their theology or activity. The separation lies in the word «church» that is derived from the Greek word «ekklesia» which means «caused by the assembly». In a letter to the Pergamos church, Jesus cautioned the church of those who teach false doctrines (*Revelation 2:14-15*). The church was to be separate from the heresies. A modern example of a church separation could be the position of the church, rejecting ecumenical unions which could combine with the church betrayers.

Biblical separation does not require Christians to cease all contact with nonbelievers. Like Jesus, we are to be friends with the sinners without partaking in the sin (*Luke 7:34*). Paul expresses a balanced view of this separation: **«I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world»** (*1 Corinthians 5:9-10*). In other words, we are in the world, but we are not of the world.

We must be the light to the world, not allowing it to dim our light. **«Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven»** (*Matthew 5:14-16*).

(Continued on the 12th page)

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CHURCH

(Ending. The beginning is on the 11th page)

Can women serve as priests or preachers?

ANSWER: The ministry of women as priests or preachers is, perhaps, one of the most contested questions within the Church today. Therefore, we must not primarily look at this problem as an opposition between women and men. There are women who maintain they cannot serve as ordained ministers and, conversely, there are men who are persuaded that there should be no barriers for women's ministry; women can serve as priests or preachers. This is not a problem of chauvinism or discrimination- this is a question of one's interpretation of the Bible.

In *1 Timothy 2:11-12* it is written: «**Let a woman learn quietly, with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather she is to remain quiet**». God has apportioned within the church differing roles for women and men. This is a consequence of the creation order (*1 Timothy 2:13*), and the way in which sin entered the world (*1 Timothy 2:14*). Utilizing this passage of Apostle Paul, God limits the role of women in relation to the spiritual instruction of men. Therefore it is impossible for a woman to serve as priest and preacher, since that involves preaching, teaching, and otherwise exercising spiritual authority over men.

Various counterarguments exist to this opinion. One of the more widely held counter-views is that Apostle Paul limited women in ministry because in the first century, women were typically illiterate and uneducated. However, the status of women literacy holds absolutely no place in *1 Timothy 2:11-14*; it is not even mentioned! If the level of education were a qualifying factor for spiritual service, then the majority of Jesus Christ's disciples would have been completely unqualified.

The second popular opinion holds that Apostle Paul's admonition pertains only to the women of Ephesus (Paul was writing to Timothy, the pastor of the church of Ephesus). The aforementioned city was widely known for its Temple of Artemis, within which women held dominant positions. However, in the *First Epistle to Timothy* this goddess is neither mentioned nor is the worship of Artemis ever cited as a reason for the limitations imposed upon women in *1 Timothy 2:11-12*.

A third argument is that Paul is writing about husbands and wives, not about men and women in general. It is true that the Greek words utilized in *1 Timothy 2:11-14* could have been used as pertaining to men having wives, but the main definition of these words are men and women, generally. The same Greek words are used in verses 8-10 of this chapter. Does Paul admonish only married men to pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling (verse 8)? Or only married women are to adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty, and to glorify God with good works (verses 9-10)? Of course not! Verses 8-10 are clearly talking about men and women, not only about husbands and wives. Nothing in the context of this passage (verse 11-14) justifies the claim that Paul is solely addressing married men and women.

Some opponents cite women leaders found in the scriptures: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Priscilla, and Phoebe. However, they are not taking into account some important facts: Deborah was the only woman judge among 13 male judges; Huldah is a solitary exception among numerous male prophets; Miriam had a close association to leadership only on the basis of being the sister of Moses and Aaron. During the reign of kings,

Athaliah and Jezebel are among the more conspicuous of women, yet they hardly qualify as exemplary, God-fearing leaders.

In *Acts 18*, Priscilla and Aquila are characterized as faithful servants of Christ. It is likely Priscilla is listed first because she was more widely known in the service than her husband. Whatever the reason for the order of listing names, it is clear that Priscilla was not partaking in service that would contradict the teaching of *1 Timothy 2:11-14*. Priscilla and Aquila accepted Apollos into their home and explained to him the way of the Lord more accurately (*Acts 18:26*).

In *Romans 16:1*, Phoebe is called a «deaconess», and not a «pastor», and this shows that she did not teach within the church. The «right to admonish» belongs to the elders (bishops), but not to deacons (*1 Timothy 3:1-13, 1:6-9*). Elders, bishops, and deacons are described as husbands of one wife who maintain good control of their families in all honesty. Besides this, in the texts of *1 Timothy 3:1-13, 1:6-9*, the pronouns associated with elders, bishops, and deacons all pertain to the male gender (translators note: numerous English Bible texts refer to «deaconess» as «a servant of the church»).

So then, why can't women teach and hold authority over men? The reason for this becomes clear in *1 Timothy 2:11-14*. «**For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor**» (verses 13-14). God created Adam first, and then Eve as a «helper» for Adam. This creation order has a universal application within family life as well as within the Church. The fact that Eve was deceived first also serves as an explanation why women should not serve as pastors or to hold spiritual authority over men. Some maintain that a woman cannot be a spiritual teacher because she is easily tempted, but this opinion is debatable, since if women is truly easily tempted, why is she allowed to teach children (who are also easily tempted), and other women? In the given text, that is not the case. Women cannot preach and hold authority above men because Eve was tempted. As a result, God gave men the higher authority in the Church.

Women take the lead in such spiritual gifts as hospitality, gentleness, encouragement, and helpfulness. The spiritual ministry within the Church depends upon women in a significant way. Women in the Church are not limited in public prayer and prophecy (*1 Corinthians 11:5*), only in exercising spiritual authority above men. The Bible does not prohibit women from using the gifts of the Spirit (*1 Corinthians 12*). Women, as well as men, are called to serve their neighbors, manifest the fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:22-23*), and to proclaim the Gospel to lost souls (*Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15*).

God preordained only men could serve in such capacities that carry spiritual authority in the Church. This is in no way indicative that men are inherently better teachers, and it is not because women are subservient or less intellectually capable, — this has nothing to do with the question at hand. This is simply the means by which God has ordained the Church to function. Men must set an example of spiritual leadership in their life and with their words, but women must play a less authoritative role. They are called to teach other women (*1 Timothy 2:3-5*), and the Bible also does not prohibit women from teaching children. The only unattainable service for women is the teaching and practicing of spiritual authority over men, which excludes the opportunity for a woman to be a priest or pastor. This in no way diminishes the important service of women, but guides them to serve with their God-given spiritual gifts.

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«**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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CHRISTIAN NEWS A Saudi Arabian scholar has become a Christian: «Christ has conquered my heart with love»

A Muslim man from Saudi Arabia (from the city of Jeddah) has converted to Christianity. A famous Doctor of Microbiology, Khalid Al-Shamri is now preaching Christ to Muslims, Orthodoxy Cognate Page reports.

«Brothers and sisters, may the blessing of the Lord abide on all of you! As you can see this is because of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ: He has conquered my heart with his love; I have found Him and am now following Him, and will never leave Him. Jesus is Alpha and Omega; Jesus kept me safe in Saudi Arabia, in Jordan when I was a refugee, but the most important thing: the Lord saved me from eternal damnation. I am using this opportunity to thank Jesus for his love towards me, my family, and my nation. May The Lord God bless all Christians in the entire world! Please pray every day for my people, so that they, too would know the Truth through Jesus Christ» — Dr. Khalid.

During the duration of 33 years, Dr. Khalid was a staunch follower of Islam. However, his inquisitive scholarly nature led him to ask questions. In the end, these questions brought the microbiologist to faith in Jesus Christ.

Today, Dr. Khalid witnesses and testifies Christ to many people. In his time, he finished the university named after the sultan, Abdul-Aziz in Saudi Arabia with honors, achieving a Master's in Microbiology. At the university, he studied embryology.

«In Quran 23:14, it first mentions bones and then flesh. As an embryologist, I knew that from the scientific point of view, that was not true, but I did not pay attention to this verse» recalls the scholar. But later, while reading the Bible,

to his delight he found the following verse in the Book of Job: «**You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews**» (*Job 10:11*).

In 1997, Khalid went on a honeymoon to the United States. While on this honeymoon, he was invited to visit a church for the first time. Out of mere curiosity, he decided to enter the cathedral, where he was introduced to some missionaries who gave him the following advice: «Pray with the following words: Lord, show us the Truth, and give us the courage to accept it; show us evil and give us the strength to flee from it». And he began to pray in this manner.

«After my honeymoon, I returned to Saudi Arabia, and there I got a dream in which it was

revealed to me that Jesus was the Son of God and the Savior. However, this was extremely difficult to accept because at that point I had been a Muslim for 33 years. I decided to read the Bible, so I went to a website and downloaded the Holy Scriptures. I found great strength within the Word of God. While reading the New Testament, I noticed some references to the Old Testament. It was astounding to see that all of these Old Testament references proclaimed the future coming of the Savior. I read the Bible for about eight to nine years. There is beauty within it, and I would never want to part with it», says the scholar.

Dr. Khalid, who had memorized three-quarters of the Quran in the past, had always felt pity for Christians: he knew that

although they were really nice people, they were «destined for hell» because that's what the Quran says, and that was what he had been taught in Islamic school. «After I came to know Jesus as my Savior, as I read about the Passion of Christ in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit revealed to me that Christ died for my sins, although I should have perished because of them», he says.

Khalid Al-Shamri's great desire is for all Muslims to realize the Great Truth: Christ has died for the sins of humanity and He is the only Way to eternal salvation. His heart now beats for Christ. Today he is among the leadership of the channel «Al Hayat T.V.» and preaches the gospel in the Hejazi dialect. He prays for Saudi Arabia.

<http://www.pravoslavie.ru>



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!

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

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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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