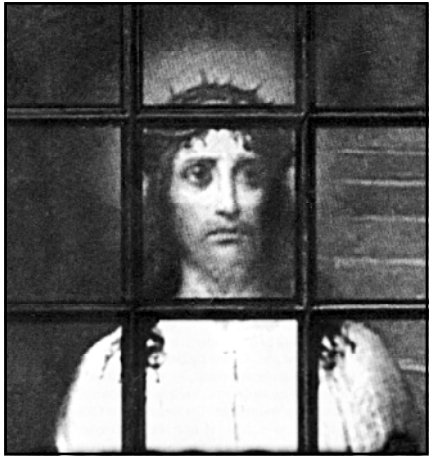


CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED, HE IS RISEN!



PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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

(John 8:32)

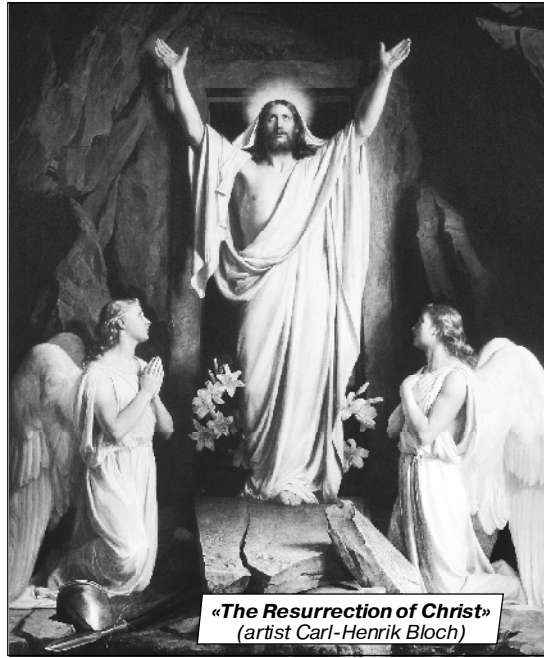
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When I think about how great God's love is to us sinners, I distinctly understand how insignificant we are in our love towards God and neighbor. With every step of our spiritual growth, it becomes evident how we are still very far away from the perfection which was given to us initially at the creation of the world. **«So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them»** (Genesis 1:27).

It would seem that since we were created in the image and likeness of God, then perfection should prevail in us. Unfortunately, our perfection still remains at a very low level. We talk a lot about love and about how we need to love our neighbor, but in reality our love is most often only evident through words.

On this, the eve of a great event — the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead — I want us to remember how perfect God's love was, and is, to us sinners. That God did not even spare His only begotten Son, so that our sins might be atoned for through His death. **«For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have**



«The Resurrection of Christ»
(artist Carl-Henrik Bloch)

ALL-FORGIVING LOVE

everlasting life» (John 3:16). **«But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us»** (Romans 5:8).

«He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when you shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see his seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors» (Isaiah 53: 3-12).

And how big His love for us needed to be, that He endured all this humiliation and abuse at human hands. Dying for those, who in fact are impossible to forgive. Someone sinless gave His life for all sinners so that we would all then have the opportunity for God's mercy and His forgiveness. This is above all comprehension, since only all-forgiving Love is capable of doing such a thing. Christ died and rose from the dead for our justification, so that later He would become an Intercessor for us before our Heavenly Father.

The bright Resurrection of Christ, which is celebrated yearly on Easter Day, should not be an occasion for drunkenness and idleness, as it is practiced in the world. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is first of all the remembrance and awareness of human cruelty, that mankind has used towards the One who came to this sinful earth to save the lost. It would be good for anyone reading this article to answer this question: do I have such a love that, not condemning anyone, I would, if necessary, give my life as Christ did? If everyone really thinks about it, then perhaps we will then be more aware of how we need to grow in our love for one another. For in the present day, there are too many words of love, which in practice have little place. It is precisely through the love of our neighbors that we can be given a real indication of our love for God. And if we are still so far away from perfect love, then let us at least work to come as close as possible to it. For our approach to perfect love brings us closer to God Himself, because God is Love!

Christ did not impute sin to anyone. He willingly allowed Himself to be taken for brutal torture, ridicule, and died for the sins of all people in order to give us salvation. Christ arose for our justification. His forgiving love has no boundaries.

Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

I. GORIK.

Thanks and Congratulations!

Victor Oguzbayev, sentenced to life imprisonment, sends greetings and a huge thanks from Kazakhstan to a very great mentor and assistant to follow Christ, **Lidiya Petrovna GUDYMA** from America. He also requests that our sister in the Lord, **Galina KLYUYSTREYKH** from Germany, be congratulated on her birthday. On March 9, she turned 83 years old. Sister Galina spiritually raises more than 20 people in all camps, and everyone calls her, with gratitude, their spiritual mother. Despite the fact that the greeting will be published after her birthday, Victor wishes her good health for many years to come. He writes that very, very many brothers would join in this congratulation. Well, the editors of «Prisoner» will gladly publish this congratulation and join it with best wishes!

YOUR LETTERS

«Sold and paid for completely by the Blood of Jesus Christ!»

Dear «Prisoner»!

I am in the prison of RJC in King County, Washington. I received your newspaper through my friend, and when I was reading it, I thought it would be nice to write something for your newspaper. I am attaching to my letter my small message. I hope that you will print it in your newspaper. Please send it to my address.

My name is Justin McPherson. I am in prison in Kent Regional Justice Center (King County Jail). I will not be telling you what I am accused for, what my time is and how much I have left. I just have a short message, which is right in the Bible, and the truth of which I am aware.

Luke, in Chapter 11, verses 24 through 26, writes: **«When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he comes, he finds it swept and garnished. Then goes he, and takes to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first».**

I was in the prison and went out of there several times. When I was imprisoned again, I sought God, confessed my sins to Him. Jesus thoroughly swept my home and arranged everything in order, expelling demons. Then I felt so good. However, when I went out of prison, my clean house filled with unclean spirits again. My life became even worse than before. Soon, I found myself in prison again, but with a longer term than the one I had before that. The reason for why this happens lies in the fact that I have not devoted myself entirely, with all my heart to Jesus. I leave as if a sign over God's temple (my body) — «For Rent». But thank God, the time has come to put on this home a completely different sign: «Sold and paid for completely by the Blood of Jesus Christ» And do you know what? After that, unclean spirits will not step even on the road before such a house, they will simply run away. That is why I want to add to everything: do not allow the Lord to be in your house only until you are in a prison, give yourself to Him forever, because He already bought you by His Blood and paid for all of you! Blessings to everyone!



Justin McPHERSON
15516 47th St.Ct. EAST Sumner, WA 98390.

Write to tell us who you became when you received Jesus Christ into your heart

Greetings, brothers in Christ!

I am happy to see your names in the newspaper «Prisoner». I decided to join you. My name is Vladimir, and I am 26 years old. I am a follower of Jesus Christ, who is my teacher, and from whom I have learned a lot. He changed my life. Glory and praise be to Him for everything! I thank God for everything, including this letter, which I can write to you and inform you about how I also, like many others, am a former drug addict. But now, by the will of the Almighty, I am saved and I am a new person. Praise God!

There are a lot of us Russians here, and also Ukrainians and Moldovans. And the majority of us attend services. Many of us were bad guys with bad stories. And there are enough books with our stories. It would be good to now write about who we have become as children of God, willing to follow the example of Jesus Christ and the apostles,

and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

I am happy for you, that you, as well as I, are children of our Heavenly Father. Glory be to Him for us all! There is a lot written about us believers in the Scriptures, how we have to obey the commandments and serve the Lord in spirit and in truth. I ask you to briefly tell us about yourself, about your life, how and for what you live for, and what you need to do to be faithful to the Lord. I know the desire of the believer, and that is why I ask you to write your opinion about that freedom, that the Lord gave us, freeing us from the inside, making us joyful to go and preach the Gospel. Write to me. May the Holy Spirit bless you, and God be with you!

Vladimir MOSCALIUC,
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Tacoma, WA 98421.



(Continued on page 2)

The question comes up frequently in letters to the editor: «Is smoking a sin, if there is nothing specifically mentioned about it in the Bible?» Of course, people who ask questions like this are trying to rationalize smoking, arguing that they don't harm others by smoking. They even quote the Bible, for example: «*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*» (1 Cor. 10:31).

Well, perhaps it's time to talk about this topic in «Prisoner». I want to share my experience with the readers of «Prisoner» and talk about how I personally got rid of this terrible habit. When I repented and turned to the Lord, and accepted Jesus Christ into my heart, there were some big changes in me, and my outlook on the world changed. However smoking remained my main problem, which I could not get rid of in spite of my prayers to the Lord.

When I began to understand the Word of God, I knew that a Christian should not destroy his body, which is, as the Bible says, God's temple. I tried to quit many times, hoping my willpower would help, but unfortunately, my attempts to quit smoking failed every time. Being a sincere believer, I blamed myself for it, but somewhere on a subconscious level, I made room for this evil to remain, and even tried to justify it.

I thought that if God had not given me complete liberation from this habit now, it meant that the time had not come yet, and the Lord knows when to deliver me. That was my crazy excuse. In fact, in all my prayers asking the Lord to deliver me from this habit, I was not completely sincere in my desire to quit. Certainly, the Lord knew all this, and was therefore waiting for the moment when I finally realized and understood my sin, for which I had left room in my heart. And, thank God, that moment finally came.

One night I fell on my knees and with all my heart confessed to the Lord my weakness and inability to get rid of this sinful habit. My desire to quit smoking was so great that it left no place in my heart or soul or subconscious mind for this addiction. And the Lord immediately answered my prayer. The next morning I woke up as a completely different person, I felt free. I did not even remember that I had smoked the day before. The Lord did not just help me to stop smoking, but at the same time He delivered me from nicotine addiction.

Many years later, after I quit smoking, I often cite the example of my experience to those who are dependent on this poison. I can definitely tell you never to ask the Lord for help if your own desire to be freed from this does not overwhelm you. The Lord gives immediate relief from any addiction (completely removes any dependency) only if we ourselves want this to happen one hundred percent. Therefore I wish that everyone who has this problem today would forsake this evil, turning to the Lord for help with all their heart.

As the book of Wisdom says: «*Do not bring on your own death by sinful actions*» (Wisdom 1:12).

I. GORIK.



Does the Bible say anything about smoking? Someone will answer «yes», another will say «no», and someone will ask, «What kind of smoking are you talking about?» This is a very interesting question. Because in the Russian Synodal Version of the Bible the word «smoking» is really used. However, in what sense?

Consider two examples: «*Perfume and incense (smoking) bring joy to the heart*» (Proverbs 27:9 NIV) and «*Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense (smoking) every morning: when*

he dresses the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it» (Ex. 30:7).

At first glance it may appear that these verses are talking about amateur tobacco products which serve no purpose other than to inhale cigarette smoke. But the meaning of incense here is different. In these and many other verses of the Bible the word «smoking» refers to the burning of incense, a special composition, on coals, which burning gives off aromatic smoke. A detailed explanation of this incense is in Leviticus 16:12, 13: «*He (Aaron) is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the tablets*».

We find no verses in Scripture in which the word «smoking» would apply to people smoking tobacco. For this reason, weak Christians sometimes draw for themselves such a conclusion: «Well, if the Bible says nothing about tobacco use, then everyone can make their own choice: whoever wants to smoke, smokes, and whoever does not want to, well, no one forces them to smoke». Can we draw such a conclusion? If the Bible says nothing about tobacco, can Christians smoke it?

To answer these questions, think about this: Why did God give us His Word — the Bible? The Lord Himself gives us the answer: «*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me*» (Jn. 5:39). «*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*» (John 8:32). «*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*» (John 20:31). «*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*» (Acts 20:32). «*Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*» (James 1:21). «*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*» (Romans 1:16). «*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*» (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

So we see that the purpose of

the Bible is to reconcile man with God to save him and grant him eternal life. Obviously, God did not set a goal to reveal all the events of human history from the beginning to the end, or to describe all the phenomena of nature or all the flora and fauna of the planet or all the possible inventions of mankind and all the mysteries of the spiritual world. However, our infinitely wise God gave man the knowledge in His Word which is necessary to achieve righteousness and salvation of his soul.

And the Bible contains enough spiritual truths and principles to assess rightly any event in life, any action, thing, idea or motive, and learn whether they are pleasing to God. «*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of*

including money. And He wants us to be wise in how we use them. Smoking is an example of people wasting money for evil, while also hurting his body and soul. But in life there are many areas where you can use the money wisely: donations, helping needy brothers and sisters, caring for your family and neighbors, etc. Let us remember this principle: «*... For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more*» (Luke 12:48).

Fourth, using tobacco products is a bad influence on others. Jesus Christ says of His disciples: «*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men*» (Matt. 5:13). What good is a Christian who smokes if he

THE BIBLE ON SMOKING



the thoughts and intents of the heart» (Heb. 4:12). When we try to assess such activities as tobacco use, it must be admitted that, although Scripture does not say anything directly about this, there are many principles that allow us to draw the right conclusions. What are they?

First, what is already available on cigarette packs: the warning «Smoking Kills» speaks of the dangers of using their content. Part of the tobacco, nicotine, is a poison that destroys the cardiovascular system, lungs and other organs. The Apostle Paul writes about the body of a Christian: «*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*» (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). We were purchased by our Lord Jesus to glorify God by doing good deeds. If we destroy our bodies by smoking tobacco products, we cannot do good deeds for the glory of our Father in heaven, but rather «*the name of God is blasphemed because of you among the Gentiles, as it is written*» (Romans 2:24, Recovery Version).

Second, smoking leads to addiction, making a person a slave. Perhaps we've heard more than once from smokers who are unable for some time to satisfy their nicotine hunger that their ears are «rolled up». This expression reflects not only the strong desire to smoke, but also their dependence on tobacco and slavery: «*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey...*» (Rom. 6:16).

Third, every smoker violates the principle of God's faithful personal economics: «*Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful*» (1 Cor. 4:2, translation Cassian). To each of us the Lord has entrusted a different number of good things,

cannot, like salt, prevent the world from decay nor give it a good taste?

Fifth, every smoker is guilty of the sin of idolatry. Worshiping their god, nicotine, they give it their money, time and health. These will not inherit the kingdom of God: «*Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters... Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God*» (1 Cor. 6:9, 10).

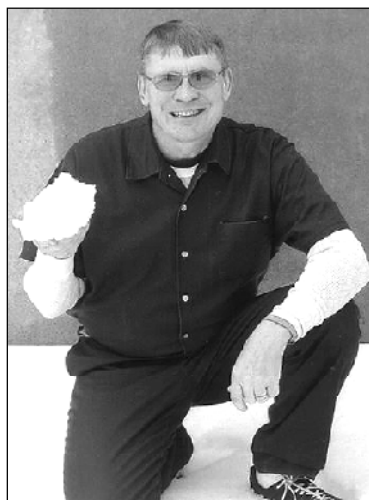
In conclusion, the Christian who smokes undoubtedly harms his soul, separating it from God. However, those engaged in the production and marketing of tobacco products bring no less evil on themselves by enticing and attracting others to these deadly products. «*But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!*» (Matthew 18:6, 7). Those who work in a tobacco factory, from the director to the ordinary worker on the shop floor where cigarettes are packaged, advertisers, store owners, and even grandmothers who sell on the street to earn extra money — all these people participate in the work of Satan to tempt and murder human souls. They will answer for this to God.

Brothers and sisters, let us strive for holiness without which no man shall see the Lord! And if the Bible does not say anything directly about cigarette smoking, let us remember the spiritual principles that prohibit the use of cigarettes by Christians. And may God forbid us from participating in the production or distribution of this evil. Who has an ear to hear, let him hear.

Sergey BOYKO.

Source: <http://www.kievchurch.org.ua/Library/ArticlesTruth/2004/366.aspx>





Kent Hovind in the snow, healthy and in good spirits (January 27)

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE WORLD FLOOD AND NOAH'S ARK

cubit (my height is 6'1" and I have a 21-inch cubit), the ark was large enough to hold all the required animals, people, and food with room to spare.

4. The length-to-width ratio of 6 to 1 is what shipbuilders today often use. This is the best ratio for stability in stormy weather.

5. The ark may have had a «moon-pool» in the center. The larger ships would have a hole in the center of the bottom of the boat with walls extending up into the ship. There are several reasons for this feature: a) It allowed water to go up into the hole as the ship crested waves. This would be needed to relieve strain on longer ships; b) The rising and falling water acted as a piston to pump fresh air in and out of the ship. This would prevent the buildup of dangerous gasses from all the animals on board; c) The hole was a great place to dump waste into the ocean without going outside.

6. The ark may have had large drogue (anchor) stones suspended over the sides to keep it more stable in rough weather. Many of these stones have been found in the region where the ark landed.

7. Noah lived for 950 years. Many Bible scholars believe the pre-Flood people were much larger than modern man. Skeletons over 11 feet tall have been found. If Noah were taller, his cubit (elbow to fingertip) would have been much larger also. This would make the ark larger by the same ratio.

8. God told Noah to bring two of each kind (seven of some), not

of each species or variety. Noah had only two of the dog kind, which would include the wolves, coyotes, foxes, mutts, etc. The «kind» grouping is probably closer to our modern family division in taxonomy, and would greatly reduce the number of animals on the ark. Animals have diversified into many varieties in the last 4,400 years since the Flood. This diversification is not anything similar to great claims that the evolutionists teach.

9. Noah did not have to get the animals. God brought them to him (*Genesis 6:20 «shall come to thee»*).

the Flood according to *Genesis 1:20-30* and *Genesis 9:3*.

13. The pre-Flood people were probably much smarter and more advanced than people today. The longer life spans, Adam's direct contact with God, and the fact that they could glean the wisdom of many generations that were still alive would greatly expand their knowledge base.

14. The Bible says that the highest mountains were covered by 15 cubits [20 feet] of water (*Genesis 7:20*). This is half the height of the ark. The ark was safe from scraping bottom at all times.

15. The large mountains, as we

17. Many claim to have seen the ark in recent times in the area in which the Bible says it landed. There are two primary schools of thought about the actual site of the ark. Much energy and time have been expended to prove both views. Some believe the ark is on Mt. Ararat, covered by snow (CBS showed a one-hour special in 1993 about this site). Others believe the ark is seventeen miles south of Mt. Ararat in a valley called «the valley of eight» (eight souls on the ark). The Bible says the ark landed in the «mountains» of Ararat, not necessarily on the mountain itself.

18. The continents were not separated until 100-300 years after the Flood (*Genesis 10:25*). The people and animals had time to migrate anywhere on earth by then.

19. The top 3,000 feet of Mt. Everest (26,000-29,000 feet) is made up of sedimentary rock packed with seashells and other ocean dwelling animals.

20. Sedimentary rock is found all over the world. Sedimentary rock is formed in water.

21. Petrified clams in the closed position (found all over the world) testify to their rapid burial while they were still alive, even on top of Mount Everest.

22. Bent rock layers, fossil graveyards, and polystrata fossils are best explained by a Flood.

23. People choose to not believe in the Flood because it speaks of the judgment of God on sin (*2 Peter 3:3-8*).

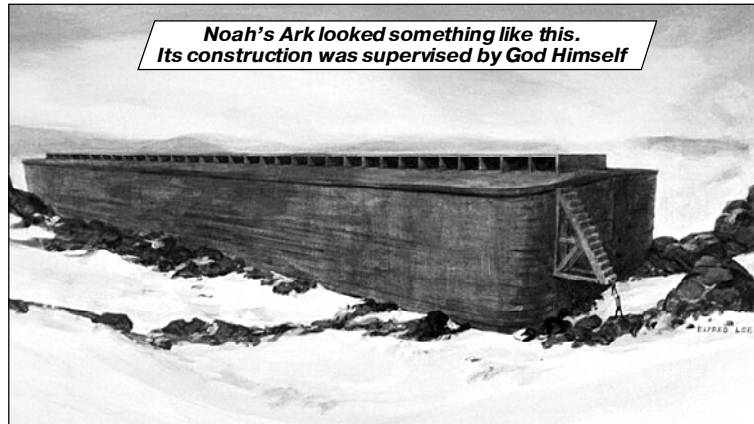
Kent HOVIND.

Second Peter 3:3-8 tells us that people who scoff at the Bible are «willingly ignorant» of the Creation and the Flood. In order to understand science and the Bible, we must not be ignorant of those two great events in Earth's history.

1. Over 500 Flood legends from all parts of the world have been found. Most have similarities to the *Genesis* account.

2. Noah's ark was built only to float, not to sail anywhere. Many ark scholars believe that the ark was a «barge» shape, not a pointed «boat» shape. This would greatly increase the cargo capacity. Scoffers have pointed out that the largest sailing ships were less than 300 feet because of the problem of twisting and flexing the boat. These ships had giant masts and sails to catch the wind. Noah's ark needed neither of those and therefore had far less tensional stress.

3. Even using the small 18-inch



Noah's Ark looked something like this. Its construction was supervised by God Himself

10. Only land-dwelling, air-breathing animals had to be included on the ark («in which is the breath of life», *Genesis 7:15,22*).

11. Many animals sleep, hibernate, or become very inactive during bad weather.

12. All animals (and people) were vegetarian before and during

have them today, did not exist until after the Flood when «**the mountains arose and the valleys sank down**» (*Psalms 104:5-9; Genesis 8:3-8*).

16. There is enough water in the oceans right now to cover the earth 8,000 feet deep if the surface of the earth were smooth.

The history of the world Flood is a totally unique chapter in the history of mankind. In physical terms, this is the worst punishment of mankind in all its history. And not only of mankind, but of all earthly nature. Let us consider whether this punishment has a special meaning corresponding to its power. It is clear that God punishes people for their sins, but what was the particular sin of mankind before the Flood? Scripture tells us what this sin was rather briefly. It quotes the Lord Himself: «**My Spirit will not always strive with man, because they are flesh, his days shall be an hundred and twenty years**» (*Genesis 6:3*).

What other sins did God condemn in the pre-Flood people? There is another brief statement: «**And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually**» (*Gen. 6:5*). The Lord uses almost the same words regarding the post-Flood people: «**the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth**» (*Gen. 8:21*). So, it turns out that evil human hearts are not repaired with the help of even the most severe punishment? Yes, exactly. All Christian faith stands on the fact that human improvement and the ability to inherit eternal happiness is given to us by Jesus Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of the human race.

Why was this punishment sent to mankind if it could not fix the person? Only to avenge the most inveterate sinners? But for this purpose there is the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (*Matthew 25:41*). Besides, how many innocent children had to die in the Flood waters, and why did wonderful, primitive nature have to share the plight of the wrong-doers? Let us seek the solution to this in God's words about the people who lived before the Flood and in this same wonderful, primitive nature. Paleontologists have discovered that the ancient world was really much richer than the contemporary world. Many species of plants and animals have become extinct since then because they could not adapt to the new conditions.

Creation scientists explain this fact as the result of a water-vapor shell above the atmosphere which created a greenhouse effect and significantly reduced the level of solar radiation. In this giant terrestrial greenhouse grew the most lush vegetation, giving food to a host of different animals.

WHY DID THE FLOOD OCCUR?

The near-complete absence of cosmic rays significantly increased the lifespan of every creature, including, of course, people. And we see that, indeed, the age of the people mentioned in the Bible prior to the Flood is eight or nine hundred years. It is this longevity and the associated absence of disease for a long time, apparently, that led people to lose all spiritual sensitivities and religious interest. This, however, does not mean that they all had forgotten God.

If we look at the genealogy of Adam's descendants (*Gen. 5*), we can be sure that Adam could his descendants to the seventh generation. This means that generations of ancestors who died in the Flood could personally see Adam. Those who saw Adam could not doubt that God exists, that paradise had existed, that there was a Fall, and that the world after the Fall is under God's curse. Those who saw Adam could well learn from him repentance. It is hard to believe that in three or four generations people could lose the knowledge of God.

But looking at people around us, it is easy to see that merely knowing about the existence of God, His commandments, and the punishment for disobedience, does not necessarily produce any practical effect. This lack of effect was greatly aided by longevity and a quiet life without particular challenges. This is actually what led to the fact that people became quite carnal before the Flood, and deprived of all spiritual abilities and desires.

They had enough knowledge and power, very likely, to possess unique occult powers — and used all their talents only to improve their life on earth. Probably these people quickly multiplied since their childbearing years corresponded to the overall life expectancy. If so, then the older generation, ready to enter a different world, was not populous. Death rarely caught the eye. People could imagine that death was a random phenomenon that in principle could be conquered by man's ability.

Man — to whom God speaks only a death sentence — was reduced to this: Flesh. Brutish and bestial existence! A two-legged animal, though possessing a powerful intellect. Giants of old, men of renown! (*Genesis 6:4*). But alas! how sad

their glory. What kind of prophet, what kind of teacher to send them, what kind of Messiah? Their souls are completely immune to any religious teachings, whether true or false. They have no spiritual questions, they have nothing more to learn. What remains to be done with them? Apparently, only what the Lord did in the year of the Flood.

But does the Flood bring destruction to people only? No, it changes the face of the earth itself and the conditions of life on it. Only after the Flood does the earth experience seasons, and develop regions with harsh climates. The primitive rich vegetation is not restored, and cosmic background radiation appears. The lifespan of Noah's descendants declines rapidly enough, so that Abraham dies at 175 years old, and his descendants — at an even younger age. Now death becomes a much more familiar, routine event. That's when religious questions begin to arise in people.

The piety of their forefather Noah cannot, of course, last for many generations. To produce a race of godless people, as we saw in the case of pre-Flood mankind, does not require much time. But this is not what happens now. We see that in the times of Abraham, this righteous man is not the only one who knows God. Of course, Abraham believes in Him more than other people do, and obeys Him completely, but other people around him (Lot, Hagar) are capable of doing many things out of a fear of God and from religious motives. Even the departure from the true worship of God does not lead now to complete godlessness, but to false religion.

For example, Laban, Jacob's father-in-law, is mentioned in connection with the worship of gods made with hands — idols. (*Gen. 31:19*). But from the knowledge of the One Invisible God to such primitive idolatry is a long journey. Logically, it should devolve through the worship of the elements — sun, fire, etc., as objects that, although physical, embody something more abstract than man-made images.

Now it is no longer possible to say that people, even apostates and sinners, are only Flesh. It is clear that religious life in the post-Flood humanity never died out,

although it could (and most often did) take perverted forms. Eventually idolatry became the chief sin of people for centuries, and was the source of all their other abominations. People after the flood have to think often about life and death, the afterlife, the reward for doing good and punishment for evil, righteousness and mercy. Religions appear, and religious disputes. This is only soil and a basis for prophetic preaching, for teaching the true worship of God, to prepare people for the Good News — the Gospel.

Only a few brave souls here and desperate dare publicly deny any deity, but these worship matter instead of God. These unhappy souls cannot make it through life without dealing with eternal questions — all too real will be that invisible but terrifying religious instructor — Death. This is the beneficial work produced in man and all nature by the Flood, that terrible punishment upon sinful mankind. God is merciful even in such a manifestation of His wrath. And if you think about it, you will not find any other way to turn a fleshly into a religious person. No wonder the righteous glorify God when they witness his terrible judgments.

It is time for us to think about our fate. Today, science has allowed to construct some idea of the true history of the earth, a history that is according to the Bible. And only now, thanks to our still superficial, but convincing, knowledge of the pre-Flood earth, does the deep and correct logic of Scripture become clear — the logic of Biblical history, which explains the spiritual causes of the Flood, and the appearance of idolatry only after the Flood.

For us here, too, there is an important lesson. It is precisely the terrible time we live in that allows us to imagine Man as Flesh. Everywhere in literature we find the evidence that wherever there are people, there is religion, be it true or false. But it is our contemporary world, often incorporating religious images and ideas into a world of entertainment and spiritual consumerism, which allows us to imagine our pre-Flood ancestor. From here it is not difficult to draw parallels to the historical destiny of mankind — both pre-Flood and contemporary.



Priest
Тимофей АЛФЕРОВ,
пос. Любытино,
Новгородская обл., Россия.

A CHILD'S CRY BEFORE DEATH

Listen! Listen! For I am doomed!!!
My soul has become weary
and cries out!
I have been condemned to death;
And my mother has signed the sentence!

She decided, for me, that I must
not live,
And tomorrow they shall kill
and cut me out!
They will not even bury me,
Just throw me in the trash
and forget me...

Why shred me? Why kill me?
In my mother's womb I cry out!
For God gives everyone the right
to live!
Oh, Mommy, don't kill me! I want
to live!

Ah, how I want to be born and live!
To see the sunlight and my own
dear mother.
How I dreamed of giving her flowers...
Oh, Mommy, you are making
a fatal mistake!

I am your child, after all, and I have
a living soul!
I want to look into your loving eyes,
To lie close to your breast,
dear Mommy,
And fall asleep with a smile
at your caress.

Mommy, I will tell you secretly,
That I am afraid to die, unborn...
Listen, my Angel is crying somewhere...
Why do you kill me, innocent as I am?

The birds shall fall silent,
their singing cease,
The flowers shall fade,
and the sun will not rise...
And your heart will weep every day,
But it will be too late,
the grief will not pass!

Listen, oh people, and do not be silent,
Stop my Mommy!
I want to live, I beg you, help me!
And tell my Mommy that I love her...

Sister TABITHA
California, USA.



Orphan children are left without parents, without affection and care, without supervision, or what is worse, in the custody of very evil people, who only think about themselves and their own gain. There are many true stories about orphans who have been beaten, starved, and so on. Here is one of them.

I. Childhood

This story is about a boy named Alex. When he was only one-month old, he was left by his mother in one of the hospitals in the city of Nikolaev. Such a strange and absurd action can probably be explained by the fact that the child had health problems: cerebral palsy. And that the mother



that many of his friends were adopted by American and German families, and those children moved to live with their new parents. It certainly saddened him that he could not find new parents. At that time, he was already 17 years old.

After a while, a few more complex surgeries were done which brought a noticeable improvement. The young people did not forget about him. They visited him in the hospital and supported him financially and spiritually. For him, it was the biggest support; he began to feel that he is not alone in this world.

Of course, he had to go through many difficult moments being in a boarding school. Classmates and even the principal of the school humiliated and beat him because he was not able to defend himself and was always behind in his studies. «Survival of the strongest» is the rule that must prevail within these walls where there is no place for compassion or love.

As I said before, God did not abandon him; we, who cared about his life, began to intercede for him. Educators and authorities were very surprised; some people thought that we

ABANDONED BY HIS MOTHER, BUT NOT BY GOD

led a chaotic life: alcohol, drugs, etc... You may ask where the father was. We only know that he died at age 32, probably from tuberculosis.

The boy was sent to an orphanage named «Little Baby». During the court trial the mother did not show up and was deprived of parental rights. Alex never saw his parents. His mother never visited him in the orphanage, and didn't want to. She probably decided to pretend he did not exist.



From that moment, Alex's difficult childhood began. The boy could not understand why he was left by the closest people in the world to him. The cerebral palsy did not give him a chance to develop normally; he could not move or speak. His childhood, like that of many other orphans, was very different from that of children who grew up in a family home, surrounded by care and warmth. For us, it was normal and completely natural to see our parents every day, to go to the sea in the summertime, to ask for new things and so on.

When I listened to his testimony, I could not hold back my tears. Even more frightening was to read his medical history starting from childhood. Each diagnosis was followed by another: severe complications, surgery, a concussion, disability, as well as many more words and diagnoses which I could not understand.

While still in the orphanage, he had already faced the cruelty and contempt of the educators, not to mention the fact that he was simply deprived of love and attention.

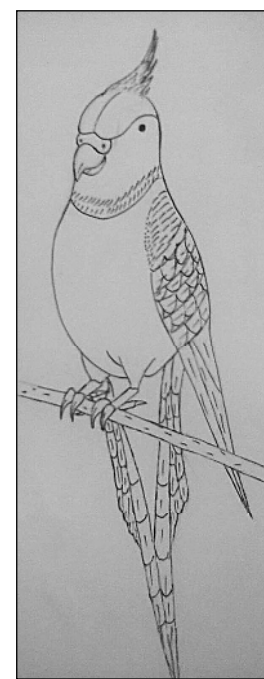
From the orphanage he moved to a boarding school, which became his home and school, and where Alex met other boys like him. Each had a different sad story and reasons why they were in such a place. Though struggling with a terrible diagnosis, Alex did not give up hope of improving his health. He received an opportunity to have a free surgery in the regional children's hospital of Nikolaev to straighten the lower portion of his legs. The days after surgery were hard and monotonous; after the first operation, he had to lie in a hospital bed for about 2 months. It seemed like all his life would be like this. He asked himself whether he would be able to play on a soccer team or have a family. Perhaps those were the most pressing questions he asked himself and God.

II. God's plan

One day God heard Alex's prayers. A group of young people from the local evangelical church began to visit the school where Alex studied. They played games with the orphans, showed videos, and had many interactions with them. The first encounter with Alex was very cold. He was reluctant to be touched; his eyes showed resentment and mistrust. After the third visit, Alex began to pay attention and participate in conversations and games; he opened up to us. We learned

had mercenary motives. Nevertheless, God gave us the strength and wisdom to solve many issues and situations that arose in Alex's life.

From his childhood, Alex showed a great interest in drawing and creativity. He liked to do things with his hands. He did a great job. I admire some of his drawings and crafts. His talents flourished, and what is most important, he began to feel less disabled. It was our small victory! My attention was once drawn to one of his drawings, which I remember to this day. It was of a hand — his hand — and it was continuously writing the word «Mom». It touched me very deeply because instead of this word, it might have been writing his own name or words that teens are interested in nowadays: «Adidas», «Reebok», and many other beautiful words. The person whom he had never seen, who threw him out of her life, still remained in his heart. He still hoped to meet her. He had not lost hope of finding his relatives and maybe even siblings.



III. The New Birth

I was able to take Alex to church; he himself wanted to go there. There he began to fellowship with the young people and even took an active part in their life. He made more new friends than he could ever have imagined. One spring day in 2013, Alex confessed his sins. It was his choice and sincere repentance. The Lord came into his life.

As I said above, I don't expect that my work will change people's attitude to the issue of orphans in our country, but I hope and I will work hard to ensure that more smiles will appear on the faces of orphan strangers, who are our children. I would like to hear joyous laughter from our orphans in this city, in this country, in this world. I wish that at least one more child would find his family; a family of which he would become a part, not a stranger.

And if through our activities in Ukraine and abroad, at least one child will cease to be an orphan and become part of a family — it will mean that we have not believed and worked in vain!

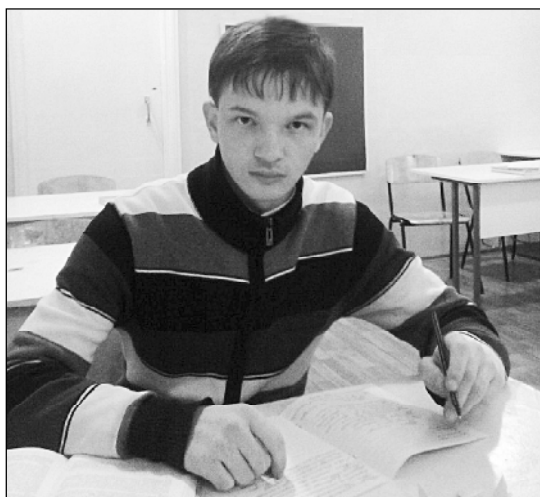
(In photos: Sasha and his works).

Contacts with Sasha:

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CHRISTIAN NEWS

51% of Israelis Want to Emigrate from Israel

A survey conducted by the Sociological Institute «Dialogue» (led by Professor Camille Fuchs) for ITV Channel 10 showed that 51% of Israelis thought about the possibility of leaving their country. 38% said they did not think about it, and 11% said they would be happy to leave, but they do not

have such an opportunity.

The website jewish.ru says almost exactly half (49%) of respondents said that today their departure from Israel seems to be more justified than in the past. 34% do not feel any difference in this regard.

45% of parents surveyed said they would support their children if they expressed a desire to leave Israel. 22% said they would oppose the idea, and exactly a third of respondents (33%) said they would allow their children to make their own decision.

So many (a lot, if not too many) Jews want to leave Israel. The question is where are they going to go? The answers showed that the most attractive countries are the U.S. or Canada (56%), Western Europe, especially, Germany (18%), Australia and New Zealand (14%). Only 6% of respondents would like to return to their country of origin.

Information Agency
CNL-NEWS.

Source:
«Peace to You!»



PHOTO EXCURSION To Norway's Halden Prison



Aerial view

Norway's Halden Prison is located near Oslo, and is considered the most humane prison in the world. The prison was opened in 2010 and houses 252 inmates. The bright and airy cells are each equipped with a private bathroom and flat screen TV.



Two prisoners in the prison

The prison offers comfortable conditions for exercise, hobbies and personal education. Halden Prison was built on the principle of a village.



A place where inmates can meet with family members

Each cell has a private bathroom and flat screen TV. Halden Prison is considered the most comfortable and humane European prison.



Gym in the prison

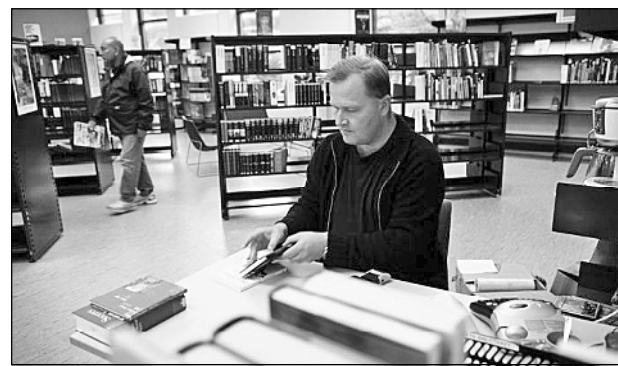
Prisoners are given plenty of opportunities for sports. For example, there is a climbing wall and a basketball court, as well as a fitness room and a soccer field.



Music Studio

The prison offers music lessons. Also, the prison has a recording studio.

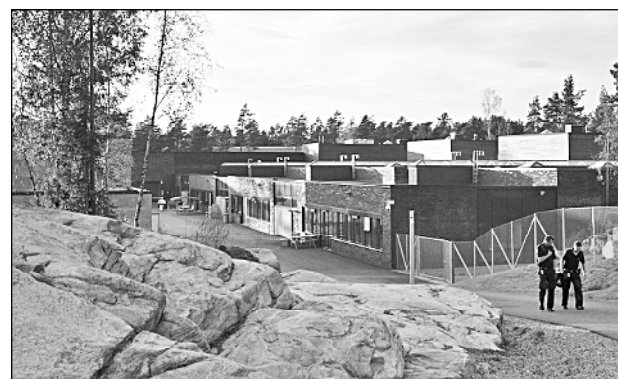
Library and media-library. Here prisoners can get an education or improve their skills.



Prison library and education center

This Norwegian prison cost 160 million euros to construct. Certainly, the prison has been criticized — Halden prisoners enjoy better conditions than many elderly persons in nursing homes.

However, the Norwegian Ministry of Justice takes the position that the punishment of prisoners is the deprivation of their liberty, not a reduction in their quality of life. The maximum prison sentence in Norway is 21 years.



Cost of construction — 160 million euros

Source: <http://daypic.ru/about-all/157466#more-157466>

World's Most Humane Five-Star Prison

For many people, the answer to this question is obvious: «He died for my sins». Yes, this is the correct answer, but these words often sound like a memorized phrase whose real meaning is unknown to many. This raises questions like: «What is the connection between death and sin? Why is death the only way to freedom from sin?» Ignorance of why Jesus Christ died leads to a lack of trust in God's forgiveness and a careless response to Christ. To realize the importance and value of the death of the Son of God for us, we should know:

WHAT IS SIN?

Sin is resistance to God's will, or omission in its performance. *1 John 3:4* «**Sin is lawlessness**». Lawlessness is a violation of established boundaries. A sufficient understanding of these boundaries is written on the conscience of every man. The fullness of this knowledge is contained in the Bible. In knowing these boundaries and violating them, a person commits sin.

James 4:17 «**Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin**». Often people try to be cautious. In trying not to do any wrong to others, he does not do any good, either. This situation is also called sin.

CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

The physical world in which we live operates according to certain laws. For example, the rotation of the earth, the ratio of oxygen and nitrogen in the air, gravity, etc. All existing laws were not created by humans. People only learn to recognize them and use them. No matter what, we cannot annul or change these laws because they were established by a perfect God. Parallel to the physical world, there exists a spiritual world that is just as real and which also contains laws created by God. For example, «*Whoever a man sows, that shall he also reap; do not judge, lest ye be judged; dust you are and to dust you shall return*», etc. Regarding sin, there exist these laws:

1. «**The wages of sin is death**» (*Romans 6:23*). The working of this law can be seen in the example of Adam and Eve. They were warned that they must not eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was the only prohibition made by God for humans. The law then proclaims, «*in the day that you eat from it you will surely die*». Once Adam and Eve transgressed the boundaries of obedience, the law began to act. They were separated

from the presence of God — this is the essence of death and it led to the physical death of people. An illustration of this law can be seen in the following example. In North America, in the state of Kentucky, deep under the ground there is a huge cave, and in it lies a lake. In the lake are fish, and on the banks of it live ducks that make their nests and hatch eggs. For their sustenance they have everything: air, water, food. There is no light in the cave and it is always dark. As a result of the constant darkness, all living creatures in this cave have no organs of vision. In the place where there should be eyes, there are faint traces of eyeballs. This is a clear proof of the immutable law of life: if the living entity does not use his bodily or spiritual ability, they gradually degenerate. «*The wages of sin is death!*»

2. Another spiritual law proclaims: «**Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin**» (*John 8:34*). The working of this law can be illustrated by the following example: A TV program about the dangers of smoking described the fate of a certain smoker. Because of his addiction, he lost an arm. After the arm was amputated, the first thing he asked for, while still in the intensive care unit, was a cigarette. Despite the pleas of the doctors, he still continued to smoke. After some time, his second arm had to be amputated and again his first

request was for a cigarette. Later his leg was amputated, and still his first demand was «Give me a cigarette». Finally, even after he lost his other leg, the first desire of the man, whom the doctors called «Stump», was «Give me a cigarette».

Everyone knows that drunkards and drug addicts are not born, they become such. Once a person commits a sin, he starts to lose power over his will. His willpower is

overcome by sin. This bondage can express itself not only in glaring sins, but in such less obvious sins as foul language, anger, lying, etc.

Thus sin brings with itself first, wages, and second, bondage. But who is a sinner? The answer to this question according to *Romans 3:23* is «everyone». There are no exceptions for anyone. Therefore, all people deserve the wages of sin, and are to various degrees slaves of sin.

WHAT DID CHRIST DO FOR US?

If a bird flies in through a window, it will try to get back out to freedom by flitting from corner to corner. We can direct it where to fly, but if we do not speak the bird's language, the bird will not understand us. Jesus, being God, came to earth in the form of human flesh and spoke to us in a language that is understandable to us. He came to tell us the way of escape and the steps to take. He came into the world full of compassion for humanity, which is in such a spiritual catastrophic condition. However, it is worth noting that even Jesus, the Son of God, cannot change the established law of life. He came «*not to destroy, but to fulfill the law*».

Romans 3:24 describes what He has done for the justification of the man:

1. «**Being justified freely**». The Apostle Paul says that through the

death of Christ we are justified. Justification is a legal term. If you were to be released from liability for the offense by a court, it would mean that you are justified. Imagine two close friends who go to school together. One of them became a judge, while the other a criminal. At one point the offender was brought before a judge. He was convicted of the offense which he committed. The judge, who recognized his childhood friend,

was unsure what to do. Representing the law, he had no right to release the perpetrator. On the other hand, he did not want to punish this man, because he was dear to him. In order for justice to be done, he announced that he would fine the offender. Then he descended from his judgment seat and paid the full amount of the fine for him.

This case serves as an illustration of what God has done for us. In His justice He is obligated to condemn us, because we are guilty. But then, according to His love, He comes to earth in the image of His Son Jesus Christ and is punished for us. Thus, He judges (because he does not allow sin to go unpunished), but He also justifies, because He Himself paid the «fine» in the person of His Son. This allows us to be free. Jesus Christ willfully went where human sin reigns and took upon Himself the punishment for our sin. He is not only our Judge, but also our Savior. Here we should note the following: Christ does not eliminate the physical consequences of a sinful life. A person who is intoxicated and loses his arm because of this, is armless for life. A person can receive full justification from God, he can become a blessed instrument in the hands of the Lord, but he can never become what he once had the potential to become. We have to

hold ourselves accountable for our actions and meditate deeply on this fact in order to stop the process of spiritual decay as soon as possible.

2. «**Atonement**». Debt is not only a modern problem, it was also a problem in the ancient world. If someone had serious debts, he was forced to be sold into slavery to pay for them. So it was with us in the spiritual world. But the Lord paid the price of redemption through His death on the cross (*Mark 10:45*). In *John 19:30*, Jesus said these last words: «*It is finished*». In that time, these words were used as a seal on agreements and meant that everything was paid. Through the sacrifice and blood of Jesus, we are delivered from the power of sin. This is true freedom. Jesus said, «*If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*».

This does not mean that we will never again sin, but that the power of sin over us is destroyed. Redemption also has this additional important consideration, that there are sins from whose power even the blood of Christ cannot free us. These are sins we do not want to part with. The Blood of Christ frees us from sin that we want to part with. To be completely free from sin, it must be treated by two sides: by the person committing it, and by the Son of Man, who never knew sin. The first must uproot the sin from his life, using all his will. The second washes away the guilt of sin by His blood and deprives its of its power.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can emphasize that freedom from the power and consequences of sin is possible only through Christ, and only so far as the door of our hearts are opened to Him. Sometimes we do not fully open our soul to the Lord, but partially. It is what most people do. But partially opening our hearts means partially accepting life in our heart, meanwhile allowing the seeds of death to remain within us.

Source: http://www.cxbe.by/obrazovanie/nachalnyj_kurs/2_zachem_umer_jesus_hristos/

«Then the angel said to her, «Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest» (Luke 1:30-32).

MOTHER

Oftentimes I think about how great God is to arrange that every living creature, before he or she is born, should be formed in the womb of his or her mother. The Bible says: «**For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb... My frame was not hidden from You, when I was being made in secret**» (Psalm 139:13, 15).

Obviously, everyone knows this, and there is no other way for people to come into the Earth. Even God Himself chose the holy virgin Mary to bring forth Jesus Christ. Jesus was born as everyone else was, through the suffering of His mother. Unfortunately, after sin entered the world, the Bible says a uniform sorrow was established for all women in coming generations: «**Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow you shall bring forth children**» (Genesis 3:16).

However, despite this warning, a woman's nature does not stop her from delivering children. Moreover, while carrying a baby in her womb, she grows very close to the baby. As soon as she delivers the baby through suffering, she forgets about the pain. It is said in the Bible: «**A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world**» (John 16:31).

The Bible says that the woman does not remember the pain because of the joy «**that a man is born into the world**». But how long does she feel this joy? Here only conscience can answer for each of us. It is very sad that most children bring more and more sorrow for their mothers as they grow. Why is it that growing children cause so much pain for the most loved person, pain that cannot even

be compared with the sorrow that each mother experiences when giving birth? It is very hard to explain, but mothers are suffering mostly because of their great love. It happens that when we grow up, we do not give attention to and care for our mothers.

We become very greedy with kind and tender words that our mothers need. We are very busy and we do not have opportunities to spend more time with our mothers. And at the moment of sorrow when our mothers are passing away, we suddenly regret that we have not cared enough about them. We want to go back and say good words to them, we want to hug them and kiss them, but it is too late, and we feel pain and emptiness.

We are late and have not loved strongly enough the person who gave us life. The most painful situation is when we realize that we ourselves are guilty of losing the opportunity to say good-bye to our mothers and send them on their last journey. I have been in this situation and have experienced these feelings; that is why I would like to wish for everybody not to forget their mothers. God prepared for each of us a mother's womb, so we could be delivered into the world and do good works. «**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them**» (Ephesians 2:10).

There is no more bitter thing in the world than the situation where people make their mother's life shorter, the life of the person who is truly trustworthy and has given life to them. Let every reader of «Prisoner» look back today and find an opportunity to say good words to his or her mother, the words that she needs. Let it never happen that your conscience judges you because of your lack of love for that most precious person — your mother.

What shall I do now
When I know that you are not here, mother?
How can I live without you,
My only trustful friend?
Without your words:
Without your «kiss», «love», and «miss you...»
Without the dream that when I come back
I will hug you with my strong arms.
I cannot cry anymore,
I can only howl in pain because of the loss.
You are my blood and my body,
And I was born into this world by you.
You are my part,
And I am sick without you...
My God! Tell me
Why is my mother not here?
Kneeling down
I have been crying for several days.
Everything is grey for me now,
I do not want to eat nor to drink...
What is it so? Why?
Why has death taken my mother?
I did not even have a chance
To say good-bye to her...
Mother!.. Mom!.. Mommy!..
I am so sorry, if you hear me.
I have not been a good son,
But I have an open and friendly soul.
I did love and do love and will love you with all my heart.
While I am alive you will live in my heart with me.

I. GORIK.



WITH THANKS TO ALL MOTHERS

Mother, Merry Christmas! I am currently on the road of life, in Russia. Oh, it is very beautiful over here! I am writing you a letter, and I do really hope that you receive my letters. I happened to celebrate this Christmas here in Russia. I want to say that through all that one can see Christ, His Beauty and (most important!) His love.

This old lady believes deeply in Jesus Christ. It has been 23 years already that she has been celebra-

ting Christmas and waiting for a miracle — to see her son return from prison. Oftentimes I celebrate Christmas helping these faithful, dear and wonderful mothers to stock wood for a long winter. The prayers of a mother are especially warm and faithful. However, very often, these mothers are alone with a broken heart because of sorrow and illnesses. This lady has been celebrating Christmas for 23 years and keeps coming

out on the road with faith and hope to meet her only son who she loves so much. My Lord, please help her to have this meeting! Please support this lady in her prayers. She is a great example for me. And give me strength, Oh my Lord, to chop wood for her and carry it out of the snow to her house. Let her not, Oh Lord, freeze to death while waiting for her son!

From Russia. Vladimir MUSIENKO, Israel.



Dedicated to a friend and a sister in Jesus Christ,
Elena KRAVETS.

CALLED TO BE A MOTHER

The old two-story building was located outside of the city, right by the forest. The house with cracked roof and mossy walls looked like a building which barely survived a bombing. The backyard was empty. At first glance, one could think that nobody lived here. Only a long rope strung between a post and dilapidated barn, with worn-out clothes hanging on it, gave any indication that the building was inhabited.

It might not have been so scary to look at the house if one had not known that it was the place where the local government had decided to put children with disabilities. The children were diagnosed with mental and physical disabilities. This place was rarely visited. A grassy and dirty road bore witness that guests were infrequent.

It was a hot day in July. A woman who was not very noticeable among other people arrived to the last metro station. There was only one thing that made her different from others: she was holding two huge, heavy bags. She put the bags on the sidewalk and took a deep breath.

— Ugh, what a day it is! Oh Lord, it is very hot, — she said very quietly. She bowed down and lifted the bags. She started walking down the street to the bus station.

The bus stopped very far from the city and elite rich houses.

One could see the forest not very far away and the dirty road. It was the same road Elena had been walking on a month ago with great feelings of bitterness and sorrow in her heart. She had been returning from the Children's Home. Today she was going back to the home with bags of candies for the children. Also, she was planning to take one child home. She wanted to adopt the child and she had spent the last month filling out all the required papers. She saw the boy clearly in her mind. He was little and very thin, and he was looking at her from his corner.

When Elena had learned that the child had been abandoned in the hospital and later directed to this house because of his skin color, she lost her peace and sleep.

— Oh my God! — she cried in her prayers. — Who are they? Human beings? Maybe not? How dared they deal in such a way with the child just because of his skin color? Oh my Lord, I saw his eyes — he was looking at me...

Elena prayed to the Lord for help multiple times. Now she was in a hurry to get to this house and take the child that she was to adopt. Sometimes she would stop to take a rest and a deep breath.

— Oh Lord, please help me so that the child would recognize me, — the woman kept saying in her heart.

This child would be the fifth out of her seven children that she adopted. She had two daughters from her marriage. It is possible that the great Creator has given her a wonderful gift of motherhood, mercy and sympathy. Elena grew up in a very good family, and she would always see love, faith and goodness. She had thought that the world was very good and everybody loved each other. The love of her parents was a fairytale for Elena. Despite the fact that her mother was paralyzed when Elena turned one and her father was disabled, the harmony of love and respect would always reign in their family.

Since her parents were sick, Elena was educated by her grandmother. Her mother died when Elena was twelve. Elena lived with her grandparents and her sick father. There was a beautiful, well-maintained garden near their house. Even today, Elena still remembers how her grandmother

put fruits and vegetables in bags while telling her:

— Our faith is dead without good works. Let's hurry 3 children are waiting for us...

And they would lift the heavy bags and go to the Children's Home which was by their house. They visited this place on a regular basis.

CALLED TO BE A MOTHER

Elena got married at the age of 18. She was accepted into an institute of higher learning and finished it successfully. After the institute she worked as a teacher. She always dreamed that her husband would be just like her father: kind, smart, humorous, and loving. But it turned out to be just the opposite. Despite the fact they were raising two charming daughters, her husband absolutely wasn't interested in family matters. As time passed, he started drinking more frequently. Then he started cheating and would not appear at home for days. The young woman was 26 years old when she was left alone with the two children. In one year her father, her grandmother, and her grandfather died. Shame before her two little daughters and constant indignity from her drunk husband made Elena separate from her husband and devote her life to her children.

The Mighty Creator was already working in her heart and soul. He directed her footsteps to misfortunate, abandoned children. The woman had to work really hard to provide for her little daughters. Nevertheless, as time passed, her visits to the Children's Home became more and more frequent; she was always welcome there, many of the children knew her from their infancy.

During one of the visits Elena noticed a little baby boy, whom she heard was born to a prostitute, who left him in the birthing clinic.

The child was very weak and sick. Nannies didn't even want to take and hold the baby because his body was all covered in wounds and abscesses.

— Oh, my righteous God! — Elena said in her heart when she looked at the baby boy. How can one, without pity, watch this poor tot?

It took her a whole month to prepare the documents for adoption. At home she already prepared everything: a baby bath, poultices, necessary shots, massage equipment, and many other things to ensure baby's improvement in health. Elena's friends and acquaintances didn't understand her — why would she need all of this, all the more so that the boy was Chinese or Japanese (nobody knew)? But Elena only smiled and said in her heart:

— This little boy is like my own and his skin color and the shape of his eyes don't matter to me.

After some time Elena adopted a girl. During one of her regular visits to the Children's Home, one girl caught her attention. She was only four months old. The girl was so skinny that her fingers were like thin threads. Workers informed Elena that the girl was handicapped; she did not



Elena and the younger children on New Year's Eve, 2004

respond to light or sound, and her legs did not move at all.

Regardless, crying out to Lord for help, Elena started visiting the girl every day. In a week she started noticing that the girl saw her clearly and recognized her. In a month, when the baby girl was five months old, Elena took her home. And again: baby bath, shots, massages, diet for prematurely born children. The girl at five months weighed only a little more than four kilograms.

Elena was warned by the hospital staff that the child was sick and would not walk. But this frightening reasoning could not stop the woman. She was fighting with all her energy for the girl's health and life. Her belief and trust in the Lord were so strong that when the girl celebrated her first year, she weighed twelve kilograms and, after she turned five, she became a student of the first grade.

It's simply incredible! Where does this woman get so much love, patience, and faith? Indeed, every time she lifted up and set on their feet children who were already pronounced hopeless by local healthcare workers. Every time, when Elena arrived to different orphanages, she knew for sure — she was chosen by God to be a mother.

And now, only a couple more footsteps to that same Children's Home. Elena lowered her bags once more and looked up to the sky. Her eyes reflected the mysterious sapphire color of a clear, blue sky.

When she opened the door to one of the children's rooms, several children looked up with complete apathy. Some of the children sat on the floor and disinterestedly played with an old plush toy. Some of the children sat on the beds, some simply walked around the room from

one corner to another. Two yellow light bulbs, hanging right by the ceiling from a short cable, dimly illuminated the room.

Elena glanced quickly around the room and then gazed at the nanny.

— Where is he?! — She asked perplexedly.

— Let me go! Let go! — She heard a clear childish voice, as if it was answering her question.

From the far corner, pushing away the children, a little boy was persistently working his way to the door. It was him. Elena recognized her boy right away.

— Mom came for me! — The boy almost screamed affirmatively.

He ran over to Elena and grabbed her with his dark, thin arms. Elena took the boy in her arms and hugged him firmly. Both of them started crying. Mother and son were sincerely happy.

I. GORIK.

«I'M LOOKING FOR MY MOM»

Greetings, dear brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ! I wish you peace, welfare, strong health and long life! When I read your newspaper «Prisoner», I was pleasantly surprised to learn the stories of my brothers and sisters who dedicated their lives to our Lord Jesus Christ! I am happy that the newspaper «Prisoner» came to our prison. I am thankful to Lord that I have an opportunity to greet you all!

I want to thank the editor of this newspaper, Igor Gorik, and all who work to publish and distribute this newspaper. Thank you very much for your aid and sincerity. It is heart-warming to know that somebody still needs you, prays for you, worries about you and lends a helping hand in such a harsh time. I thank God for you, that you encourage many, give much needed advice, grant your love and your concern. I bow to you deeply for everything that you do for us.

I want to relate my testimony on how I found redemption in the prison. My name is Yuriy. I am 33 years old. I am serving my eighth sentence in these «grassy places» for theft. My way of life was built on thievery, including hatred and physical violence toward Christians. I was full of rage, my heart was hollow. Within one and a half years after I got caught the eighth time, my life changed drastically.

Once, a man came up to me in our prison and started telling me about the Lord. Brother Anatoly invited me to a church. For a long time I couldn't decide, and I was ashamed of what others might think of me. But soon I made my decision and went to church. During the service I



saw their sincerity and love towards each other; it soon filled my heart as well. Thank God, I repented.

Dear editorial staff of «Prisoner». Knowing that your newspaper is distributed in many countries, I want to ask you to find my mother, who used to live in Chernovtsy.

When I was one month old, and my sister was only a year old, our mother left us in the orphanage and left for Russia. I don't know anything else about her. I want to address her through your newspaper. Maybe the Lord will send this newspaper to her or, maybe, somebody can inform her that her son is seeking her. Her maiden name is Zhitar Natalia Ivanovna, but in my birth certificate she is documented as Frensel-Fesenko Natalia Ivanovna.

Dear mother! I am writing these words

hoping that someday you will read them. I am 33 years old now. I will tell you truthfully, life was hard, but I don't blame you for anything. There was probably a reason why you left us.

Mother, I am dreaming of one thing only and praying to our Lord Jesus Christ for this — to meet you while my heart is still beating. I want to talk to you, hug you, and kiss you and your hands. I want to thank you that you gave birth to us. I am very thankful, for if there had been no hardships and no adversities, then I would not have come to know God's grace and love. It is truly endless.

I was dying from loneliness, realizing that nobody needs me. I became a cruel human being. Since my childhood I have been stealing, and the prison's ward became my house. But once, during yet another moment of despair, when I got sick and tired of everything and I didn't want to live anymore, the Savior, Jesus Christ, came to my heart through my brother. I cried like a child. He gave me His Hand, drew me out of filth and granted me peace, hope, faith and love. I am happy that I have a Father, Who, despite my being hardened in sin, forgave me, called me His son, and granted me a new life. I am very thankful to the Lord for everything!

Mama, I had many needs, but the Lord and His family always help me. I am sending you my photo, so you can see me. I am asking you one thing: please, don't be silent, respond, come to me and hug your son! I love you and don't harbor anger.

With love to you, mama.

Your son

Юрий ФРЕНЗЕЛЬ-ФЕСЕНКО,
РВК-78, отр. 10, бр. 23,
с. Райковцы,
Хмельницькая обл.,
Україна, 31356.



A MOTHER'S PRAYER

I ask You, Lord, give the person who is reading these words whatever he asks You! Give it to him in full measure, in a way that only You can! Let him be happy during all of his days. Grant him strong health and love of his neighbors, understanding and sympathy. Make his soul always to shine only with love to everything. Protect him from evil words, from offenses and jealousy, from wars and death, from physical and spiritual pain, and if all this is inevitable, don't leave him, but give him consolation. Rescue everyone who is dear to him in this world. If it is too late for that, don't deprive him of his memories. I don't know whether the one reading this prayer believes in You, but even if he does not, please help him! Let him feel that he is not alone, that he is needed and loved. My gracious and kind Lord! Fulfill my wish! Fulfill it thus, that before I close my eyes forever, I may say, «Thank You, Lord! You heard me...»

ANONYMOUS.

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

«GOD! I WANT TO LIVE!»

Peace to you, dear friends! I am very glad to share with you this testimony to God's glory. My name is Gennadiy, I am 39. My parents were educated specialists who went to gold mines in the North with me and my older brother. We left our house in Nikolayev. However, even though our family was financially stable, we did not have the most important thing — we did not have God. In a very short period, I lost my brother and my parents.

Jesus Christ entered my heart as my Savior in 2008, when I was 34. Before that, I was perishing in the swamp of sin and lawlessness. The most terrible thing was that this life path was my choice. I became an orphan very early, and I had to face the fact that I had to survive alone in the world. I was 12 at that time. After I lost my family, having been a spoiled child, I turned into a real predator within a very short period of time. My heart grew hard because of loneliness, and all good things that my parents taught me faded away and were replaced with the animal survival instinct. My pure childlike feelings of love and respect suddenly turned into hatred and cruelty to all people. Now I realize that God protected me no matter how I behaved and He helped me to return from the North back to my home city of Nikolayev, almost 7,000 kilometers away.

At a certain period of my life I succumbed to the seduction of the devil and got caught in his nets. And as I grew up, I became entangled in the nets even more. But I do not want to share the details of my lifestyle. I will only say that I am thankful to God because it is all in the past now. I am very thankful to God for His immeasurable mercy to me,

Nevertheless, thank you, God, I made a decision to visit the rehabilitation center and this visit was the beginning of my new life. I decided to visit it out of curiosity, but God started working His wonderful works in my heart. I am very thankful to God for the brothers and ministers of the center. When I came there, they accepted me with great love despite the fact that I drank and kept trying to argue for my points of view. When they started sharing with me about God's glory, I suddenly became of a clear mind. They were telling me about God and I could notice that they were full of unusual happiness. And a question would arise in my heart: «God, you have changed these people; why can't You help me?»

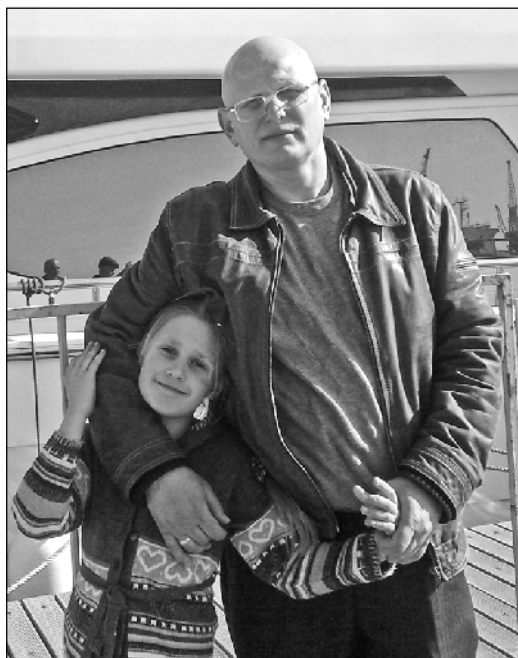
And the Lord answered me and fulfilled my heart with His Holy Spirit. In my heart I repented before Him with tears of contrition. After a few weeks, I was baptized with the Holy Spirit. A miracle has happened: before my repentance, I was not able to communicate with people normally (I only knew the vocabulary of prisoners); but after my repentance, I started writing poems and songs that I read in church now. My songs are performed by my wife, who is gifted with melodies from God, even though she never studied music before. Overall, God's miracles have happened in my life many times since I repented. I think God's miracles happen in every person's life as soon as he or she entrusts his or her life to Christ.

I would like to add a few more details. In 2009, I had the very last stage of AIDS and I was taken to the AIDS center to die. But the great and almighty Lord granted me healing and a wife. In 2011, our son David was born and he was a healthy baby despite the fact that my wife had had multiple surgeries and was told she could not have children.

The new life of my wife, Alena, is another testimony to God's glory. The Lord wonderfully freed her from 15 years of drug captivity. She died three times and was raised back to life during her surgery. Three times her heart stopped working when doctors were trying to help her after she had been cruelly hit. She lost half of her blood, and there was no donor blood for her at that moment. God would make her heart beat again even when she was covered with a blanket and pronounced dead. Alena repented when she returned to consciousness. Despite the fact that she lost her spleen and her internal organs were deformed, she gave birth to a healthy baby. Our son's birth is a great testimony to our God's glory. I have many stories to tell about miracles in our life, but the most important miracle is that the Lord gave us, sinful and unworthy people, the gift of eternal life through His Son Jesus Christ. I am very thankful to God that He gives us strength and health to serve Him today.

Nowadays my wife and I go to prison and visit reservations for prisoners in our county and preach about God's glory to the people who are perishing in sins as much as we had in the past. Also I am thankful to God that I do not feel fatherless with Him anymore. I have a huge Christian family and I love it a lot. May God bless us and enable us to be faithful to Him at all times! Halleluiah!

Gennadiy GOLOTA,
Nikolayev, Ukraine.



«I HAVE BECOME A NEW MAN!»

«Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit» (Ezek. 18: 31).

I was born in the city Nikolayev, in a blessed family. My parents tried to give me all the best. When I was a child, I never lacked food, clothes and a warm, clean bed. We would go to Crimea, the Baltic States and the Carpathians.

However, there was a period in my life when I lost interest in everything and was attracted by the street. I was in 5th grade when I lost any interest in school and did not want to do my assignments and what was required by my teachers. Very soon, I started stealing stuff from school lockers and taking money from classmates. I got very attracted to other people's money. I forced my classmates to steal money from their parents and deliver the money to me. As a result, my name was put on record with the police.

My parents tried to change me. They punished me, and my father would even beat me with a belt. Of course, I did not like it and I was longing for personal autonomy and independence. I became a great problem for my school and my parents very soon. I was greatly attracted to people like me. My friends were usually teenagers who were little older than I. When I ran away from my house, I would encourage someone else to do the same, and we would live in basements and attics. By this time, I was smoking marijuana on regular basis. We would visit farms and factories in our county and bring bags of marijuana. As soon as we got back to our basement, we would smoke until we got happy. When it was already night, we would get out from our dwelling and rob people, small stores and restaurants.

When I was 15, I tried a very hard drug intravenously for the first time. I still remember this day. I had never thought that little amount of opium could put my life upside down! For the next 19 years, I was interested in two things only: money and drugs. In a year, I was isolated from people for 5 years as a robber. I began experiencing serious inconveniences in my life: cold, hunger, physical problems. I do not want to disclose all the details, but I would like to say that being in prison was a very hard experience for me.

I was prosecuted four times for breaking the law, and every single time as soon as I was returned to freedom, I would use drugs. I could not imagine a different life; I could not clear my mind. I was getting a feeling of worthlessness, and I tried to suppress it with another dose of drugs. Drugs were very expensive, and I had to think about where to get money. Of course, I used unjust ways. I realized that these ways would lead to prison; that was why I was in constant fear about my future.

In the times of «perestroika» (mid — 1980s), many evangelists visited prisons. They told about Jesus Christ, who was very difficult for me to understand, but who was crucified for our sins. I felt very sorry for

those strange people. I thought, how could a normal person refuse all happiness of this world and sanctify his or her life to somebody or other?

I could not imagine how I would work at a factory for a monthly salary. I used to spend two average salaries for drugs and clubs in one day. How possible was it for me to be clear minded and live a healthy lifestyle? I could not accept it. I viewed Christians as psychologically abnormal people. However, despite all that, God continued loving me and protecting me. I could have died many times because my body could not survive through multiple overdoses without God's help.

It became incredibly hard to live for me in this world. I became a great problem for my relatives, for people around me and even for myself. I tried to change my life many times, but I was not successful. When I was put in prison the last time, I did not have any hopes

for returning back to freedom. The court recognized me as a special recidivist.

Since I turned 18, I had been sick with tuberculosis. I did not get any treatment for years. A prison doctor explained me that I did not have much time left to live on the Earth. I had a double-sided decay of my lungs (last-stage tuberculosis) and problems with my liver and kidneys. I killed my body with drugs and the prison lifestyle. But I did not want to die. I began listening to a Christian prisoner. He said that there is Someone Who could help me. Also my mother and wife had become Christians. They visited me with my little daughter and told me about Jesus Christ.

I learned that Christians in the local Evangelical church (on Kober street) had been praying for me and helping my wife and the child. A question arose in my head: why is that so? They do not know me at all, but they help me anyway? I understood that they were honest people. I had never seen such people in my life, and I wanted to meet them. The Lord began working in my heart.

I noticed that I was getting well. However, you can imagine what treatment is offered in prisons! But the church prayed for me, and God healed me very soon, freed me from drug abuse and began changing my mind. I became a new man in Jesus Christ when I accepted Him as my own Savior! I cannot give any ransom for myself, but when I appeared before God's throne with all my sins, asking for help with promises to serve Him, He accepted me as His own son. This is the perfect love of God. He hates sin, but He loves sinners and gives them a chance to repent. Do not lose the opportunity, reconcile with God! Learn to live with His standards which He has stated. Then you will feel unusual happiness and fullness of life.

When people experience hard life situations today, they are looking for a solution everywhere, but cannot find one... They spend a lot of money in order to get rid of bad habits, but are unsuccessful. Drug dealership and crime rates are increasing with great speed. Government spends a lot of money on solving these problems, but the number of problems does not decrease. Jesus Christ is the only One Who can solve all these problems for free! All you need to do is to go to Him and ask Him for help. The Lord will give you strength and hardness to change your lifestyle.

Since I repented before God, I have felt great and enjoyed my life. I have become a new man and I am very thankful to God Who entered into my life. After I met Him, I turned around 180 degrees and started walking into a different direction. I cannot imagine my life without God now!

Sergey VINNIK,
Nikolayev, Ukraine.



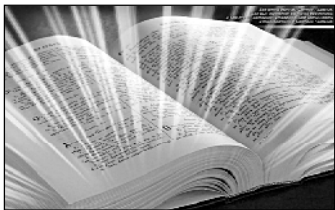
because God protected and saved me from hell, for I was perishing in sins and lawlessness and almost dying. It is not too hard to guess that my lifestyle led me first to the prison for teenagers and then to multiple sentences in adult prisons.

Because I lived such a lifestyle, I lost the house that was left as an inheritance from my parents. The very last point was that I was diagnosed with HIV. All these were the consequences of my sinful life. And I realized that I did not have any purpose in my life now. At this moment, I did not have family, children, friends and I thought that I would never have any of them. I was only 30 years old, but I made a decision to stay in prison for the rest of my life. However, if I got out of prison, I decided to make sure to be sentenced again.

It was so until I came out of prison one day. Since I did not have a place to live, I was given a referral letter and direction to the shelter for homeless. But I did not live there very long. I committed a crime and was sought by the police. I am thankful to God for the director of the shelter. She told me that the police were searching for me and she gave me a card of a rehabilitation center. She said: «Take it, Gennadiy, let God help you!» On the card, there was the address of the rehabilitation center near the church «Bethany». I put the card in my pocket, but I never thought about God and this rehab center.

Pastor's Word

SPIRITUAL CONTEMPLATION



Drawing Igor OSOKIN

Christians often don't value or understand the importance and usefulness of spiritual contemplation. We often consider contemplation a waste of time. Although spiritual contemplations do not bring us money, however they do contribute to the formation of the inner spiritual person who lives forever. No wonder God's Word says: **«For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace»** (Rom 8:6). **«But he who puts in the seed of the Spirit will of the seed get the reward of eternal life»** (Gal. 6:7, 8).

At first glance, we may question, what kind of good thoughts can a person have? Especially if we take into account how greatly distorted human thoughts are and how much they differ from God's thoughts. It is written: **«My thoughts — not your thoughts, neither are your ways — My ways, says the Lord»** (Isaiah 55:8).

Yes, that is true. The Apostle Paul himself said that we only know in part (1 Cor. 13:9, NIV). **«We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete»** (1 Cor. 13:9, MSG). But the portion that we do know is very important. This portion was assigned to us by God for our spiritual formation. This portion is enough for us if we are able to

make good use of it.

In order to fully digest God's word, one's mind has to be involved. Meditating on spiritual truths is essential for spiritual growth. The thought process helps you use what you heard in practical life, transforming your mind in accordance with what you hear. **«For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it»** (Heb 4:2). **«But he that received seed into the good ground is he that hears the word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty»** (Matt 13:23).

Phil. 4:8 *For the rest, my brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honorable, whatever things are upright, whatever things are holy, whatever things are beautiful, whatever things are of value, if there is any virtue and if there is any praise, give thought to these things.*

Pr. 2:1-5 *My son, if you will take my words to your heart, storing up my laws in your mind; So that your ear gives attention to wisdom... Then the fear of the Lord will be clear to you.*

Ps. 1:2, 3 *But whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and whose*

mind is on his law day and night. He will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which gives its fruit at the right time, whose leaves will ever be green; and he will do well in all his undertakings.

Joshua 1:8 *Let this book of the law be ever on your lips and in your thoughts day and night, so that you may keep with care everything in it; then a blessing will be on all your way, and you will do well.*

Christians need to meditate and contemplate things, so as to not repeat the same mistakes, but instead, to make the right conclusions to continue on the path of preparation for eternity.

Our spirit recognizes spiritual truths through faith, but meditation using our commonplace mind is necessary in order to find practical applications for these truths in our everyday life. Lack of contemplation leads to the loss of God's revelations.

The process of spiritual growth occurs mainly from meditating on God's word, contemplating what He is teaching us, and reflecting and learning from our mistakes in order to change and grow from them. Meditation is an important part of a Christian's life. God wants us to keep changing and become more like Him, and if we never take time to reflect, we cannot grow.

Alexander BORISENKO.



The New Testament is filled with scriptures about God's Love. The Gospel of John, says **«In the beginning was the Word...»** Many are surprised by the words from the Sermon on the Mount: **«But I tell you: Love your**

that's how I felt. My car had been broken into, and my backpack with my money, glasses, and camera had been stolen.

Emptiness filled my heart. Oh, how did this happen? What do I do now? I quickly wrote an ad in hopes of

prison, two «Prisoner» newspapers (in one, my letter and two poems were published) that are dear to me. I read them, but not completely. A new notebook was also there which had a few poems I wrote.

In general, everything was

praise you! Thank you for humbling my spirit and teaching me how to love. I forgive my abusers, thieves who have stolen my belongings and money. Forgiving them as you have forgave me. Bless them and reveal Yourself to them. Let

letters and the newspaper and the other things, they will learn about God and that they robbed a believer, and that is a blow to the world of Satan, cracks in his society. Every word of God, every preaching of the gospel, forms a crack in the

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES...

enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you» (Matt. 5:44). When asking who is my neighbor, they also ask, who are my enemies?

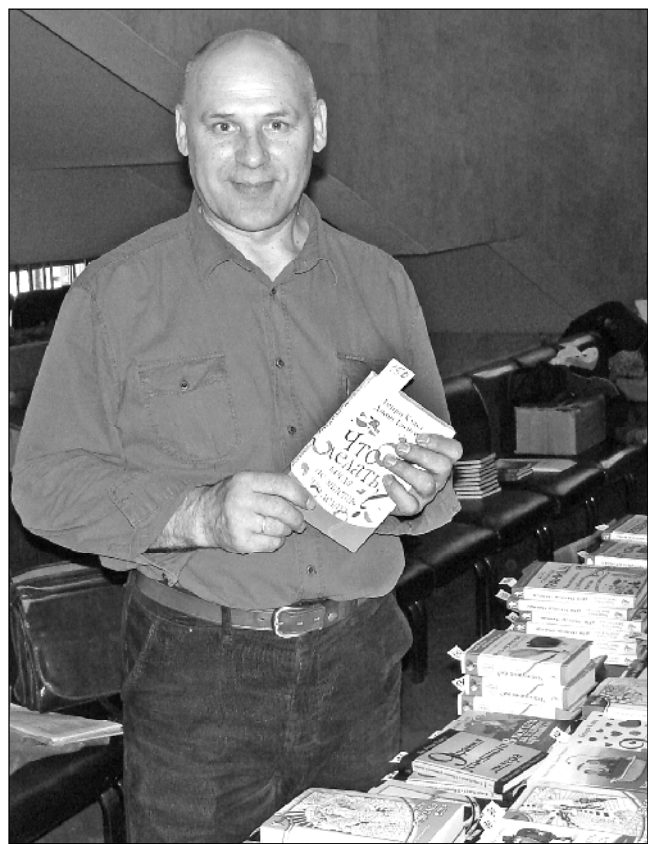
When talking to brothers and sisters of the church, I often ask them if they love their enemies. The response I usually get is: «I don't have any». «Well... they must be somewhere...», «I don't know...», etc. Oh, do you really not have any?!

I will prove to you that you have them. Then I ask the following question: tell me which one of you had the following stolen: a purse, mobile phone, bag, briefcase, car radio, or perhaps had your apartment or cottage robbed? As it turns out mostly everyone had a similar incident. Hitting the nail on the head I ask: Did one of your good friends, acquaintances or friends do this to you?

No, your enemies, opponents, and those who do not like you, those who sin and commit theft did this to you. Do you have love towards them after what they have done to you? In fact, it is very difficult to love your enemies. It's easier said than done.

I'll try to tell you about what happened with me earlier this year.

As of January 5th, it has been 21 years since I turned to Christ. What a great joy it was! I attended a service early that day, but at the end of the day I felt bitterness. Devastated and furious. Yes,



having my things returned. I traveled to the courts with the hope that maybe somewhere my backpack would be lying around. I went to the police asking to see any video cameras. I found no hope in looking.

Earlier I said, Love your enemies. Here I am, letting bitterness and hatred into my heart. Do I have love towards them? And this is not a theory but a personal experience, especially when it involves you personally.

Bad, of course, because the money was gone, as well as a camera, a letter from

terribly bad, even the world had become too small and narrow. I called my pastor and told him about my situation. All he said to me was «You must pray, brother». When morning came around, I calmed down little bit. I opened the Bible and read the 1st letter of John. Who can rob me of eternal life? No one! The fact that these things are gone in comparison with eternity is nothing. I began to pray for my enemies, those who robbed me and those who I do not know.

Lord, I thank you and

your will be done in all of this! Amen.

You will not believe this, but my heart felt much lighter and at peace. Because my God is always with me, and He first loved me when He died on the cross.

I began to list off all the positive things that I can take from this situation.

— God allowed this to happen, so I would «wake up» and learn to be on guard spiritually.

— God, through such situations says: be very cautious, remember that internal peace is far more important.

— The thieves received money and a camera, and their life became a little better at least for the time being, but I won't lose eternal life through this.

— They learned my address and name from the envelope and learned that I correspond with inmates. They learned about the newspaper «Prisoner», and if they read it, they found my poetry and my printed letter. Thus, even passively, they could hear about God and the Gospel.

— They got three Christian cups that involuntarily will remind them of God.

— There was a Christian magazine, another reminder of the Good News.

— Note pad with my poems, which is proof that there are people who praise God.

— My new good glasses were there — maybe one of them needs them?

— Albeit tacitly, through

kingdom of Satan, splits it, destroys it.

My lesson may be simple, but I think it is instructive. The world of Satan is real; he's around, reach out and you're already in it. So let's not be careless and inattentive, but let us be armed with God and resist our enemy.

God says to love your enemies! And this is the practice, the harsh reality that is life in action, when we begin to forgive our enemies and pray for them. In such a way we step not over ourselves, but step on the devil, not letting him breathe.

In conclusion: God bless my enemies. Maybe one of them will repent and become a Christian, pointing the others on the way to God. Here is the moment of truth for us, for the LORD lives, and He is always with us.

Oleg GRABOVIY
prison minister
Zhukovskiy, Russia.

P.S. *And I want to convey greetings and best wishes to all the brothers with whom I correspond as a prison minister. I wish you spiritual strength and spiritual victories for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as firmness in faith, hope and love! Thank you for your letters. I do not get tired of answering them; I just do not have time, but each of them makes me happy. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And while you're in bondage, God is always with you, because for him there are no barriers.*

CHRISTIAN NEWS

Argentinian homeless man receives 200-euro check from Pope

An Argentinian homeless man from Marghera told his story to volunteers from the parish and wrote to the Pope, a fellow countryman, «partly in Italian and a partly in Spanish» about the difficulties Argentinian homeless people face in Italy. A few days later he received from the hands of the parish priest a check for 200 euros, officially issued by the papal distributor of alms.

According to Gazzettino, Don Nandini Kapovilla, head of the parish, had to wait until an official ceremony joined the man to the parish before asking the parishioner to come to the altar and receive the check.



Together with another fifty homeless persons, the Argentinian comes every Sunday to the parish to eat.

Two weeks ago, a similar check for the same amount was given to an elderly resident of Marghera. She wrote to Pope Francis about the theft of her wallet with 54 euros, while she was riding on the bus to the hospital where her husband lay.

News Agency
CNL-NEWS
from materials at
Katolik.ru

Review of 2013 for «Hope of Freedom» Mission

One of the goals of Hope of Freedom is to provide inmates with spiritual food that will help their rebirth and spiritual growth.

In 2013, about \$6800 was spent on Russian-English Bibles, Russian-language Christian literature, and to support the printing costs of «Prisoner». Besides this, friends of the ministry donated Russian-language Christian magazines, newspapers, and books which we also sent to prisons.

Besides regular visits to prisons by some of the ministry members, seven one-time group services to prisons were organized with the participation of youth from many different churches in the area. Group services take advance planning, including various forms and personal information submitted to the chaplain at least a month in advance. After a background check, permission for clearance is granted.

Before leading group services in a prison, all participating volunteers meet up a few times to prepare songs and decide on the program, and also decide on a day of fasting and prayer for God's blessing at the service. Volunteers also request prayer support from their churches.

In prisons, our services are led mostly in English, with the exception of a few songs. When we have any volunteers who do not know English well enough to preach, we have them preach in Russian and interpret for them into English. During these services we typically sing a few songs with the inmates, have a few Bible messages, testimonies, and poems and at least two prayers.

So many blessings have been experienced in these group visits, both by volunteers and inmates! Many letters of gratitude are received after these visits, with requests to come again. One inmate in Stafford Creek Correctional Center said after such a service: **«We have many Christian programs at our prison, but this is the first time I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit at a service»**. Praise the Lord, our efforts are not in vain and our prayers have not been unanswered! One of our volunteers said, after such a group service in prison, «After the blessing experienced during our visit to prison, our church service in my own church seemed quite «dry» to me».

Below is a quick summary of the group services from this past year.



Stafford Creek Correctional Facility, February 17th, 2013

Fourteen volunteers went (members of five different churches) and about 30 inmates showed up to the service, about 6 of them Russian-speakers. The service was very blessed. We felt the presence of the Holy Spirit at the service and were surprised at how many inmates were willing to kneel with us in prayer. It's typical for Slavic people to kneel during prayer but not very common for Americans to do so. The service was two hours long with preaching, testimonies, singing, and prayers.



Echo Glen Children's Center in North Bend/Snoqualmie on Sunday, March 17th 2013

About 60 children showed up for the hour-long service beginning at 3:30pm. To the surprise of the administration, the children listened very attentively and seemed to enjoy the service. They were very thankful for the visit. At this time, there were no Russian-speakers at this facility. This facility is a 50-minute drive from Seattle.



On Saturday, March 30th, the evening before Easter Sunday, 15 volunteers led a service at Larch Correctional Center, located in a forest about a 45-minute drive away from Battleground. The prison was built in this location so that inmates could fight forest fires in the area.

This was an unforgettable evening service (6:30–8:30 pm)! About 50 inmates showed up for this Easter service, and many were very touched by the service. This was certainly a sacrifice for many of us who got home at 3am or so and still had to go to our own Easter sunrise services just a few hours after. How wonderful it is that we can sacrifice something in His name!



August 17th we once again visited Larch Corrections Center, this time with youth from a different local church from Battleground. Once again, God's presence and blessing was markedly felt at this service. 40 inmates showed up, and this time there was one Russian-speaking inmate. Chaplain Cardin suggested that we start a program there, comprised of volunteers who would be able to lead services there on a regular basis. Alex Litvinov and Dimitry Kutsar from this visit agreed to head up a team and have since begun ministry there.



September 21st we visited Mission Creek Correctional Center for Women for the first time. We really felt the presence of the Holy Spirit at this service. It was visible how every song, testimony, and Bible message touched the hearts of the incarcerated women. The volunteers also later told of God's leading and blessing in everything they said and sang at the service. Six women came forward to rededicate their lives to Christ. A few more women requested prayer after the service as well. Within the next week, the prison ministry received five letters from the prison giving positive feedback and requesting more services. The chaplain enjoyed the service herself and invited us to come back in the spring of the following year.



November 23rd we visited Olympic Correctional Center, which is a 4-hour drive from Seattle. 15 volunteers came, more than half of whom were older people. The service was held 6-8pm in the chapel. Although there were no Russian-speaking inmates present at the service, much of the testimonies and messages were in Russian (with interpretation into English) because many participants could not speak English very fluently.

One volunteer shared about how she got saved, another spoke about a miraculous healing in her life. Someone else spoke about the power of praising the Lord in all life circumstances. That was our theme verse that night **«...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus» (1 Thess. 5:18)**.

After the service, inmates came up to us to thank us for coming. The chaplain said she really enjoyed the service and hoped we can come again. All in all, it was a blessed service. As usual, we had prayed and fasted for God's blessing and He answered our prayers.



On December 14th, we once again visited Stafford Creek Correctional Center. This facility is a little over 2 hours away from Seattle. About 45 inmates attended the service with about 10 of these being Slavic. It's unanticipated to have fellowship with people who seem to know God no less than you, but for some reason ended up behind bars. God once again blessed our preaching, prayer, songs and testimonies.



According to prison training and ethics, we do not ask how or why one was incarcerated. But in their letters to us, inmates often say «God stopped me», «God sent me here for my salvation», «Only in prison have I really gotten to know God for real» and many other similar phrases. We do not even try to judge whether these sayings fit into Biblical theology, but in practical life have noticed that for the most part, incarceration has served as salvation and a blessing to those who respond to these circumstances with the right attitude.



My name is Aleksey, I was born in Arkhangelsk, Russia. I was brought up in a good family where there were no quarrels or alcohol. During my childhood I was engaged in sports, interested in technology, and learned to play guitar.

During my school years I learned well, played in a school band and in a school theatre. I performed for the honor of my school in different sports competitions. I graduated with a Physical Mathematical bias and a third category chief diploma.

After finishing school I entered the Navy and



Photo: Rehabilitation Center Good Samaritan Aleksey with a guitar

AT THE BORDER OF LIFE AND DEATH

graduated. Simultaneously, I was studying at the Admiral Makarov Sailor's Academy, from which I didn't graduate.

On my last course of Sailor's Academy I began using opium. At that time I was nineteen years old. From then on my life began to change. By the time I was twenty-three I was heavily addicted to heroin, and had a large list of complaint records with the police.

I was convicted three times for home burglary, and once for drug possession. In 2001 I was sentenced to four years and six months. After being released I continued using drugs. The next three years (up to 2012) I was using Morphine (nicknamed Crocodile).

By this time I was diagnosed with many diseases. One of them was, Thrombosis of the lower limbs. I was to have my leg amputated, but God miraculously saved me from this disaster.

This did not stop me from using drugs, and as a result I was diagnosed with Necrosis of both sides of the upper jaw. I had a surgery done, but I still continued using Morphine.

On the verge of life and death a thought was spinning through my head: when will this senseless life, full of pain and disappointment, that I myself created, end.

Miraculously I remembered a friend, who went to a rehabilitation center and returned well in a week. Even in this short period of time, she received medical help in a hospital in Saint Petersburg.

I found the phone number of the coordinator

in Arkhangelsk, who sent me to a rehabilitation center called Good Samaritan in Priozersk.

There I read and studied God's Word, and soon after that I repented. The first thing I felt was the peace that the Lord gave me, the freedom from drugs, and the desire to live. The Lord provided me treatment in one of the best clinics in Saint Petersburg.

I completed the program, but in my heart I understood that these eight months were just the beginning of my walk with the Lord.

I stayed to help others who were like I once was. I pray for my service, and I want to make a covenant with God.

God's word says, «...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house» (Acts 16:31).



The Lord softened my mother's heart, which had been hardened towards me. She attends a church in Arkhangelsk.

I am awaiting a plastic surgery. One of the best surgeons will be performing the surgery.

Praise the Lord for this new life which He gave to me through His mercy.

Aleksey GIRIN.
Russia.

CHRISTIAN NEWS

American Christian Woman Surprises Pickpocket

In a grocery store in Oklahoma, a man took the wallet out of a woman's purse. The woman was a Christian. Her actions stunned the thief. She not only did not call the police, she paid for the man's purchases.

Jessica Eaves is a ministry leader in the First Christian Church in Guthrie, working with non-believers. One day at the grocery store, she suddenly discovered the loss of her wallet. She remembered, however, that there was a man behind her — and, of course, it was he who pulled the wallet from her purse.

But instead of immediately calling the police, Jessica did a courageous thing: she found him — he was still in the store and was going to pay for his purchases with her money. As she was coming toward him, she remembered the biblical instructions about how to deal with such cases.

«When I came up to him, carefully maneuvering between shopping carts, the words of the Gospel of Luke suddenly came to my mind, that if someone slaps you on one cheek, you should turn to him the other, and if someone wants to take away your coat, give him your shirt also», Jessica said in an interview with local television

station KWTV. «So I thought, «Well, I'll be good».

«I told him, «I know that you have something of mine. I'll give you a choice: either you immediately give me my wallet, or I will call the police. If you give me my wallet, I'll pay for you».



The stranger was confused for a moment, but then he handed her a wallet. «He looked at me for a few seconds with wide eyes. Then he reached into the pocket of his sweatshirt and pulled out my wallet».

After receiving her wallet, she went to the counter and paid for the man's groceries: milk, bread, cooked sausage, soup, crackers and cheese, to a total of \$27. Seeing this, the man was moved to tears. He could not control his emotions.

«The last thing he said to me», said Jessica, «was, «I'm so ashamed... I have children and I am out of money. Forgive me».

The story didn't end here. There are a few other striking details. Jessica claims that she never takes cash, but for some reason she took some that day. And she took exactly the amount to pay for the hapless thief's groceries.

«When I went to the checkout, it turned out that he had groceries for the amount of a little more than \$27. I had \$28 in my wallet», Jessica told Christian Post. «I realized at that moment that it was not I who helped the poor guy, but it was Christ who paid for it».

Jessica also said that she had no reason to tell about this incident to everyone. But when she put this story on Facebook, more and more people saw it. While some reacted negatively to the fact that she, as a college student and mother of four children, has not informed the police about the theft, Jessica is convinced that she did the right thing and encourages others to follow her example. She also expressed the hope that the man had a good lesson and would stop stealing.

«Even if we don't have a lot of money, we should always be ready to help to those in need. There are always those who are poorer than us», said Jessica Eaves in conclusion.

Information Agency
CNL-NEWS.

Source: Voice of Truth.

Number of Monks Declining Sharply Worldwide

Every year more than 3,000 monks leave Catholic monasteries, reported KAR Agency, citing the Vatican publication, L'Osservatore Romano.

«The crisis of monasticism» is especially common in young adults, which the Vatican sees as an «alarming» fact. One of the main reasons for the abandonment of monasticism in 2008-2012 is reportedly «alienation from public life».

In recent years, the number of nuns has declined drama-



tically. While in 2001, there were 792,100 nuns, in 2011, the number was only 713,000.

CNL-NEWS

Source: Sedmitsa.ru

Prayer Initiative Hopes to Spark Revival

The National Prayer Center has announced an initiative to pray for candidates running for Congress and state legislatures (USA). Representatives of the Center are also going to conduct prayer meetings with those who already hold these positions, reports invictory.com, a Christian mega-portal.

The initiative is called the Josiah Project.

«Josiah tore down the idols and brought God back into the nation or brought the nation to God. He was probably the most devout king of all the kings, including David», DeLay added. «So that's why we named it the Josiah Project. In the presence of where our nation is today», said Tom DeLay in an interview with TheBlaze. DeLay is the former Republican majority leader in the U.S. House of Representatives.

According to DeLay, they will pray for all elected groups.

«The Constitution is based upon a higher authority. This government cannot exist in the future if we give that up and put man as the higher authority», DeLay said. «We need that higher authority and the truth that comes from that higher authority in order for us to survive. Otherwise we'll find ourselves where we are where man gets to define what truth is and everything crumbles».

The National Prayer Center is located near Capitol Hill.

Reference: Charisma News.

We are seeking fellowship by mail Christians

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ATTENTION!

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

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

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



Hope of Freedom

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

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Dasha: (206) 604-4594, dasha1@uw.edu

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

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

Christian News

Restoration of Hearts Mission holds evangelistic campaign in Cuba

Restoration of Hearts Mission, led by evangelist **Victor Koroteyev**, held an evangelistic campaign in Cuba. Cuba continues to be a country with limited religious freedom. It is almost impossible to get buildings for church services and officially have a church.

But, nevertheless, the churches grow and multiply. The program of Restoration of Hearts Mission included evangelistic meetings, seminars for pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and Sunday school teachers. Each service was filled with great divine presence. The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. The Cuban Christian Union «Bethel» was very well prepared for this evangelistic campaign.

More than 150 new Christians who repented there joined one of the main churches of the union.

At every service people experienced divine healing power. People who wished to testify about the healing, could not stop. Jesus healed someone from cancer, others were healed from several diseases at the same time, someone had a tumor that disappeared. One woman, an atheist, came to the service with a huge pain in the stomach. She did not believe in the existence of God, but the good Lord touched her with his power, fully healed and saved her.

More than 350 people attended the various seminars held by Paul Golosinsky, Victor Koroteyev, Irina Fisher and Alex Petrov. The mission staff, Lydia Omelchenko and Michael Fisher, helped more than 80 widows by buying for them soap, beans, toothbrushes and toothpaste, washing powder, salt, oil, etc. The average wage in Cuba is \$30 – \$40 a month, and many products can only be purchased with coupons and in limited quantities.

Despite the economic challenges, Cuba is turning to God.

Information Agency, CNL-NEWS
Press-center of Restoration of Hearts Mission.



Dear readers of «Prisoner»!

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

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

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

PRISONER

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