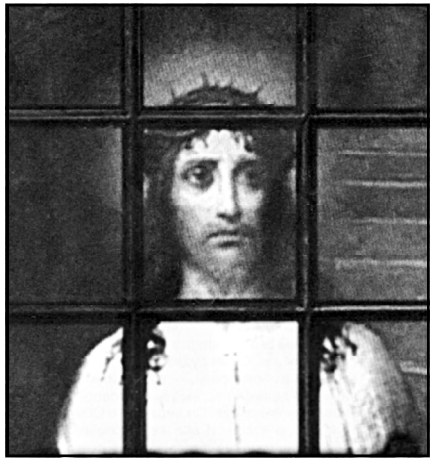


MERRY CHRISTMAS! HAPPY NEW YEAR!



PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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

(John 8:32)

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On the Eve of Christmas

I did not understand it then, that the turning point of my life took place just before Christmas. Unrolling back the film of my life's memories, in front of me rises 1995:

Tomorrow is December 4 and my last trial is to take place. It is the last because the verdict will be given. The prosecutor at the last meeting requested the highest penalty, which is actually death by firing-squad. The whole day passed in suspense. The night was quite hectic because streams of thought followed one another. What lies ahead for me — I did not exactly know. I understood only one thing: freedom for me is very far indeed, or not at all. At some point, I fell asleep and saw a very long corridor, at the end of which was a window, from which I could see the light of day. I tried to escape through the corridor, but the longer I ran forward, the further away from me the light at the end of this corridor became. It felt like my movement was somewhere outside of reality. I woke up in a cold sweat with a very clear understanding that the dream showed me a very long journey into the unknown.

The court session began with the judge giving me last words, after which he began to read the verdict. The words «Capital punishment with confiscation of all property», sounded like a bolt of lightning from the sky. I distinctly heard these words, but at the same time could not yet realize that it's me, personally. A person, with his psychology, does not readily believe in the worst relation of himself. I was no exception, and therefore stood in some confusion until the convoy fastened handcuffs on my wrists. The realization that the sentence «death penalty» is for me, came when I was in the cold stone jail cell. Since then, time seemed to have stopped. I could only identify it by the sound of the delivery of «soup» and the thin strips of light that could barely be seen at the top of the barred icy window.

Life had lost all meaning. I tried to search myself and find what put me behind these walls. But the more I tried to answer the numerous number of questions, the more so significantly increased self-pity. It said: your life is à ruin and nothing can fix or change it. This self-pity lasted just over a month. I was looking for answers to the questions tormenting me and did not find them. I largely considered myself a victim of circumstances, as the crimes were committed in extremely forced situations...

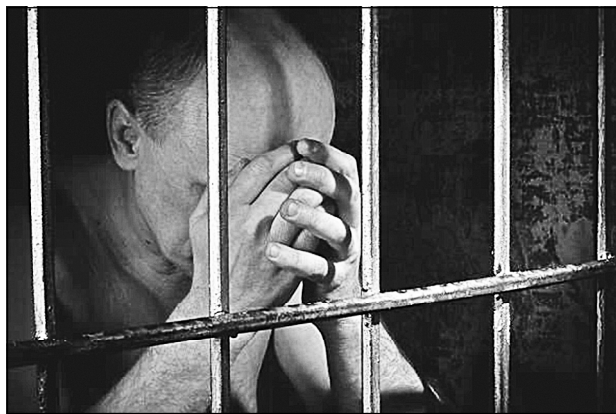
On Christmas Eve, the slot opened in my cell door and a hand extended through, I did not see the face, it gave me some tattered book. When I opened it, I saw that it was the New Testament (the second part of the Bible). I sat down on the bed and began to read the text. The beginning of Matthew seemed very strange to me, especially when it says that one man gave birth to another. At one point, I even wanted to discard this book and try to sleep. However, some invisible force would not let me do it, and I began to delve further into the biblical text. When I finished reading the Sermon on the Mount, tears from my eyes ran down like a spring. Everything that I read, reproved me and indicated the reasons which, altogether, had led me into these walls. I did not know any prayers, and therefore repeated over and over again: «Our Father». Tears flowed uncontrollably from my eyes, and that night became repentance for me. I do not remember all the things that I said to God, but I know for sure that that Christmas night, He was next to me.

In the morning, I was completely exhausted, but inside I was calm and had no fear of being executed. It was January 1996. All of the cells for those sentenced to death were ultimately filled. Traffic to the other world began sometime in the month of March. Anyone sentenced to death were taken out for execution at about one week before the one year was up which he spent on death row. By autumn, except for me and another prisoner, no one was left. Next in line were we. Due to the absence of any objects in the cell (at that time there was a complete ban to have anything in the rooms), all my thoughts and feelings I had to write on any blank area of a single notebook, which, together

with a copy of the judgment letter, was with me. I wanted very much to say to the people, to warn all those who have walked this life in sin. I even agreed with one person from the administration that he would convey my notebook to my relatives after I will be executed. At the end the notebook, I wrote these lines:

*There will be no guards or forced out words,
no one will see me at the farewell
I'll stay in the memory well alive and well,
and therefore, no passover days for my sake...*

I then thought that after I'll be shoot, there will never be any more crime and murder in the world. Despite the



fact that I was a believer then and continually repented before God for what I did, I still had the feeling that all the crimes committed in the world, were stuck on me, and therefore my death will for sure deliver everyone of this evil. I really wanted that with my death, love and peace would come into every home in the world. I waited for this very day, but for some reason it did not come. I should have already been taken to the execution of

the sentence, but, despite all the deadlines, it did not happen.

The next Christmas and New Year were around the corner. And here again on the eve of Christmas, I had a dream of the same long corridor at the end of which was window and daylight shining through. I tried again to run, but some inner voice told me: «Do not rush to do this — it's better that you do that which you have been assigned». I did not realize all that was said back then, however, these words were clearly branded into my memory.

The first new inmate on death row did not appear until the spring of 1997, and six months later another. Then I began to realize that I cannot stop the crimes and murders. But in 1998, all the cells were fully loaded with those condemned to death, although at that time there was already a moratorium on this kind of punishment (according to official data, the last death sentence was March 17, 1997). My idea that I would stop every crime, quickly vanished from my mind, as I had to face reality, which clearly showed that nothing in this sinful world had changed.

By that time, my faith has strengthened significantly, I learned to trust God completely. My soul was eager to bring as much useful fruit for the Lord as possible, but to do it correctly — I did not yet clearly understand. I did not see much results preaching the gospel or just talking about God with fellow inmates because they were changed out weekly. On the contrary, in some cases it caused irritation and anger. For this reason, so as to be less annoying, I decided to put my thoughts into creativity, and in 1999 I began to submit material to periodicals. At the same time, I began to dig heavily into theology and I studied languages and other subjects to increase my level of self-education. All this was the first experience trying to understand what specifically, the Lord wants to see from me. To guess or foresee something yourself is almost impossible. The desire of the Lord and His will are known only through close contact with Him, that is, through the knowledge of His Word (the Bible) and prayer. One day, while reading the 12th chapter of Romans, I stopped at one of the verses where Paul, edifyingly said: «...Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation, in prayer — constant...» (Romans 12:12). This verse sunk very deeply into my heart. I clearly realized then that my unbreakable bond with God can only be only through the persistence of my prayers. I really wanted to serve God, and so I knew that only through the path of constant prayers will I be able to achieve my dreams. I did not ask God anything for myself. My desire was to help other people, through my work, rethink the nature of our earthly existence. So God answered me.

The first publication of my brochure of Christian poetry was published in 2004. They were the first fruits of the glory of God that I was able to grow through the power of faith. Two years later (2006), God extended my service

and allowed the publishing of my book, «At The Edge» (a reprint of the book took place in 2013). In the same year, I painted and drew up a draft of the international independent Christian newspaper «Prisoner». I asked my friends in freedom to compile a layout of the paper for its presentation at the State Department of Ukraine for Execution of Punishment. Of course, the layout has been made, but the presentation has not proved successful. According to Ukrainian law, convicted persons were forbidden to publish in prison, book or brochure. The project «Prisoner» made a positive impression on the officials of the State Department, but the law does not allow engaging in such activities while incarcerated, which means that no one would have registered the publication itself. There was only one option — to organize the editorial of «Prisoner» at large. And so here is where the real test of faith began, concerning the strength of faith.

With the help of friends the «Prisoner» project began to spread and present in many churches. The idea of creating such a newspaper impressed many, but no one was prepared to make this newspaper international, and even more so — independent of any particular church. Orthodox Christians have offered to implement the project under the auspices of the church. Protestant churches were «pulling the blanket», saying: «C'mon, this newspaper will be ours!» In general, no one then wanted to listen that God put on my heart to embody specifically an independent (!) Christian newspaper. It was then, in 2006, when I saw that I collided with the wall of misunderstanding, I remained in prayer to God to prove how much I am willing to defend the importance of the implementation of the «Prisoner» project in prison ministry. I woke up with a prayer for this project and went to sleep with this request, on the lips. From the outside, there was not the slightest hope that this project will ever be realized. But that did not stop me in my prayers. The strength of my faith was so unshakable that even being sick and bedridden for several months (December 2007 to the end of February 2008), I still continued to pray for the realization of this project. There was not a day that I did not turn in prayer to the Lord to give me the opportunity to create a newspaper. It was then that the «good» people predicted a soon-to-be death for me, but despite this I still strongly asked God for «Prisoner» in my prayers.

Now the year 2012 was approaching. Again, just before Christmas, I saw the same dream, with a long corridor and the light at the end. This time, the light at the end of the corridor was much closer — I even discerned the rays of the sun on the floor. Desire to escape into the light was not there anymore, because I knew that the light itself will come to me.

(Continued on the 2nd page.)

On the Eve of Christmas

(The ending. The beginning is on the 1st page)

I did not hear a voice this time, but once I woke up, I felt was in a state of joy and happiness. One of these days I just felt it was time to create something that I prayed for so many years. I needed access to the Internet, and I later got that opportunity. When I got Internet access I wrote a letter to one blessed sister in America and shared my project «Prisoner» with her. Of course, she was a little shocked by the idea that I described in my e-mail. Well, who from the people that are free can adequately perceive that, when a prisoner with a life sentence offers to release an international independent Christian newspaper, and besides, while having no funds for its creation, no helpers — nothing?! I, in turn, still continued to pray. And here it is a miracle!

At the end of January 2012, the above mentioned sister told me that she believed in this project and sent out the necessary funds for its implementation. Shortly after this news, everything began to revive and blossom. The Lord sent into my life all the necessary helpers. The newspaper «Prisoner» was immediately officially registered and entered the Unified States Register. Although the first edition of «Prisoner» was only 1000 copies, the Lord already knew who He will send in as additional help for the implementation and expansion of the project. Praise the Lord, so far for the «Prisoner» project the Lord united many Christians of different denominations, who according to their strength and abilities help the prosperity of this important and necessary newspaper. Of course, nothing is given easily, but thanks to all of the united helpers who were sent by God, «Prisoner» continues for three years now, has ten thousand copies per edition and is printed in two languages (Russian and English). The Scripture says, «...so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on the power of God» (1 Corinthians 2:5). It is through the power of God, «Prisoner» is being published for nearly five years, and during that time not even once did God leave this project without His care and support. The Lord said once: «...According to your faith be it unto you» (Matthew 9:29).

I once, on Christmas Eve, repented and took everything upon faith. After that, I never doubted that any work of God is possible to implement. Praise God that He has given me such strong faith!



I. GORIK.

P.S. Today the newspaper «Prisoner» is read not only in all of the institutions of the penitentiary system of Ukraine, but also in many CIS countries, in America and in Canada, including the highest institution of our country: the Administration of the President of Ukraine, the top council, the Ministry of Justice and other institutions and libraries. But this is still not the limit, as the «Prisoner» in the near future is planned to publish also in German.

GREETING FOR CHRISTMAS!

Every day on earth someone is born, and every day the air is filled with greetings and wishes. Birthdays are relayed from day to day, and in general, there is nothing special about it. For ordinary people are born, and their birthdays only their relatives and friends know. However, of all the births on earth, there is only one birth which is known all over the world, it is remembered and celebrated every year. And this day, or specifically rather night, at all times was called and is being called the Holy Christmas. The birth of Jesus Christ — is one of the greatest events that has been granted to the whole world over two thousand years ago. Many prophets spoke of this day, even several centuries before its actual implementation. For the day of the Holy Nativity — it is not an ordinary day. For was born not just an ordinary man, but God Himself came down to earth for us in the form of Jesus Christ. «No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him» (John 1:18). This is what the prophet Micah says about this great event: «But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto Me That is to be Ruler in Israel; Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting» (Micah 5:2).

«He bowed the heavens and come down...» (Psalms 17:10) — So says King David about it.

«The Lord, having our nature, He became a slave, to give the slaves freedom, to ascend into heaven those who dwell on the earth» (John Chrysostom).

The Holy Birth of our Savior — is not just some made-up story that took place sometime in the old days. Christmas — it is God's great plan. And in the present day the Lord is being born again and again in our hearts, if we open it for Him. Therefore, while there will be life on earth, the Birth of Jesus Christ will always be a live acting force in us. For the Birth of the Savior — is primarily a time of love, joy and reconciliation; time to do and give people good.

Christmas — it is truly a great event, which involuntarily unites and brings people closer around the world. Even non-believers try to do good to each other in this holy Christmas night. For the Lord was born, the sanctity of Whom, involuntarily makes people think about good. On this day and on this night, everything happens in a special way for most of the people. All the people around become noticeably friendly and kinder.

Christmas night — is a sacred holiday, because on this night the Savior of the whole world was born! And despite the fact that the world, in the present day, has almost completely wallowed in sin, God still gives every person a chance at salvation, and through the great event — Holy Nativity — it brings people to reconcile with one another. He proved His love for the people, He sent to earth His only begotten Son, to Whom the name is Jesus Christ. «For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life» (John 3:16).

Dear Readers of «Prisoner», brothers and sisters, may the Birth of Jesus Christ abundantly fill your hearts with love, peace and joy! After all, this holy night gave the whole world the One, Who died for our sins on the Calvary and in His resurrection from the dead laid out the way to salvation for each of us.

FROM THE EDITOR.

On Christmas Eve we invite you to reflect on the history and mysteries of Christmas.

The English word «Christmas» is **Christmas**—consists of a combination of two words: **Christ** (Christ) and **Mass** (Catholic mass). This term appeared in A.D. 1038.

I. THE PAGAN ROOTS OF CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

1. 25th day of December (7th of January in Orthodox Russia).

The Encyclopaedia Britannica says: «One of the most popular winter festivals was the festival of «Saturnalia» which was observed from December 17th to 24th. Because it was a time of fun and riotous turmoil, none worked, all schools and courts were closed. People over-indulged in food, dancing, gambling and gave into whatever they usually comfort themselves during festivals and holidays. The twenty-fifth of December was a special day-birthday of the Iranian God of the Sun and light, Mithra. The Church has proclaimed this day «Merry Christmas» to counter Pagan traditions of the winter festival» (vol. 7, p. 202).

In 354 a.d. the Roman Bishop Liberius, wrote a decree about celebrating Christmas on December 25. He was guided by the desire to adopt the pagan festival into a Christian holiday. From that moment, Jesus' birth was celebrated as a day of Light to the world.

2. Christmas tree.

The book of the Prophet Jeremiah describes the Pagan tradition, reminiscent of a tradition of Christmas tree decoration: **Jeremiah 10:2-4** — *Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not.*

Pagan peoples had the custom of worshipping the ever-green tree as a symbol of eternal life and fertility. Modern tradition of dressing up a Christmas (or new-years) tree is rooted in the tradition of Babel worship of a ever-green tree.

3. The exchange of gifts.

According to the Bible, the wise men from the East brought gifts to Christ. It should be noted, however, that these gifts were presented because the Magi had recognized in Jesus Christ the King of Israel: **Matthew 2:1-2** — *...when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, wise men came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, where is born King of the Jews?*

In Eastern tradition, no one could come close to the King without a gift. Thus, gifts that the baby Jesus got, were related not to the fact of his birth, but to the fact of His recognition as King.

Many contemporary Christmas celebration traditions are rooted in Paganism: tree, exchanging gifts, and the Christmas date itself. In the fourth century, the Catholic Church replaced the pagan winter festival with celebration of the birth of Christ. But it has not revoked the Pagan traditions, and only mixed new traditions with the old. That is why it is important to remember that Christmas is not just an excuse for a feast, but is the birthday of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

THE MYSTERY

II. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CHRISTMAS

1. When was Jesus Christ born?

Question about the day of the birth of Jesus Christ is one of the most frequently asked questions about Christmas. Is it possible to accurately determine the year, month, and day that the Savior of the world was born?

A. Year: between 4-7 years BC.

In the Bible the exact date of the birth of Jesus Christ is not specified. However Scripture tells about the birth of Christ, his place of birth, as well as on the nature and

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger (Luke 2:9-12).

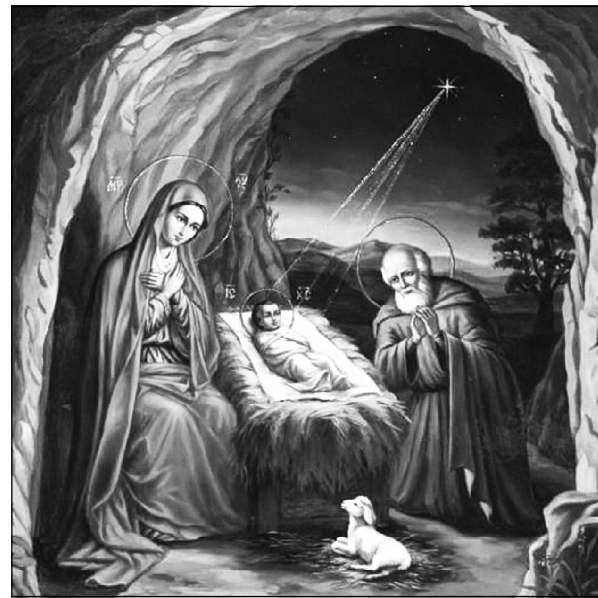
December is one of the coolest months in Israel. In December the shepherds didn't leave flocks in the fields at night. That is why the birth of Jesus Christ could not happen in December.

2. Jesus was born in a stable for animals?

Today many know of the well-known story of the birth of Jesus Christ. Mary and Joseph came from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where there was no room at the inn. Therefore, Mary was forced to give birth in a barn with animals, whereupon Jesus was wrapped and laid in a manger (a feeding trough for cattle).

The story of the birth of Jesus is described in the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke. The Greek word for «hotel» (*kataluma*) does not mean a hotel in our modern understanding. This word has several meanings. One of them is a large covered room as one in which Jesus had the last supper with his disciples.

It is safe to assume that the hotel in Bethlehem, referred to in the Gospel was nothing more than an



upper housing-living room, located on the second floor of the house. Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem, when Maria was ready to give birth. The house in question was the house of the stepfather of Joseph. In connection with the Census of population surely the house was crowded with relatives who arrived to register for the census. For this reason, in the «upper housing» there was no room for a pregnant woman. Firstly, the place was taken by the elder in age and status of relatives. And secondly, by Jewish law, a woman who has given birth to was considered unclean and must be purified for forty days. Perhaps to avoid desecration of the remaining relatives of Joseph, Mary was advised to bear elsewhere.

Where do you think Joseph and pregnant Mary went? to a barn or a cave? Not at all! The Bible nowhere mentions neither barn nor cave ... All that is mentioned is a manger, which the baby Jesus was put in. That's why many speculated that Mary birthed in the barn with the animals. However, Mary could find a manger not only in a stable, but in the same house, only on the ground floor (the so-called lower housing) where people often kept animals.

Among the Jews it was customary to have a small number of livestock in the house, which often dwelt on the ground floor. There also, stocks of food, feed for livestock, and tools were kept. Often on the ground floor, was a kitchen and even a dining room. Family bedrooms have always been located on the second floor, called «upper housing» (hotel).

While in the House, animals were protected from thieves. In addition, the warmth of their bodies helped maintain the temperature in the house during cold nights, as well as give owners access to fresh milk and manure, which was used as fuel.

During excavations in Israel, it was found that many ancient dwellings were equipped with stone troughs for livestock, called mangers.

B. Month: spring or fall.

Most theologians believed that Jesus was born either in spring (in March) or autumn (in September), but not in December or January. And here's why. According to Scripture, the shepherds were in the fields all night: *in the country were on the field, shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night (Luke 2:8).*

An angel appeared to them with good news about the birth of the Savior: *And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

OF CHRISTMAS

Most likely, the birth-night happened as follows: because there was no room for the pregnant Mary on the second floor, she had to give birth on the ground floor of this house, where livestock was usually kept. There the shepherds found them after receiving good news from the angels: **Luke 2:15-16** — *And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.*

him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young

went onward in all their journeys: But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

☉ Sanctuary in the temple **1 Kings 8:10** — *...when the priests emerged from the sanctuary, the cloud filled the House of the Lord.*

☉ The Apostle Paul basked in light from heaven: **Acts 9:3** — *And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round*

However, nowhere in the Bible does it say that there were three Magi. There could be two, or twenty. It is only known that there were three gifts. It is possible that each of the Magi gave Jesus gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

2. Who visited baby Jesus on Christmas night?

Many believe that on Christmas night the Christ child was visited by shepherds and the Magi from the East. However, this is a common misconception. On the night of Christmas only shepherds came to Mary and Joseph, as narrates **Gospel of Luke 2:8-10**.

The wise men visited Jesus a little later, when he was from 40 days to 2 years old. These facts explain why:

☉ The wise men saw the Bethlehem Star for first time the night of Christ's birth. To get to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem, it took at least 25-30 days.

☉ In the 8th day Jesus was circumcised according to Jewish law (**Luke 2:21**).

☉ Mary had 40 days of purification after childbirth (**Luke 2:22**).

☉ King Herod ordered to kill all the male babies under the age of 2 years in Bethlehem after interrogating the Magi (**Matthew 2:7, 16**).

☉ Jesus was taken to Egypt immediately after the visit of the Magi (**Matthew 2:13**).

IV. HOW DO WE TREAT CHRISTMAS?

1. How did early Christians treat Christmas?

They did not celebrate Christmas. They were celebrating the resurrection of Christ.

The Apostles and early Christians left no legacy of this holiday: nowhere in the Bible does it indicate the date of Christ's birth or date of the Christmas celebration. If Christmas was a church holiday, it would be mentioned somewhere in the New Testament.

The attitude of God can be assumed from the verse from **Ecclesiastes 7:1** — *A good name*

is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

Is it not directly written, as to what event in human life is more important for God? The day of death, but not because the world finally got rid of that person, but only on the day of death can you say with certainty whether the man was faithful to God until the very end.

2. How should we treat Christmas?

Today some Christian and un-Christian (kind-of Christian) organizations categorically oppose celebrating Christmas. (Why?) However, we believe that there is nothing wrong with celebrating Christmas, if the focus of our attention is the Lord God and his priceless gift of salvation given to us through Jesus Christ, in which he revealed himself to humanity in the end times.

For Christians, Christmas is a great opportunity and motivates to testify about Jesus Christ and the salvation given to humanity through faith in him. And for the non-believer part of the population, this holiday is an annual reminder that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh.

What is important is **how** we celebrate Christmas. Celebrating Christmas, we should remember the following:

☉ Jesus was born of the Virgin, as was predicted 700 years before his birth: **Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 9:6**.

☉ Jesus became the perfect sinless sacrifice for the sins of the whole world: **Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 26:28**.

☉ Jesus was not just a man but God in the flesh, which he proved not only with His wonderful birth, but also with many miracles: **John 20:30-31**.

☉ Only those who acknowledged Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and reconciled with the heavenly father through his sacrifice on the cross, celebrate the real Christmas. In other words, Christmas is the birth of Jesus Christ in the hearts of people.

V. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

How was Christmas actually? The following are the biblical Christmas details with the locations.

1. The birth of Jesus: **Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:1-7**.

2. Shepherds visiting the newborn that same night: **Luke 2:8-20**.

3. Circumcision of Jesus on the eighth day: **Luke 2:21**.

4. Jesus brought to the Temple in Jerusalem, to stand before the Lord. This happened after the days of purification (40 days): **Luke 2:22-38**.

5. The visit of the wise men from the East: **Matthew 2:1-12**.

6. Escape to Egypt: **Matthew 2:13-15**.

7. The murder of all the male babies on the orders of Herod: **Matthew 2:16-18**.

8. Return to Nazareth: **Luke 2:39; Matthew 2:19-23**.

Christmas involves a lot of mysteries, of which the largest is the mystery of the coming of God in the world in the image of the common man: *and unquestioningly — the mystery of Godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, preached in all the nations, adopted by faith in the world, taken up in glory* (1 Timothy 3:16).

This article for the newspaper «Prisoner» kindly provided by **Biblical discussion club, Montreal, Canada**
<http://www.cogmtl.net/Articles/110.htm>

DISCUSSION CLUB

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

3. What was the mysterious star of Bethlehem?

Read about the star of Bethlehem in **Matthew 2:1-9**.

There were many attempts to answer the question, what was the mysterious star of Bethlehem which led the Magi from the East in Israel. We will tell you about three versions:

Some theologians believe that «Star» was actually a comet, because in ancient times comets were signs of historical events, such as the birth of Kings. However, there is no record of comets, which coincided with the birth of Jesus, for example, the writing about the comet of Galileo were made in 11 BC, and Christ was born in the period from 7 to 5 BC.

Other theologians believe that the star of Bethlehem is a certain position of the planets in the solar system. As each planet revolves around the Sun with its speed, that in some years they can converge or line up in one line. John Kepler (1571-1630) adhered to this view on the issue of the star of Bethlehem.

However, the Union of planets doesn't look like a big star. In addition, the location of the planets was not considered something incredible, as it recurred after a certain period of time. Moreover, the convergence of Saturn and Jupiter, as described in 6 BC, was not much closer than the convergence of these planets in 66 BC.

The third group of theologians believes that in Luke, it is talking about an exploding star (Supernova). Some stars are unstable and explode with a bright light. However, there is no record of supernovas that coincide with the time of the birth of Jesus.

Thus, it turns out that none of the three theories withstand tests: none of them fulfill the prophecy in the **Book of Numbers 24:17**: *there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth* — and is described in the **Gospel of Matthew 2:1-12**: *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with*

child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

You should especially pay attention to the following three parts:

Firstly in the Bible it says that only the wise men saw the star. Assuming that it was a comet, other people should be seeing it as well.

Secondly the star of the Magi was seen twice: first in the East, and then on arrival in Jerusalem. Most likely, the Magi in question came to Jerusalem from Persia. The distance between Persia and Israel is approximately 500 miles. In those days, such distance would take at least 25 days to travel. What could appear in Heaven, disappear and after 25 (or more) days again catch fire in the sky?

Thirdly this star was in front of the wise men and led them from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. The distance between these cities is about six miles (North to South). However, the celestial bodies move in the heavens from East to West, which is caused by the Earth's rotation on its axis. What celestial luminary might have lead the Magi from Jerusalem to the right home?

The conclusion is, that the star of Bethlehem is nothing more than a supernatural phenomenon. We must not forget that the Birth of Christ is a miracle in itself. The apparition of the angel and choir of angels to the shepherds also was unusual. Furthermore, in the Bible there are several examples of how the celestial phenomenon (signs) led the people of God.

☉ The glory of God filled the Tabernacle: **Exodus 40:34-38** — *Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel*

about him a light from heaven.

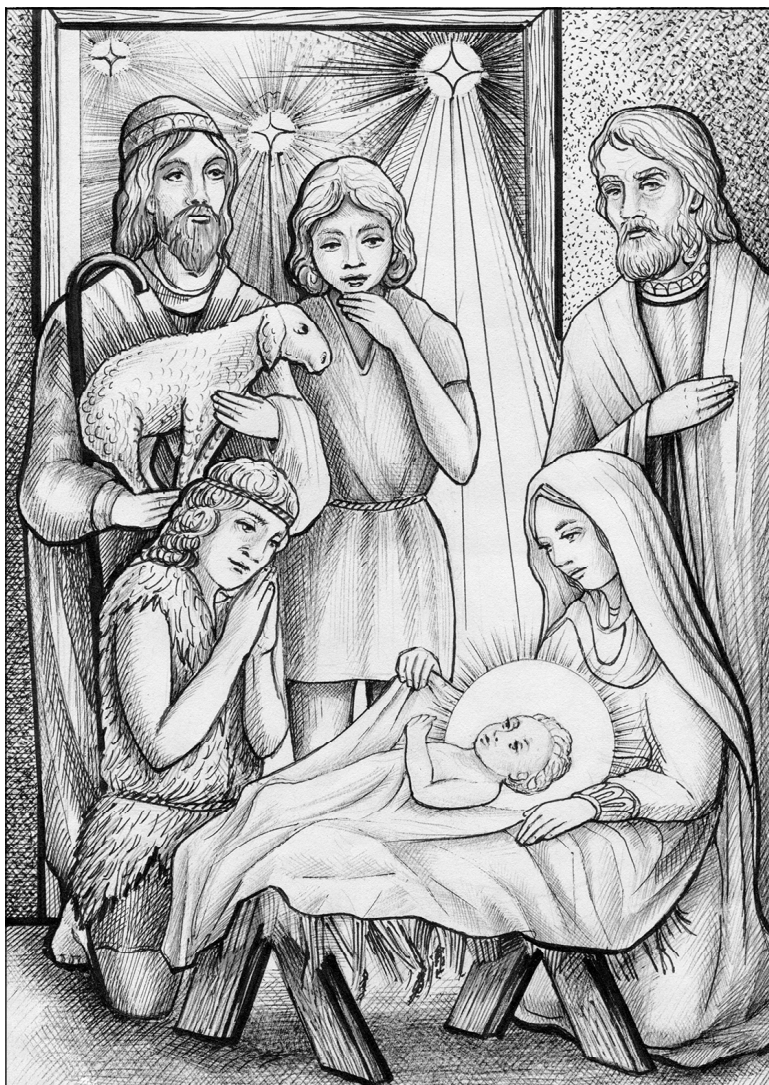
Similar signs were evidence and manifestation of God's presence and his power. The star of Bethlehem, in our view, was one such Biblical signs. However, it must be borne in mind that the center of Christmas night was not the star and not the choir of angels, but the baby Jesus — God, descended to Earth in the flesh.

Some are wondering: «Why did the Magi from the East received such an honor to follow the star to the newborn Messiah?» That we don't know, but we do know that today an invitation to Christ extends to every person in the world.

III. FREQUENT MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT CHRISTMAS

1. How many wise men visited Jesus?

Many believe that three Magi from the East came to Jesus. The bible only tells us that the wise men from the East brought Jesus a gift of gold, frankincense and myrrh.



Drawing by Igor OSOKIN, ФКУ ИК-19, 10-й отряд, ул. Магистральная, 18, г. Казань, Татарстан, Россия, 420108

YOU SHALL NOT STEAL

Absolutely all the commandments given to man are for his own blessing, they are to protect us. The fifth commandment, for example, protects the rights of parents (Honor your father and mother) and extends our life. The sixth seems to stand guard over our lives. The seventh is the guardian of marriage. But the eighth commandment protects us as property owners. All these commandments are a blessing to us, bringing us joy and peace when we follow them. And of course, if we do not follow these commandments but break them, then we reap grief, sorrow and needs.

The commandment that we are discussing today sounds as follow: Do not steal, that is, do not be a thief. In the explanatory dictionary the meaning of the word «thief» is: a criminal, a liar, and in the olden days such a man was called a traitor or a villain. To steal means to criminally possess taken goods or to take that which belongs to another. One so called wise man said, «My brother has an unusual profession: he finds things before people have time to lose them».

in comparison. But if we consider some finish worker who stole from a home owner for whom he worked, that owner may have not even noticed anything. Yes, it can be said, that no one sees this, but me and you, brothers and sisters, know a great and powerful God, who watches over us literally like under a microscope. He sees all that we do and think and said «Do not steal, it is forbidden. I am preparing you for special, kind, blessed and holy works».

THEFT, LARCENY AND THEFT...

What is theft? There are two types of theft; the first is open and blatant. For example, one way is to break through a door, come into a house, and to take all the valuables or to cut through a purse and to steal the valuables. Or one can go at night, during low visibility due to lack of light and grab the hat of a passerby and run away. But there can also be even worse, like taking a knife to someone's throat and to say «Give it over yourself». You understand that this is robbery and theft and this all signifies the handwriting of the one who wants to steal, kill and destroy. I want to believe that we Christians

may agree to meet at two o'clock and one may think, «Why two and not two-thirty? I'll come at two-thirty». This forces the waiting person to kill half an hour of time. Also, this happens often at our church services, practices and get togethers where we simply steal time from others by coming late. Or do you not agree with me? Do you think this can be counted as robbery? May God help us that we may discipline ourselves and be children of God in deed and not in name only.

There are other times such as when people abuse the love of God. For example, a sister comes up and begins to cry, «Oh brother, I'm so poor, helpless and only have air in my pockets». These people, knowing that we Christians give our finances and time, are able to use us because they are aware of this. Some people, upon seeing a tear, are ready to pull out their wallet and give some sum of money, to give away an extra pair of shoes, or to give away any extra food. And some of these sympathy seekers live by these givings. I am not speaking of all people, just that these sort of people exist but I do not want to offend anyone.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

Do you remember in the Bible, when the victorious people of Israel came to the walls of Jericho? They did all that God said to them, they cried out and the walls collapsed — the city was captured. But then God said to them: «Of all that is in this city, nothing should belong to you: I am cursing everything — do not touch anything». So one man decided to break this rule: he liked clothes and gold, how can you give all this up? He decided to take it for himself. And in that moment, the blessing of God departed from the Israelites. Joshua fell to his knees and began to plead: «O God, what has happened?» And God answered him: *Israel has sinned, and they have also broken My covenant which I commanded them, and have even taken of the cursed things, and have also stolen and pretended falsely. And they have even put it among their own stuff (Joshua 7:11, MKJV).*

Now let us Christians consider whether this commandment, «Thou shalt not steal», is still relevant or not? If I just say, «Brother (or sister), do you steal?», I can unintentionally hurt someone or simply confuse them. Therefore we need concrete examples of theft which we sometimes do not even pay attention to.

During the long years of abundance in our country, we have become accustomed to the thought: «To take a little from a lot is not theft but sharing». Today it is difficult to imagine how it can be, if I work in a factory where there is abundance of goods, to go home with empty pockets. Or if I work in a print shop why should I go to the store to buy my own paper? There is lots of it at work, one can just grab a pack and bring it home. Or if you work in a store, and go home with an empty bag, people may laugh at you and misunderstand saying how is it that you don't take anything? We are accustomed to the idea that everything is communal, all around me.

So, dear brothers and sisters, is there a need to talk about this today? For us this is all seemingly in the past, but let us consider, is it all truly left in the past? *Let him who stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, so that he may have something to give to him who needs (Eph. 4:28).* Once we have repented before the Lord, you and I have passed from the kingdom of darkness into the marvelous light of God. Is it so or not? And now our master is the King of the world, the King of the whole universe, that is, the Lord God.

When I was still a bachelor, my mailbox was broken into four times. Whatever they were looking for — I do not know. I replaced the door and they broke it again. I replaced it again and the same thing happened. Then I decided I would no longer repair it but just let it be broken. Every Friday a newspaper called «ПНО» was delivered but even this newspaper was taken. On my way to work I saw my empty mailbox but a newspaper was sticking out of my neighbors mailbox and I took it. And I heard, as if it sounded in my ears: «You are a thief». I stopped. Did anyone really notice? And God spoke directly to my mind: «You're a thief, you took what was not yours». I came back, returned the newspaper and asked God for forgiveness.

Most of us have already learned to make judgements, in which we are aided today by TV and radio. What I mean is, people on television report that someone stole fifty million dollars from the government while another got away with 1 000 tons. And when we attempt to compare ourselves with these people, that newspaper is completely invisible

don't even allow such thoughts, and if it does come we rebuke it.

There is another form of theft which we cannot stay silent about which is to hide thievery. Sometimes it happens that someone steals and keeps the stolen elsewhere. In this case we can say that we are Christians and we are not permitted to steal but we are just safeguarding goods. You know however, that this is of the same essence and it still stealing. I hope that the children of God do not partake in this. Another form of stealing that is very common and rather artistic is deception in trade or purchasing. That is, when a seller presents his low quality goods as high quality. This also is considered stealing. A customer may ask for example, «is this meat fresh?» — «well, of course!» but when they bring it home they see that it has already gone bad. This person just got robbed out of the blue for the entire price he paid.

Another form of theft that is tied to trade is when products are weighed incorrectly. Solomon says in proverbs, *The LORD hates people who use dishonest weights and measures (Proverbs 20:10, GNB). For with whatever judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with whatever measure you measure out, it shall be measured to you again (Matthew 7:2, MKJV).* This means that the principle of sowing and reaping is a surety. If a person decides to lie to someone then they will surely fall for the same thing.

The next type of theft is when too much or not enough change is given. I think that much of us have run into this situation. This type of theft is quite delicate and often we end up participating in it regardless of whether or not we wanted to. If we are given change and we count it may happen that we notice we have been given more than we were supposed to receive. But inside, in our hearts, we began to have differing thoughts. One of them is «Don't worry; they will still make their money». Is that so? A seller might also think, «I overpriced them by twenty cents, but I have hungry children». But these are demonic thoughts. Let us consider, what the Lord says concerning this in proverbs. *They do not despise a thief, if he steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; but if he is found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the goods of his house (Proverbs 6:30-31).* Even if a person is hungry and uses that as a cover up to steal, it is still stealing.

And here's another example. We are coming home from work, we walk into a trolley and there the conductor asks us for our ticket. Many of us claim we have a travel card when we do not have one. I really hope that we actually buy tickets otherwise we are lying and cheating the city transportation, which is stealing. How can God entrust us with more if we are not faithful in the small deeds? I believe that when we are honest, the grace of God may descend upon the official and they may let us through. I am suggesting that we may all always be honest and the grace of God will always be upon us.

There is also another form of subtle theft. If we take a few dollars from our parents in such a way that they wouldn't notice, what is that? I won't give an answer. I am sure that you yourselves know the answer. *Whoever robs his father or his mother and says, It is no sin; he shall be a companion to a destroyer (Proverbs 28:24).* Or we say «Mom, this item belongs to God and therefore I cannot give it to you».

There is another form of artful robbery of which many don't even think about it. You have heard some people say I want to just «kill time» but there are others who steal time. In what way? Two people

Brothers and sisters, I strongly desire that we together, correctly understand the Scriptures and not to play games with others feelings for the purpose of robbing them. The Lord speaks through Apostle Paul saying, «Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need». *Can a person rob God? — God asks of His own people, that is, of me and you. ...Yet you have robbed Me. But you say, In what have we robbed You? In the tithe and the offering! (Malachi 3:8).*

If any kind of thought came to mind akin to «no reason to tithe» then we are reaching for God's pocket because all silver and gold belongs to Him. The salary which you get, whether small or not, is God's blessing and a tenth part belongs to Him. But it doesn't just belong to Him because He is God, for He doesn't need our money, but for the growth and ministry of His church. God blesses this sort of Christians. *Bring all the tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house. And test Me now with this, says Jehovah of Hosts, to see if I will not open the windows of Heaven for you, and pour out a blessing for you, until there is not enough room (Malachi 3:10).* I am more than sure that everyone who does this sees how God blesses them. And if all of a sudden we begin earning ten dollars less then God blesses many times over and gives us the opportunity to buy goods for less and so forth.

Theft can be categorized in another way, it is to claim for yourself what is God's. What do I mean? When I say, «I said such a sermon today that God blessed the service», or, «we sang so well today that the whole church was filled with the Holy Spirit», or, «I prayed, and God healed him but the pastor tried five times and nothing happened». Do you catch my drift? Do not tempt the Lord by appropriating what is Gods to ourselves. If we sing such that God moves then glory is to Him for that, that He moves and we are even able to sing. In no situation are we to take for ourselves what is God's. He said, *I am Jehovah; that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to graven images (Isaiah 42:8)* This means that if He sees that we are appropriating glory to ourselves then He will not give His blessings. He gives His blessings only when all glory is given to Him.

When we take someone's thoughts, someone's ideas and pass them off as our own, it is theft. If someone said a brilliant idea and I took this idea, I liked it, and give it out as my own, this is stealing. *If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of God and of glory rests on you. Truly according to them, He is blasphemed, but according to you He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or a meddler in the affairs of others. But if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God because of this. For the time has come for the judgment to begin from the house of God. And if it first begins from us, what will be the end of those disobeying the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:14-17, MKJV).*

In other words, people, if we became believers, let none of us be caught stealing or called thieves because through that the church of God is blasphemed. Once someone sees someone steal, they do not say that he is a horrible man, unfortunately they say: «Your Church is like this, all of you are like this» On the basis of one person they judge everyone. Notice how one person is responsible for all, and all for one person.

(Continued on the 5th page.)



THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

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

We are striving for unity and let God bless us in this. Let us advise one another, encourage one another, to admonish, to edify to indeed shine the light of God in this world. May God help us in this!

WHY STEAL?!

What motivates a person to steal? It is greed, pride, disbelief, distrust, and discontent with what one has; it all leads to greed and poverty. There are other reasons of course, but these are the main reasons that encourage a person to steal.

The Scriptures speak of the resistance to such ideas:

1. *Not that I speak according to need, for I have learned to be content in whatever state I am. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. In everything and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:11-13, MKJV).* The Apostle Paul learned this, and for this he always glorified God. There is a loaf of bread on the table — thank God! There is butter to go along with the bread — to Him be twice the glory!

2. *I have asked two things from You; do not deny them before I die; remove far from me vanity and a lying word; give me neither poverty or riches; tear for me my portion of bread, lest I be full and deceive, and say, Who is Jehovah? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and violate the name of my God (Proverbs 30:7-9, MKJV).*

God bless us so we could remain at the golden center, not to beg, and not to be prideful.

Also, the opinion society has, is a very strong influence on a person's opinion. For example, the media says that life is very difficult, sometimes even impossible if you do not chew «Orbit» because without it your teeth will decay. This same media tells young people that life without a mobile phone is simply intolerable; if you do not have a smartphone then you're old-fashioned. Of course, when one knows that we live in this century of technology, and they have no money, what should they do? In this case what do you think is the first thought to come to some of the believers? No, it isn't to steal, but to borrow from fellow Christians, and to first think in advance: «They have a lot of money, but I need just \$100. For them it is a trifle, I will not pay them back for a month or two — they will soon forget about it, and maybe they will pardon my debt».

So, if we know in advance that we won't return the borrowed money, it is called theft. If we take the money and say, «Sister, exactly in one month I will give it back,» this is valid during the month, after that it is theft. You can certainly talk to them and ask them to be patient. *Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant (Proverbs 9:17, MKJV).* But however sweet these waters may be, and however pleasant the bread is, theft should be immediately removed from our lives. Why? Because the father of all thieves is the devil, he is a thief in all aspects. This means that if we get onto the path of thieving, the devil knows how to fulfill his purpose, and his one goal — to steal, kill and destroy. If we steal something, we are opening the door for him into our heart, and only he knows what to do next. To avoid this, immediate repentance needs to happen. If the thought of stealing comes to mind, and then enters the heart, it will take root. *...For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man... (Matthew 15:19-20, MKJV).*

Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot do any good. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know; and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations (Jeremiah 7:8-10, MKJV).

Brothers and sisters, I think we are wise people in the Lord, even if you were somehow associated with theft, in whatever form, it is necessary to repent and confess before God.

Unforgiveness — comes from within, by not forgiving someone, the person has to live with the weight of it and it does not give him rest. Inability to forgive is more often due to the fact that a person does not know how to love and at the same time he/she is prideful and selfish. If a person does not forgive their enemy, then some sort of scheme of revenge develops in their mind. The strength depends on the form of resentment. That is, if a person is offended by words, he/she will ponder and plan a scheme of revenge of similar fashion, using words, when opportunity shows. If it is a physical assault, the desire and plan for revenge and takes on the same form. A man

and begged him, saying, Have patience with me and I will pay you all. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison until he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry. And they came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after he had called him, said to him, O wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have pitied your fellow servant, even as I had pity on you? And his lord was angry, and delivered him to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due to him» (Matthew 18:23-34, MKJV).

I'm sure many of Jesus' disciples,

husband, son, or brother that is so biased against former prisoners.

Today, every person that does not forgive will have negative consequences. By not forgiving someone, that person is risking being hurt and is likely to remain unforgiven himself. Firstly of all, by not forgiving, a person is destroying his own psyche, because by carrying the burden of unforgiveness, a person destroys himself from within. Secondly, behind any unforgiveness hides the desire for revenge, which can later make a person exactly the same as whom they cannot forgive. And thirdly, every man sooner or later will have to answer before God for all his bad and good deeds. For it



who cannot forgive constantly lives with the burden of this on his heart. And even if he cannot have revenge, the desire to implement it remains. Sometimes this kind of a person is satisfied when such an offense or pain is inflicted on someone else, he feels that he is not alone and that at least, just a bit, his self-pride is comforted.

Why is there so much hatred in human society, so much vengeance and evil? First of all, it is due to a lack of love. Unfortunately, the majority of people are not perfect when it comes to loving one another, hence the inability to forgive. If it was possible to test all people on their ability to forgive, the scores would be terrible. The cause of many troubles in human society is due to the inability to love and forgive. These two actions are characterized by the absence of God in the heart of man, which is godlessness. Un-forgiveness and hatred are strangers to God because he has not only loved this sinful world but also forgave and still forgives all repentant sinners.

In the present day many people come to repent before God and they ask God to forgive them for all their sins and wrongdoings. However, it often happens that while asking God to forgive him a man does not forgive his enemy. When Jesus Christ was on earth he said to his disciples what the kingdom of heaven is compared to. And in one of His parables He taught a very instructive example, which goes as follows: *«Therefore the kingdom of Heaven has been compared to a certain king who desired to make an accounting with his servants. And when he had begun to count, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he had nothing to pay, his lord commanded that he, and his wife and children, and all that he had, be sold, and payment be made. Then the servant fell down and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me and I will pay you all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. And he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me what you owe. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet*

after hearing this, scratched their heads in wonder. For the parable of Jesus Christ reveals the deep meaning of unforgiveness. In addition, at the end of the parable Jesus added: *«So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also to you, unless each one of you from your hearts forgive his brother their trespasses» (Matthew 18:35, MKJV).*

What is happening in the present day? Do we know how to love and forgive the way the lord did and continues to do? It is quite obvious that any unforgiveness is fraught with bad consequences. Today, many governments are considered Christian, and they preach the ideals of love and kindness. Millions of worshippers attend Christian churches but, just like unforgiveness exists in present human society, so still it continues to take place. Besides there being individual unforgiveness toward one's enemy in society, there exists societal unforgiveness toward groups. Take for example, ex-prisoners in any country, what kind of biased attitude do they face from society? Moreover, this attitude comes not only from non-believers, but also from so-called Christians. Why do people who were punished (imprisoned) fall out of favor with the whole society? Is every prisoner really guilty before every free citizen? Why are prisoners and ex-prisoners automatically disgraced, and why does society not want anything to do with them? Does anyone think about the fact that by distancing themselves from ex-convicts, society thereby knowingly increases crime rate? Someone may ask «how?» But it is very simple. When people who have served their sentence are faced with a wall of incomprehension and contempt toward them, they involuntarily go commit new crimes, while including new people (people who have never been in prison). Maybe some think that the people sitting in jail are always the same people, but that isn't true. Of course, a significant percentage of former inmates return to prison again (one person could have five or even eight convictions over the course of a lifetime), but at the same time today's prisons are increasingly supplemented with more and more new people. And there is no guarantee that the bondage of prison isn't going to take someone's

is said: *«For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it is good, or whether evil» (Ecclesiastes 12:14, MKJV).*

In all Christian countries it is preached that the Father, God, sent his only begotten Son that through him humanity can be reconciled with God. By his own example, Jesus Christ showed us all that the sins of every repentant sinner are forgiven, no matter who that person is or was: a thief, a murderer, a crook, a fornicator, or anyone else who violates the commandments of God. The Scripture clearly says, *«There is none righteous...» (Romans 3:10, MKJV).* And it also says: *«If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us» (1 John 1:8, MKJV).* The Bible indicates that all people are sinners before God. Only the repentant sinner can be forgiven all his sins: *«If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness» (1 John 1:9, MKJV).*

Yes, God forgives the repentant sinner and cleanses them from all unrighteousness. The only thing people sometimes don't understand is that unforgiveness is a sin the same as all other sins. So asking forgiveness from God, while not forgiving someone else (no matter for what!) — is just pointless. For our Lord Jesus Christ, when he was on earth, clearly said to all mankind: *«...For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses» (Matthew 6:14-15, MKJV).*

I believe that in today's society it is necessary to change the stereotypes of human righteousness and unrighteousness, as all righteousness and truth are in God's decrees and laws. And at the heart of all of God's laws lies love. It is the love that is able to forgive all. God has shown us that love in His Son (Jesus), and forgave us, and forgives us today. So perhaps it is time for all of us to follow God's laws, and learn to love and to forgive all. Let everyone reading this remember who we have not forgiven?! For living without forgiving someone — is praying and believing in vain.

I. GORIK.

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS



Vyacheslav Danilin:

«God has completely changed and restored my life»

From a young age my friends and I always wanted to be first in everything. We loved going to clubs. In 8th grade we started drinking. After a short time alcohol didn't thrill us anymore and we started to smoke marijuana. The first time I injected myself, I was 17. From that time I a drug addict. Drugs started consuming my whole life.

We had a group of a few people but we brought people a lot of pain. Having become acquainted with the criminal circles, we began to commit theft and robbery. All the money went to drugs. We did not have family, stability, or a value... The result was the broken hearts of our mothers and fathers, friends and family.

I often wanted to stop using drugs, but this lead to nothing... Many times I promised my parents that I will quit, but I still continued. I was repeatedly in drug treatment clinics. I tried quitting by myself but it was all useless.

Twice I almost died from severe over dosage. I was in a serious automobile collision with my friends at 175 km/h (110 mph), but we did not even have fractures. Now I understand that it was the grace of God that I did not die.

There were moments when I wanted to commit suicide. But when it came to do the deed, something stopped me. I was prosecuted for drug abuse and stealing. I spent six months in jail during the trial process. Only at this time I was off drugs. The court sentenced me to three years of prison.

Four months later, I was arrested with my friends another crime which I took all responsibility for. As a result, I was given a four year sentence and I went to prison. There I was not able to obtain drugs and even though a lot of time passed, in my mind there was only one thing: when I get out the first thing I'll do is get high. When I was finally released, the first thing I did was not going home to my mother, who all these years brought me packages and waited, but to a pickup point where I got heroine. Only then did I come home.

For six months I did not use drugs, and got a job. It seemed that all was well. But then I started to get paid, and again began to use drugs more and more. I lost my job and I came to the point that I had no change of clothes. I lost the respect of my parents, relatives and close ones. I reached such a state that did not want to live...

All ten years of my addiction, my mother constantly prayed for me. One time I met a man from the church «Salvation in Jesus», he was also a former addict. He explained that the church operates rehabilitation centers, where I could get rid of addiction. He invited me to one of the meetings in the church. And a week later I went to the rehab center. There I took a full course of rehabilitation.

Now I am 42 and for 13 years now I am free from drug. God fully and changed and restored my life. I have a beautiful wife and three children. My life is now stable and my priorities have changed: I do not smoke, do not drink, do not swear, but I give glory to God for the life and freedom He gifted me.

For many years now I serve at the adaptation center of the church «Salvation in Jesus» the same guys as I was; former inmates. I want to make every effort that these guys are saved and that their lives have been changed.

Russia.

The Lord changes all the negatives to positives

I grew up without a father. Mother brought me up as she could but I never listened to her. I rejected her discipline and advise. The street educated me. As to me it then seemed, on the street I rapidly became grew up, although in reality I was still a child.

My mother worked and I was left to myself. We never had enough money and at the age of 7, I gathered bottles in order to purchase myself toys, and at 9 years — to purchase myself candies and pastry. When I was somewhat older all my money went to alcohol.

The street is not kind to the weak and when I drank, I immediately felt like a hero. I was not afraid of stealing. Thus it continued until I was 15, until I got a taste of smoking weed, and later I started using poppy. At the time poppy grew in the vegetable-gardens, and hemp was grown in the collective farm fields. Therefore it was not necessary to pay for the narcotic, but it was possible to even earn some money off it.

For three years I constantly used narcotics. This was prestigious. It was easy to earn money off of drugs because there were many people around that wanted to be high. No problem: live, delight in life and bring pleasure to others.

But this idyll did not continue for long. I was imprisoned at 18. I was ready for incarceration but was not ready for withdrawals. After 30 months of prison I no longer wanted prison.

I changed my way of life and for next few years I dealt in different goods and legally made a living. I purchased automobile and apartment. I married. Life was good.

But today's conventional wisdom says: «The drug can wait». Once again, I served time and my life went upside down. I went anywhere just to leave the city in order not to use drugs, but I did not understand the main thing: you cannot run away from yourself.

In 1997 I began to drive poppy into the city and sell it. At the time I myself did not use drugs but I drank heavily. When I injected myself, I got a constriction of nerves in my arm and thus a group II disability. This was a stress with which I did not cope well. At that time I just turned 32.

A year later my daughter was born — it was a real gift from God! It seemed to me that I began to live for the family. Nevertheless, I continued to transport the drug in large quantities and sell it. I paid off the police with the money I earned. At the time it seemed to me that I can buy everything and everyone. Constantly living in this nightmare, I did not see the suffering of my family, especially my mother's. Life around me was dirty and lewd. And so that although somehow it will remove from it, the dose of narcotics in me with each at once became increasingly more. I was in the dark and the gloom proceeded from me.

Life around me was dirty and depraved and to somehow get away from it, the drug dose in me got larger and larger. I was in darkness.

In 2001, I went for another consignment of drugs and fell asleep at the wheel. This was the third car accident in my life, and in two of those the cars were smashed completely but I remained alive. This time the shrapnel fragmented both heels. I could not walk for a long time but rode in a wheelchair. Then I became better was able to walk with a cane. But even this did not prevent me from continuing to sell drugs.

In 2004, I was imprisoned again. This time I was very very sick, and in prison I was discovered to be in the initial stage of tuberculosis. I was transferred to the TB zone. One time I was given an injection of vitamins, after which my blood pressure dropped significantly. I was getting ready to die.

After that I was transferred to a disability zone, you are brought to die. I called this transition the «last trip.» But, despite the criticality of the situation, even there I began to create a «movement» of drugs and alcohol. Once I was sent weed, and I prayed to God that all would go well. But the opposite happened: I was beaten badly with baseball bats, smashed my kidneys, and broke my ribs. And then, lying in the infirmary, I thought in a wild state, «Lord, I do not believe in people, only you are left».

I had always been invited to church, but I refused to even communicate with the faithful about God. Although somewhere deep inside I liked their lives. Once completely sick and ruined, I had to overcome my pride and come to the meeting. When I came to the meeting I was invited to repent. But I said that I still want think about it. I didn't think long and a week later I gave my life to Jesus Christ.

My repentance has changed my life: what used to be enjoyable for me, now for some reason, became ill. I thought more and more about how I live. And the more I read the Bible, the more I realized that if I'm going to live as it is written in this book, all will be well.

A month later, I heard these words within myself, «Son, you have a good heart, but your body is disfigured. Start exercising.» And from that day I ran for an hour every day. The disability in my legs and tuberculosis was removed. It is the glory of God! It is poured out on my life. How can I abandon the Lord who pulled me out of this swamp and prepared the best for me? Now the Lord fills me with His love so that I can make known His infinite love to the people of our city. God changes everything the negatives to positives.

Igor MIKHAILENKO (RYBAK), Ukraine.



Once, at the age of 5-6, I had a dream where there was a struggle for my life between the forces of good and evil. My grandmother, who attended the Baptist church, said, «Granddaughter, you need to go to God. Satan will have a lot of power in your life but God will help you».

As time passed, the fears subsided and the dream forgotten, I did not go to church. All went well, why do I need God. I grew up and was admitted to medical school, then I got married and gave birth to my daughter. I did not know where trouble crept up. When our daughter was four years old, my husband and I separated. Then my life was upside down: restaurants, wine, cigarettes, new friends. It wasn't life but pure entertainment.

Jesus is truly risen in my life

At that time, I had many friends who are addicts and as a paramedic, I helped them with IVs for blood purification. Then one day I too decided to try the effect of the drug. It was pleasant to me, and I began to use it — at first occasionally, then more and more. I sunk into depression from which only a terrible cocktail of drugs rescued me: immediately everything becomes beautiful. I thought I would never get addicted and all the while the dose increased, I already needed it several times a day.

Life ceased to be fun, and I began to seek a way out. An opportunity to go to the sea arose, to become free from this intoxication. But even there, there were «good» people who are constantly supplied me with dope. Returning home, I quit work as it was hard to work in the hospital. And life continued to go down; I started making and selling drugs.

And for the first time I was faced with the authorities. And here I remembered my Christian relatives. As in the Slavic proverb, «as soon as there are hardships you need God» I repented of my sins but did not hurry to part with drugs for which I received a 3 year period. But even this did not stop me.

But, thank the Lord, my daughter came to God, at the time she was 15. She began to pray for me. Constantly telling me about the love of God, that many people in the Church where freed from their addictions with the help of God. I listened, and even believed, but I continued to use drugs. And then a re-encounter with the law forced me to come running to the church. Once again, God helped me: miraculously the charges for the distribution of drugs were dropped. I began to consistently go to meetings, treating the church as a guard, thinking that I'm protected from the authorities and other evil. I did a lot as purely rituals, even prayer.



Six months later, I once again returned to my old ways. Due to the lack of finances I was in a drug club, where I lived for a dose. A serious roundup impacted my life and a time of serious upheaval began in me. I suddenly comprehended what crap I was in and cannot get out. I fell to my knees, and prayed to God for Him led me out of this impasse by promising to leave the drug.

Thank God that He is slow to anger, and merciful: He intervened in my life with His love and freed me from the bondage of sin. It was my day of mourning, in which I cried out to Him, and He heard me and glorified in me.

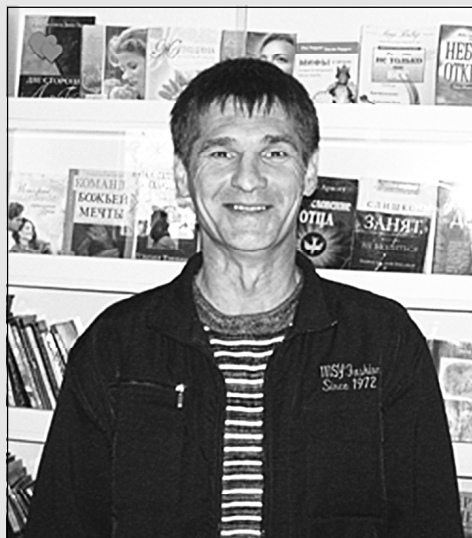
I am eternally grateful to my Lord and Savior for His faithfulness, because everything is in His hands, even me.

I have a wonderful spiritual family. I serve my Lord, praising His great name. I like to sing to him. He is truly risen in my life.



Oksana RUDENKO,
Dnepropetrovsk region, Ukraine.

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS



God has changed my thinking

«interesting» friends. So at age 16 I first tried opium. At that time, it was impressive, fashionable, interesting and romantic to use drugs, and whatever your heart desired could be purchased without any financial difficulty. Poppy and hemp were grown in accessible places, and the drug problem did not exist at that time.

Ten years flew by. I periodically «played with» drugs, somewhat slowing down myself, but to give it up completely was not something I considered. I did not suspect that everything related to drugs could go so deep.

The following 15 years were a nightmare, or in better words, hell on earth. Everything that was dear to me failed and was destroyed: family, work, and friends. Friends began to turn away from me because I annoyed them all. My relationship with my parents became strained. My life was rolling into a deep hole and I began to sink lower and lower. A dose of drugs now began to cost a considerable amount of money. Earning money in an honest fashion was not an option for me and that led me to theft and lies and, as a result, repeated convictions. In prison, I continued to use drugs, for which I received an additional sentence without being freed.

My health was getting worse and worse. The doctors said that I will not last long with the condition of my liver, and the disease enveloping my leg progressed. And everyone around me had me marked with a «cross» (a

Russian saying meaning that this person is to soon die).

Fortunately for me, I knew religious people who once lead lives something similar to mine. But now they were quite different: sincerely believing in the grace of God, saying that God is able to do a miracle in my life also. I had a choice in front of me to either go to jail again or to go to a rehabilitation center.

And with the help of God and other believers I ended up in a rehab center called «Ark of Salvation» located in the city of Alexandria. There was a parable written in large letters: **«If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain»** (Proverbs 24:11). In the rehab center I repented and confessed of all of my sins and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ into my heart. After repenting, great changes began to happen in my life. God began to change my thinking, my eyes were now opened both physically and spiritually.

The Lord had to put a lot of effort to change my character and change my hardened heart to a loving and compassionate heart. I had great desire to help people who have fallen into the drug addictions. In the Gospel of John it says that the thief (that is the devil) comes only to steal, to kill and destroy; and Jesus came to earth so that all might have life and have it more abundantly. I realized that addiction to drugs is real slavery, from

which only Jesus Christ can help break people free, because only He voluntarily went to die on the cross to save people from their sins, and made intercession for transgressors (Isaiah 53:12).

Serving in a rehabilitation center called «The Manger» in Dnepropetrovsk (now Dnepr), I helped the men learn about the living, loving, and merciful God, serving as a live example of what God can do with a drug addict and a criminal. And the «cross» that once people put on me became a cross of the Lord Jesus Christ who saved me, justified me, purified me and infused hope in my heart.

I now live in my home town of Ordzhonikidze, and minister as a pastor in a church called «The Word of Awakening» and I see the hand of God and His grace in my life.

I want to reach out to all people, in whatever state you are, give your lives in the hands of God, trust Him, as I did once, which I do not regret. And if God could so change and heal me, then I am sure that the Almighty God will help you if you let Him.

I thank God for each person which he sends into my life for them meet a real friend, helper and comforter — our God. Now I am happy every day, given to me by the Lord, His presence in my life, His power and His grace. To Him be all the glory for He alone is worthy of all praise.



Vladimir YAKOVLEV,
Dnepropetrovsk region, Ukraine.

From a homeless to a successful and happy person

I am a member of the church called «The Word of Awakening» for over two years. Now I am a happy person: I have a beautiful loving wife and two wonderful children, friends, work, and ministry in church (I am a drummer in the worship band). My Lord gave me the talent of becoming a musician, and now I'm trying to improve my talent even more.

But it was not always like this. My problems started from the moment of my birth. Doctors immediately marked me with the «cross» (a Russian saying meaning that this person will die soon) and said that I will not live long. I survived only thanks to the prayers of my mother and grandmother. Despite this, before joining the church I had deeply fallen.

As a child I was very active in sports: wrestling and karate. And then, after coming back from the army, I showed my abilities where it was not necessary, being a gangster and so forth. Life was in full swing but soon enough my life hit me hard on the head. I literally lost my apartment: sold it for business and lost money on it, and my balance went negative. The remaining money was spent very quickly.

In 1996, my mother died, and in 1997 my brother died in a car crash. Life blow after blow caused me to look for a solution in alcohol. At that time I already had a family and a little girl growing up. My wife could not stand my drinking anymore and one day took the child and left. After my wife left I started to drink even more, and soon after I became a homeless. During the day time I worked as a loader in the flea market. In the

evenings I received payments for the day and every night until four in the morning I would drink up all of my money in a restaurant. When the restaurant was closing, I would go to a parking station to sleep a couple of hours. I exchanged a bottle of vodka to sleep at that station. Three years passed in such a way.

One time in that same restaurant, a believer in Jesus Christ spoke to me. He claimed that God loves me and can help me. I was already pretty drunk, but listened and somehow mumbled a repentance prayer: repented in all of my sins and asked Jesus to come into my heart and be my Lord and help me get out of the rock bottom in which I have struggled for a long time.

It was in 2004. Another two long years I tried to change something in my life. I continued to drink, but not as often. I started to think more about God and about Satan, trying to remember what that believer once told me. And at one time I said: «God, if you exist, then I'll live. I am canceling all of my contracts with the devil».

It was 2006. After another hangover I did not want to live. I was trying to pretend to run so that people did not see that I'm too drunk. During my hangovers I often did crazy things. Then I heard a clear voice inside of me: «You want to run? Run to church». I obeyed and ran to church. At the church I was greeted by an administrator. I told him everything that just happened. He patiently listened and talked with me, then he prayed. And since then I have stayed there in church. I returned to church as soon as I was free, and I was looking for things to do to be



helpful, helping keep the territory clean and so on. I ask God to shut me out of the world and to give me work with the faithful believers, so that I could resist the temptation because those temptations were always there with me.

And God has been faithful because I received what I requested. I began to pray for myself and for my wife and daughter. Thank God she did not divorce me. I began to look for a way to reconnect and re-establish my relationship with my family. I tried to convince my family in believing me that I have changed and that the Lord made me free from my alcohol addiction. My wife

and daughter were the most important people in my life. I confessed to her and asked for forgiveness for all the pain and hurt that I have caused her. She did not immediately believe me but thank God, she gave me a second chance.

Another year has passed since then, and one of our friends told me that when my wife was asked «How are you?» she answered «I live in paradise.» I was so happy and thanked the Lord from the bottom of my heart for such an undeserved gift. I loved my daughter dearly, but deep in my heart, for about eight years, I've been dreaming for a son. And this dream has come true: my wife gave me a wonderful son Daniel.

This is my story of my way from homeless life to a successful person and a happy family man. And for all of the blessings I praise and glorify my Father, Friend and master — the Lord Jesus Christ! I also thank many of my brothers in Christ that helped me stand, supported me and prayed for me that the Lord would renew me.

Dear friend, maybe you are now in the same situation as I was in before. Do not be despaired because the Lord Jesus is able to bring you out of any terrible situation, even if it seems hopeless to you. Listen to your heart and make a decision immediately. I told many of my old «friends» that God wants to transform their lives. Some listened, others didn't, but many are no longer living. God always gives a person a chance, take advantage of it. God has achievement, healing, deliverance, restoration ready for you. He has everything you need. The choice is yours.



Sergey YUKHIMENKO,
Ukraine,
<http://gazetasp.net/svidetelstva>

The Proverb of the torn coat

A soldier once asked one of the elders if God grants forgiveness to sinners. And the old man answered, «Tell me, dear, if your coat was to tear, would you throw it away?»



The soldier replied, «No. I sew it up and continue to wear it».

«If you are so careful with your coat, do you not think that God will be merciful to His own image?» the elder concluded.

The proverb about workers. Five cents or five dollars?

One worker went to his master and says, «Master! Why do I get paid five cents only, and Ivan always gets five dollars?»

The master looks out the window and says, «I see someone coming. It seems like the hay is being taken past us. Go and see».

The employee went out and soon returned and said, «You were correct master, it is hay». «And do

PROVERBS

you know from where are they bringing it? Maybe from Semenovskoe meadows?»

«I do not know». «Go and find out».

The worker went to ask and soon returned saying, «Master! You were correct, hay is from Semenovskoe meadows». «And do you know if it is the first or second hay mowing?»

«I do not know».

«So go down to find out!»

The employee went and returned again, «Master! First mowing!»

«And do you know how much are they selling it for?»

«I do not know».

«So go down and find out».

He went. He came back and said, «Master! For five dollars».

«And do you know if they will

sell it for cheaper?» «I do not know».

At this point Ivan walks in and says, «Master! There was a hay wagon transported from meadows of Semenovskoe, first mowing. They asked for five dollars. I bargained for three dollars for a cart. I drove them into the yard and now the load is being unloaded».

The master turned to the first employee and asked, «Now do you understand why you get paid five cents and Ivan receives five dollars?»

Tears of a great artist

One day, the students caught a great artist in tears.

«Master, why are you crying?» they asked.

«I finished the art job, but I do not see any flaws in it», he replied.



«This is good!» students delighted. «If I do not see any flaws in my work, then my talent is on the way to its end», said the great artist. Similarly we find the same situation in our spiritual life. If you do not see any flaws in yourself then there is no need to rejoice, but to weep.

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

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

God shares His glory with us

Constantine ❄️

I remember my childhood with a bottle of wine and a cigarette in hand. I remember the entrance to my home, a guitar, and dramatic changes in my behavior, being called a youngster. rehab for a drug addiction, then a strict sentencing and so on. I remember seventeen years being locked up in Ukraine, four convictions, twenty years of drug use.

In addition, I was shot and even buried. Once in a Nikopol at a den (a place where criminals and drug users gather), I was carried outside half-naked and placed near the house next door because I had no heartbeat. As a result I had a stroke and was paralyzed on my left side. Also because I was wanted it was not long before I was back in jail, no family, no friends, no teeth.

At the time I thought that jail was my home, I almost liked it there. I could always get myself drugs. Around this time I found out that my mother who believed in God helped me by visiting as best as she could. However, after a while she was paralyzed and could no longer check in on me. And then, desperate and devastated, in a location that I began to consider my home, the Lord found me.

To the CLC-6 Kirovograd (now Kropyvnytskyi) came people who sincerely believed in the mercy and love of God, and spoke about his love. And I repented because I was tired of being angry, tired of being a slave to drugs. These Christians prayed for me and for my mother. I saw tears in their eyes, and it could not fail to touch my heart. And then they asked for permission to visit my house.

I was very surprised that people whom I just met were willing to travel three hundred kilometers to the city of Ordzhonikidze (now Pokrov) for the sake of my family, so that they could also know about Jesus. And my family too, repented and come to God.

Later in my life, great changes began to take place, as God began to change my thinking. I got together with the others to pray for our superiors, as well as for daily needs. I saw how the Lord leads us His ways, and I loved it. For the first time I was introduced to the colony-settlement, from which I came out on parole. God continued to perform his miracles in my life. I came out from prison with a mark for extra supervision, but by God's grace I had it removed early.

I began to serve in the church, and began to go to prisons in the Kirovograd region as a part of the prison ministry team. I told my former «colleagues» about what God had done for me and how He could change the lives of ex-offender drug addicts.

Once in church, I met a young lady, her name was Tanya. After a time, God miraculously united us in marriage and gave me a real, sincere love and a family that is growing and becoming stronger. We have two adult daughters — Katie and Dariya and a son Danny.

Last year, my mother went up to heaven. I am forever grateful for the care and understanding that she showed me in my most difficult times.

In Ordzhonikidze the Lord formed a branch of the church «Word of awakening,» and my family was called to serve Him. I am a pastor and I see the hand of God and His grace in my life, my family and the people who, like us, sincerely accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Dear reader, I am now able to live in joy and enjoy His presence, His power, His glory in its entirety. God showed me that when I was dying in the winter on a bench without a pulse, he was there. And I'm sure that he kept me, did not allow death to carry me to hell, but gave me a chance to change my life. And thank God that I jumped at it. After everything that happened to me I now easily understand any person, showing him mercy and love. I can confidently quote the words of the Bible: **«It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes»** (Psalm 119:71).

Tatiana ❄️

I was born into a very nice family, in which I was brought up in love and prosperity. I did well in high school and graduated from music school. Teachers and parents had high hopes for me. But, despite all this, at the age of 15 I tried drugs. It was cool, fashionable, and interesting.

On the outside everything seemed well, but opium slavery lowered my identity lower and lower. At age 16 I got married, and gave birth to my first child — a daughter Katie.

I began the endless attempts to somehow escape from drug addiction. I would leave to close relatives to change my usual circle of friends, often had a variety of treatments, and even decided to have a second child — a daughter Dariya, because I thought that the responsibility for the children would be able to hold me.

But nothing helped; the power of sin overwhelmed me. When Katie was ten years old, and Dariya was one year old, I was in such a state that I could not even take care of myself, so the children were taken to my parents. After a while I was so broken and destroyed by the slavery of sin that tried to commit suicide. I began looking for a way to quickly get rid of the life that I was living in.

My mother was a doctor by profession, and I tried to ask her about some poison. But when I tried to ask her, she remembered a woman's daughter who was a drug addict who was miraculously saved by the Lord. This girl was freed from drug addiction, quit smoking and swearing. I did not believe it, but my eldest daughter invited me to go to the church for the service. During the service I kept laughing, looking at how believers behave, their behavior was very unusual: they sang, danced and rejoiced. The preaching I liked, because I've never understood the point of the Bible, but here it was being broken down in great detail in a way which I understood.

When the pastor began to call to repentance, my daughter took me by the hand and led me to the stage. I did not understand what was happening to me, but I repeated the prayer of repentance after the pastor. My daughter Katie also asked to pray for my freedom from drugs. When we were going home, my face was shining with a smile. God saw my situation and touched me so much that the next morning I felt completely liberated from my drug addiction.

Six months of a fulfilled Christian life had passed. My parents were not fully aware of the fact that God gives me the strength to not shoot up. They thought I had willpower, so they said I did not need to go to church so often. I listened to them. And then there was a dramatic fall, I started using drugs again. The result was three years of prison. After a year and seven months in prison I got parole, and I thought about God. I realized that I really need spiritual support, and asked my daughter Katie to pray for me. I also prayed for myself. The Lord heard me, but when I got out, I did not return to my family of God. When my mother asked me to go back to church, I told her «go yourself».

Eighteen months later I again went to jail, this time for one and a half years. When I entered the chamber, I went to the window with bars and made a promise to God to be faithful to Him even while in prison. And God heard me. I have seen many miracles, when people repented, and were healed. After serving 10 months, I was released early. Even in prison, God spoke to me telling me that I would have a son and he would be named Daniel. I was very surprised because my first marriage was completely destroyed, and I considered myself already too old. But, remembering His promise, I completely trusted my life to God, and He changed it miraculously. When I again began to serve God and Christianity became my way of my life, God sent into my life and my daughters a very special person, my beloved husband Constantine.

Now we are really very happy, and even my parents agree that God exists. As He promised, we had a son whom we named Daniel. Our daughters serve the Lord, and we can see how God leads them and are satisfied with their fate.

My husband and I serve in the church «Word of Awakening» in our city Ordzhonikidze. God has given us wisdom and finances to start our own business, which is developing and provides an opportunity to serve the Lord, and also not to be in need of food and shelter. I know what happiness is, because I experience it every day in my life. Today I can confidently say: with God I am a very happy person!

❄️ Constantine and Tatiana YAN, Ukraine,
<http://gazetasp.net/svidetelstva>



CHRISTIAN NEWS FROM THE PAST

I recently came across an interesting article; a story titled «Child Evangelism». At the beginning of the twentieth century, dozens of children (especially girls) were engaged in major evangelism, gathering crowds. This phenomenon is associated with the plentiful coming of the Holy Spirit in 1906. It is interesting that in the years 1920-1930 these little preachers traveled extensively in America, renting the biggest building at that time and leading thousands of people to God. The most famous preacher of the time was a little girl named Uldine Utley.

Uldine Utley was born in 1912 in a farmer's family and spent her childhood on a farm in the city of Fresno, California. In 1921, at the age of 9, she and her parents visited a crusade (*missionary trip, which includes organizing religious meetings and preaching.* — **Note from Ed.**). Aimee Semple McPherson experienced an unusual encounter with God. One evening Emmy preached on «David and Goliath» and the little girl came to the platform and said: «I want to be like David to fight Goliath!» During these ministries Uldine experienced a strong presence of God, received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and saw a vision in which Jesus called her to the ministry. Since then, everything changed in her life.

The story of a little girl, who filled stadiums for Jesus!

Returning to her home church, nine year old Uldine testified how she experienced an encounter with God in the service of Amy McPherson. To everyone's surprise, she told them about God, not as a child but as a fiery, adult preacher. People were shocked. During her testimony, many non-believers with tears in their eyes turned to God.

Uldine traveled California with her parents for two years testifying how she had experienced God's presence in her life. Once at one such service there were two missionaries present and when they had heard her speak they invited her to come along to Sanger, California to speak. On the first evening, when Uldine spoke at a Sunday service, the anointing came down with such force that the whole assembly was set in motion. She was invited to stay there and continue to hold meetings, which she did. As a result, these revival meetings covered the whole little town and almost all people came to God!

In an instant, eleven year old Uldine Utley became famous: newspapers began to write about her and she received hundreds of invitations from different churches and organizations. Seeing this great opportunity, the girl's parents created a mission and began to travel extensively throughout the country with their young daughter, holding large services where Uldine was the main speaker.

According to witnesses, the presence of God in the ministry conducted by Uldine Utley, were just indescribable, people were shaking, crying, falling to the floor and, most importantly, each time hundreds and even thousands would accept Jesus Christ into their hearts. When Uldine appeared on the scene, her voice became different, and she with great authority preached about God.



Three things accompanied her ministry. First, when she lay hands on people, they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Second, when she anointed the sick with oil, they immediately received healing. Third, after a call to repentance of sinners the crowd tried to hurry

forward to be reconciled to God. Very often, new churches were formed after the crusades.

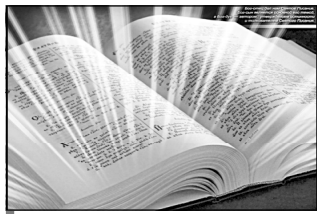
With each passing year, Uldine traveled more and more across America, gathering crowds of people in the churches, tents and even stadiums. Over time, she began to hold joint service with the leading preachers of the period. For example, the famous British evangelist Smith Wigglesworth often shared the platform with her. In 1925, while visiting the city of Savannah in Georgia, after several ministries the girl left two fast-growing church (one of them — the famous Savannah First Assembly of God). At the age of 12 years Uldine began producing her own monthly Magazine — Rose of Sharon, which published its preaching schedule crusades and testimonies of people who experienced an encounter with God at her meetings.

But the most significant event took place in October 1925. Thirteen year old Uldine Utley and her team (which at that time consisted of 12 people, including her parents) decided to rent one of the largest covered buildings in America for evangelization — Madison Square Garden (Manhattan). For several days the 14,000 seat arena was filled with people, which resulted in the repentance of thousands of people. The well-known American magazine Time Magazine devoted a whole page to this event in its publication!

Over the next 15 years, God used Uldine mightily, to bring thousands of people to repentance. Unfortunately, this story has no happy ending. In 1936, at age 26, after years of intensive service (in her later days she preached up to six days a week in the Chicago area) Uldine experienced a lot of stress, and pulled away from the ministry.

Uldine Utley's history reminds us that God can use anyone He wants, even children, as it is written in the eighth Psalm: **«Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.»**

Roman SAVOCHKA,
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Pastor's Word

WHY IS IT THAT CHRISTIANS SOMETIMES FALL?

Why is it that some Christians, after coming to God and serving Him for several years, fall back to their old life of sin? Those who only yesterday flew as if on wings, full of the joy of salvation, today are overwhelmed and depressed. It does not matter what kind of environment these people were in, whether in church, surrounded by care and attention, or alone, or even in prison. There is always about the same small percentage of those who after repenting, «take off» and after their «flight», which lasted from a couple of months to several years, disgracefully and painfully land. After a while though, many of them rise up and return to God, being stained, crippled, and with a deep sense of guilt.

We'll talk about some categories of Christians who fall, and discuss the reasons.



1. Coming to God for reasons of personal gain

A common cause of the fall of Christians, who came to believe in God (at a time free of persecution), is that many come to God not for the purpose of selfless service for God, but to obtain earthly goods from Him. Perhaps, some preachers are at fault here, when at evangelistic meetings they talk to those who are coming to God only about the pleasant sides of Christianity, and do not speak about the difficulties. Not showing the full picture from the beginning, but luring them in, they lay the foundation for the subsequent fall. And as a result, such people are not motivated by self-sacrificing love for God, but by selfish goals. This can be expressed in anticipation that God, in return for their conversion, will resolve the problems they have in their personal lives. Some expect to receive good health from God, a wealthy life, a happy family. Even if such people are willing to sacrifice something for God, it is only on the condition that He will repay them a hundred times more, and right away. From the beginning, they were not set on suffering, deprivation and persecution, which make up the life of every true Christian. It is not surprising that when these people are faced with difficulties or struggle, they quickly become frustrated. They become upset with God and with preachers, who didn't warn them about the challenges of the Christian life. That is why Christ in His earthly life days warned in advance, the people who wanted to follow Him, of the difficulties they will face on their way when they decide to follow Him.

John 16:33 — *In the world ye shall have tribulation...*

John 15:20 — *If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...*

Luke 14:33 — *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

God cares and arranges the lives of those who give everything to Him, and that is an indisputable fact, but this is a consequence, not the root cause. God gives His blessings to those who accept His conditions and begin to live according to gospel principles. And even when a person wants to use God for their selfish goals, the Lord does this or that for him but it doesn't last forever.

Even when the Lord bestows His blessings on a Christian, He will first examine and test him. And it is God's right — which life path each person should follow, but a Christian can't go without being tested and examined by Him.

2. Lack of awareness of the depth of their sinfulness during repentance

The second reason why believers fall is that for whatever reasons, when coming to God, they did not have a deep, painful process of awareness of their sinfulness, one they should remember for a long time. The presence of this process is a distinct boundary that divides human life into before and after repentance. The realization of one's depravity and sinfulness is like labor pains, indicating a normal healthy birth of a live person.

Why does that happen to some? Perhaps, when the Holy Spirit led a person by way of a healthy birth from above, someone interrupted them, rushing to comfort with words such as «Do not cry. God forgives everything. Don't remember your sins any longer», or «Do not worry, and forget everything in the past: you are now a new person and your life begins with a new slate.» And though these consolations have some truth in them, but no one can interfere with the spiritual birth of a repenting person in such a way. At this time, a person needs the opportunity to not only see themselves in the light of God's Word, but to hold a «mirror» in front of their eyes for a longer time, so that together with the pain of being purified, an immunity against the subsequent sin can be developed at the same time.

The apostle Paul many years after his conversion thought of himself as a blasphemer, an offender and a fiend (**1 Tim. 1:12-13; 1 Cor. 15:8**). Why did he do that? Maybe for the same reason of which he himself said: *And lest I should be exalted above measure through the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure* (**2 Cor. 12:7**).

Every physically working person sometimes has abrasions, bruises and scratches on their body, and we often do not even remember where it happened. But if a deep painful injury occurred, and it was necessary to sew up torn or cut muscle tissue, then that is a different story. This is remembered for a long time, and the scar is a reminder for the rest of one's life. It is so with repentance as well: the more pain and suffering a human endures for the knowledge of their own sinfulness, the better it is. It is remembered longer and prevents him from returning to his old ways. It is the lack of deep sorrow and pain for their sinful past is the cause of an easy return to the old.

3. Do not withstand the process of sanctification

To consider the third reason for the fall of Christians, let's turn to a natural phenomenon. When an amount of rain pours on growing crops, not only the planted crops receive water but the weeds as well. Under the influence of the sun and moisture, everything begins to grow rapidly. After a while the weeds choke the crops and are a threat to the whole harvest. At that

point it is necessary to take action and to uproot the weeds or weed the crops. It is the same in the spiritual life of the people who come to God.

After many years spent in anxiety without God, a person comes to God without a goal in life. After their repentance a completely new era of existence begins, with a calm heart, inner harmony, a meaning in life, joy. The believer is like an asthmatic after a choking attack, not being able to get enough breath. Wonderful changes occur in him: there is more patience, mercy towards others, the ability to sacrifice, love God and people. This continues for a certain time.

But gradually the person gets used to this new state, and along with the good qualities feelings of self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency begin to appear. Somewhere unconsciously, understanding forms that it is to his credit that he began to live a new life. And after a while a sense of superiority over others arises, and he can judge those who act and live wrong. If this will continue to happen, it may end in tragedy for that human. Arrogance, pride, self-satisfaction and independence are the qualities of the devil and are repugnant to God. Therefore, the Lord is forced to take measures and uproot weeds in the life of such a person. How does that happen?

First, God takes away the sense of His closeness and support. With that, the inner peace, joy, stability, and confidence in God, all disappear. Everything becomes annoying, the faith is weakened, the ability to see oneself is lost,

but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears» (**2 Cor. 7:5**).

All of this is directed to the fact that a Christian, seeing their weaknesses under the loads, will uproot the weeds of pride, self-confidence, self-reliance, or extolling themselves over others. In other words, the person is brought to the edge of all his capabilities and discovers his own impotence, inability and infidelity. This revelation of all their weaknesses is a strong blow to human pride and arrogance. After these insights the missing humility comes to the Christian, and remembering who he really is, he begins to act differently towards others and God. And even when the following blessings come or God demonstrates His glory through him, that person, remembering the past, will no longer ascribe it to himself, as before, and will not think of himself better than others. And also after his experience, the Christian begins to cherish closeness with God, afraid of losing it. His heart clings to the Lord and desires His permanent life management.

All of this is part of God's process of education and an excellent protection against pride. It is in this process of God's care that some Christians fall. They do not understand: «What is this? For what? It felt so good, but God left without reason and forgot about me».

I remember how it happened in my life...

After years of living in sinful slavery and countless attempts to break free, I decided to commit suicide. I reasoned with myself in

this way: «The longer I live, the more I sin. The sooner I die, the less evil I will do». Prior to the execution of my decision I decided to turn to God. My prayer was short: «God, if You need me and if You can do something with me, do it, because I can no longer live this way». They were specific, well-thought-out words of the last prayer.

But something I didn't expect happened. In one moment, after these words, I received a new heart. All of me was filled with delight and joy. A strong belief that the old life is over came. I will never go back to the old way.

And my «honeymoon» began with the Lord, and it lasted several months. I found it hard to stop talking to the Lord. It was so sweet that it can be understood only by someone who has experienced something similar. God began to teach me like a small child, responding to my every whim. Biblical truths began to open with such frequency that it was breathtaking. I spent day and night in communication with my Loved One, not allowing myself to sleep. And when I went to sleep, I would go back to talking with the Lord in bed. And if I slept two to three hours, I would again jump up to read the Bible and talk to God, afraid of losing contact with Him. When I worked in production, even though my hands were working, I would fall asleep standing. When they saw this, my unbelieving co-workers asked me, «What do you do at night?» And I didn't know how to explain to them that I did not have

enough time in the day to enjoy God. I thought that this would last forever...

But then came the day when I lay down to sleep and prayed and rejoiced in bed for a long time, but when I woke up after a couple of hours, I felt completely empty and abandoned. I knew that sin can separate from God, but that was not the case. I fell asleep rejoicing and filled with the Holy Spirit, and woke up empty. If I say that after this I felt sad, it would be quite far from the truth. I was terrified, devastated, and full of panic. I prayed, suffered, repented for everything I could, but the joy and closeness of God did not return immediately.

Then it began to occur for longer periods of time. The joy and closeness of God began to leave for a day, week or longer. But I didn't tell you that when the Lord carried me in His arms during the «honeymoon» phase, I had already envisioned myself like the apostle Peter, John or Paul. I had an inner outrage when I looked at warm, half-asleep Christians. God's grace, I unnoticeably began to ascribe to myself success in the knowledge of the truth and God's blessings. But I did not see or notice that then. I learned about this only later, when these horrible tests came — tests of separation from God. That's where my spoiled true nature became visible. I asked God a question during moments of insight: «God, how did bless me before with these vices? I was just as proud when You opened the truth to me, taught and comforted me.» And in response, God's love: «I did not count it as a sin, since you were a spiritual child. But when you grew it was time to correct you, so that you would not grow up to be a spiritual cripple».

John 15:2 — *...every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

When I understood and began to humble myself and get rid of pride, arrogance, then the close presence of God, joy, and peace, once again returned to me. What is important is not what we experience in the material world, but the findings, the results, contributing to the formation of our spiritual person for eternal existence with Christ in heaven.

Col. 1:28 — *...warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*

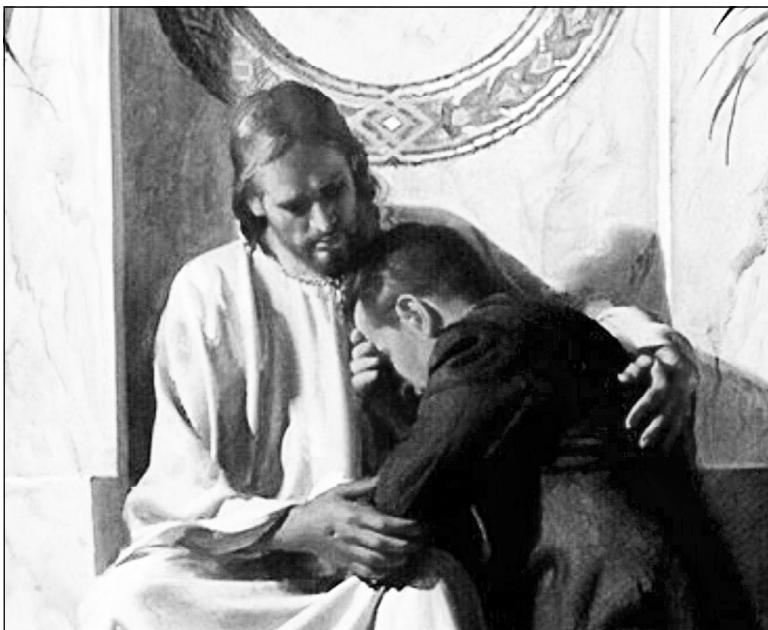
When this became clear to me, the relief came: so it isn't a cruel coincidence, but part of a well-rounded God's process of education. God does nothing accidentally or by mistake. So, all this suffering is not in vain! No wonder the Bible says: *...the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us* (**Rom. 8:18**).

Conclusion.

The presence of the free will of man imposes a lot of responsibility on people. Improper use of this privilege, that is, of free will, leads to moral downfall, destruction of families, and bloodshed. Let us remember that every soul that lives on the earth is precious to God, and He does not do anything meaningless with people. He knows all human weaknesses, and even pain, which is the result of our sinful decisions, God tries to turn it into good. We need to cherish the opportunity provided to us, through faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to His truth, to reach His likeness here on earth, and have eternal life in heaven.

1 Tim. 2:3-4 — *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

Aleksandr BORISENKO.



QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

What does it mean to grieve / quench the Holy Spirit?

Answer: When the word «quench» is used in Scripture, it is speaking of suppressing fire. When believers put on the shield of faith, as part of their armor of God (*Ephesians 6:16*), they are extinguishing the power of the fiery darts from Satan. Christ described hell as a place where the fire would not be «quenched» (*Mark 9:44, 46, 48*). Likewise, the Holy Spirit is a fire dwelling in each believer. He wants to express Himself in our actions and attitudes. When believers do not allow the Spirit to be seen in our actions, when we do what we know is wrong, we suppress or quench the Spirit (*1 Thessalonians 5:19*). We do not allow the Spirit to reveal Himself the way that He wants to.

To understand what it means to grieve the Spirit, we must first understand that this indicates the Spirit possesses personality. Only a person can be grieved; therefore, the Spirit must be a divine person in order to have this emotion. Once we understand this, we can better understand how He is grieved, mainly because we too are grieved. *Ephesians 4:30* tells us that we should not grieve the Spirit. We grieve the Spirit by living like the pagans (*4:17-19*), by lying (*4:25*), by being angry (*4:26-27*), by stealing (*4:28*), by cursing (*4:29*), by being bitter (*4:31*), by being unforgiving (*4:32*), and by being sexually immoral (*5:3-5*). To grieve the Spirit is to act out in a sinful manner, whether it is in thought only or in both thought and deed.

Both quenching and grieving the Spirit are similar in their effects. Both hinder a godly lifestyle. Both happen when a believer sins against God and follows his or her own worldly desires. The only correct road to follow is the road that leads the believer closer to God and purity, and farther away from the world and sin. Just as we do not like to be grieved, and just as we do not seek to quench what is good — so we should not grieve or quench the Holy Spirit by refusing to follow His leading.

How is the Holy Spirit like a fire?

Answer: The Bible describes God as «*consuming fire*» (*Hebrews 12:29*), so it is not surprising that fire often appears as a symbol of God's presence. Examples include the burning bush (*Exodus 3:2*), the Shekinah glory (*Exodus 14:19; Numbers 9:15-16*), and Ezekiel's vision (*Ezekiel 1:4*). Fire has many times been an instrument of God's judgment (*Numbers 11:1, 3; 2 Kings 1:10, 12*) and a sign of His power (*Judges 13:20; 1 Kings 18:38*).

For obvious reasons, fire was important for the Old Testament sacrifices. The fire on the altar of burnt offering was a divine gift, having been lit originally by God Himself (*Leviticus 9:24*). God charged the priests with keeping His fire lit (*Leviticus 6:13*) and made it clear that fire from any other source was unacceptable (*Leviticus 10:1-2*).

In the New Testament, the altar can serve as a picture of our commitment to the Lord. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are called upon to offer our bodies as «*living sacrifices*» (*Romans 12:1*), engulfed by the divine gift: the inextinguishable fire of the Holy Spirit. At the very beginning of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is associated with fire. John the Baptist predicts that Jesus will be the One to «*baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire*» (*Matthew 3:11*). When the Holy Spirit began His ministry of indwelling the early church, He chose to appear as «*tongues of fire*» resting on each of the believers. At that moment, «*all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them*» (*Acts 2:3-4*).

Fire is a wonderful picture of the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is like a fire in at least three ways: He brings God's presence, God's passion, and God's purity. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God as He indwells the heart of the believer (*Romans 8:9*). In the Old Testament, God showed His presence to the Israelites by overspreading the tabernacle with fire (*Numbers 9:14-15*). This fiery presence provided light and guidance (*Numbers 9:17-23*). In the New Testament, God guides and comforts His children with the Holy Spirit dwelling in our bodies — the «*tabernacle*» and the «*temple of the living God*» (*2 Corinthians 5:1; 6:16*).

The Holy Spirit creates the passion of God in our hearts. After the two traveling disciples talk with the resurrected Jesus, they describe their hearts as «*burning within us*» (*Luke 24:32*). After the apostles receive the Spirit at Pentecost, they have a passion that lasts a lifetime and impels them to speak the word of God boldly (*Acts 4:31*).

YOU ASK, WE ANSWER



The Holy Spirit produces the purity of God in our lives. God's purpose is to purify us (*Titus 2:14*), and the Spirit is the agent of our sanctification (*1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2*). As the silversmith uses fire to purge the dross from the precious metal, so God uses the Spirit to remove our sin from us (*Psalms 66:10; Proverbs 17:3*). His fire cleanses and refines.

What is the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

Answer: *Galatians 5:22-23* tells us, «*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*» The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the result of the Holy Spirit's presence in the life of a Christian. The Bible makes it clear that everyone receives the Holy Spirit the moment he or she believes in Jesus Christ (*Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13-14*). One of the primary purposes of the Holy Spirit coming into a Christian's life is to change that life. It is the Holy Spirit's job to conform us to the image of Christ, making us more like Him.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is in direct contrast with the acts of the sinful nature in *Corinthians 5:19-21*, «*The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*» This passage describes all people, to varying degrees, when they do not know Christ and therefore are not under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Our sinful flesh produces certain types of fruit that reflect our nature, and the Holy Spirit produces types of fruit that reflect His nature.

The Christian life is a battle of the sinful flesh against the new nature given by Christ (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). As fallen human beings, we are still trapped in a body that desires sinful things (*Romans 7:14-25*). As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit producing His fruit in us and we have the Holy Spirit's power available to conquer the acts of the sinful nature (*2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 4:13*). A Christian will never be completely victorious in always demonstrating the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It is one of the main purposes of the Holy Spirit to produce more and more of His fruit in our lives — and to allow the Holy Spirit to conquer the opposing sinful desires. The fruit of the Spirit is what God desires our lives to exhibit and, with the Holy Spirit's help, it is possible!

Should we worship the Holy Spirit?

Answer: We know that only God should be worshipped. Only God deserves worship. The question of whether we should worship the Holy Spirit is answered simply by determining whether the Spirit is God. Contrary to the ideas of some cults, the Holy Spirit is not merely a «force» but a personality. He is referred to in personal terms (*John 15:26; 16:7-8, 13-14*). He acts as a Being with personality would act — He speaks (*1 Timothy 4:1*), He loves (*Romans 15:30*), He teaches (*John 14:26*), He intercedes (*Romans 8:26*), and so on.

The Holy Spirit possesses the nature of deity — He shares the attributes of God. He is neither angelic nor human in essence. He is eternal (*Hebrews 9:14*). He is everywhere present (*Psalms 139:7-10*). The Spirit is omniscient, i.e., He knows «*all things, even the deep things of God*» (*1 Corinthians 2:10-11*). He taught the apostles «*all things*» (*John 14:26*). He was involved in the creation process (*Genesis 1:2*). The Holy Spirit is spoken of in intimate association with both the Father and the Son (*Matthew 28:19; John 14:16*). As a Person, He can be lied to (*Acts 5:3-4*) and grieved (*Ephesians 4:30*). Furthermore, some passages in the Old Testament that are attributed to God are applied to the Spirit in the New Testament (see *Isaiah 6:8 with Acts 28:25, and Exodus 16:7 with Hebrews 3:7-9*).

A divine Person is worthy of worship. God is «*worthy of praise*» (*Psalms 18:3*). God is great and «*most worthy of praise*» (*Psalms 48:1*). We are commanded to worship God (*Matthew 4:10; Revelation 19:10; 22:9*). If, then, the Spirit is deity, the third Person of our triune God, He is worthy of worship. *Philippians 3:3* tells us that true believers, those whose hearts have been circumcised, worship God by the Spirit and glory and rejoice in Christ. Here is a beautiful picture of worship of all three members of the Godhead.

How do we worship the Holy Spirit? The same way we worship the Father and the Son. Christian worship is spiritual, flowing from the inward workings of the Holy Spirit to which we respond by offering our lives to Him (*Romans 12:1*). We worship the Spirit by obedience to His commands. Referring to Christ, the Apostle John explains that «*those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us*» (*1 John 3:24*). We see here the link between obeying Christ and the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, convicting us of all things — especially our need to worship by obedience — and empowering us to worship.

Worship is itself a function of the Spirit. Jesus says that we «*worship in spirit and in truth*» (*John 4:24*). Those who are spiritual are those who are indwelt by the Spirit who testifies to us that we belong to Him (*Romans 8:16*). His presence in our hearts enables us to return worship to Him in the Spirit. We are in Him as He is in us, just as Christ is in the Father and the Father is in us through the Spirit (*John 14:20; 17:21*).



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

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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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