

HAPPY NEW YEAR AND MERRY CHRISTMAS!



PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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

(John 8:32)

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Dear readers of «Prisoner»!

On behalf of all our editorial staff, I wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I wish you all health, a peaceful sky over your head and peace in your hearts, success in achieving your goals and, of course, faith, hope and God's never-ending love! May the new year bring to you the desired changes and may the bright day of Christmas once again remind you that the One who has become the Savior and Intercessor for all of humanity has come to the world. It was through the birth of Jesus Christ that God showed us His infinite love. As said, **«for God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life»** (John 3:16).

house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way».

From this short story about the birth of Jesus Christ, we learn that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that the prophets spoke about His birth several centuries before His birth on earth. God reveals to us through this narrative that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. Unfortunately, nobody still knows the exact date of birth of our Lord and Savior, so traditionally Christmas is celebrated on December 25 and January 7 (Slavic countries) in different styles.

Christmas Holiday

Christmas is not just a date on the calendar; it is a great, holy day when God presented the Savior to the world. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we gain hope of eternal life. For each of us, beyond the earthly threshold of being, the doors to the mysterious, immense universe open. Today, we can't even imagine what awaits us in eternity, since when we live on earth, not everything is revealed to us. The Bible speaks of this, **«The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law»** (Deut. 29:29).

What do we know about the birth of Jesus Christ? Perhaps, only what the Bible tells us. *The Book of Matthew* (1:18—2:12) says this:

«Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away, privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, «Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us».

Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, «Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him».

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently, what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the

However, this is not so important. What is important is the fact of His conception by the Holy Spirit and His real incarnation. After all, it was through the nativity of Jesus Christ that God showed us His love and gave us a real chance to become children of the Kingdom of God. If God had not send His Son into the world, there would be no saving sacrifice for sin.

Has anyone ever thought about how great God's love is for people?! When I think about the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, at the same time I am in awe,



and I admire, and I am horrified by the mere thought: «Would I have been able to sacrifice my child in order to give a chance for salvation to all of humanity? And not just to sacrifice your child for sin, but to deliberately give him to a martyr's death». When you start thinking about it, not only do goosebumps run all over your body, but also your heart begins to feel weak and pain stricken.

God did just that for the sake of each of us; He did it in human flesh, experiencing all the suffering and pain that

man can experience. Are we worthy of such a great price that was paid for us?!

A sinless Man came into the world, who, while still young, was endowed with God's wisdom, and brought love for all people. He grew up among ordinary people and initially knew that at the time set by God the Father, He would become a sin offering for the salvation of all mankind. To live and know that one day you will be forced to endure the martyr's death for the sins of other people, being yourself sinless, is something beyond our human understanding.

I would very much like every person to have an epiphany on the day of Christmas and appreciate how dear we are to God. After all, it was for each of us that God sent His only begotten Son into the world. Christmas is not a goose baked with apples, and not a drink-filled table. On this day, God gave the whole world through the virgin Mary a sin offering. As the Scripture says, **«For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him»** (2 Cor. 5:21).

Dear readers of the newspaper «Prisoner», with your help may this year many people come with repentance to God and realize the full depth of God's love for us, sinful people. May the day of bright Christmas always remind us of holiness and innocence, and let the very earthly life of Jesus Christ become an example for us all to follow. Let's learn to love each other the way God loves us. For nothing is worthier and higher than love. The Lord once said: **«A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another»** (John 13:34).

Today, many have the opportunity to be born with Jesus Christ anew — to be born in a new life for love and kindness. It is not for nothing that it is said: **«For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them»** (Eph. 2:10).

I. GORIK.

CHRISTIAN NEWS

CareOptions makes senior care accessible to families

Adventist Community Services (ACS) has released an online wellness hub to help bridge the long-distance gap between family caregivers and their parents and grandparents. Offering «The Right Care Resources, Right When You Need Them», CareOptions gives caretakers tools for prevention, early detection, and care planning that address aging-related health issues before they become unmanageable.

CareOptions is a free resource provided by the Family Healthcare Advisory Program of ACS in the North American Division.

Wynelle Stevens, assistant director of ACS and coordinator of ACS' Older Adult Ministries, emphasized the need to focus on older adults. Stevens said, «While the CareOptions resources are important to the entire family, regardless of age, we believe it is critically important to raise awareness among families to care for their own parents».

Stevens continued, «A study from the Administration on Aging found that, «Of those caring for someone 65-years or older, the average age of the caregiver is 63-years and 33 percent of them are in fair or poor health». That is a very troubling statistic. 1 Timothy tells us to care for our parents and grandparents as a way to repay them and because it is pleasing to God. It is an important part of our mission».

The app-based, aggregate platform allows users to access assessment tools, cost-of-care calculators, evaluation criteria for hospitals, homecare and nursing homes, the ability to create advance directives, evaluate medication compatibility, and more.

Membership for CareOptions is free. When signing up, enter «WWW011» to receive a permanent passcode. You can also visit the ACS website, or watch a short introductory video to learn more.

<http://www.communityservices.org/careoptions>

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son... (John 3:16).

We are so used to our Christmas traditions that for us this holiday has to include all of them. When Christmas arrives we have certain rituals that routinely take place. However, when one does something too often, there is always the danger of doing it superficially and not being aware of the full depth of what is happening. The celebration of Christmas is no exception.

Whether we like it or not, but when we tear off the next sheet on the calendar, we have to admit that time has again come out of the battle as the winner. Throughout the year, we tried to win an unequal fight with time, making every effort to take control of it, but now we must

of our Savior, one suddenly realized that Emmanuel was born for them as well. He knocks on the doors of our hearts. Of course, one cannot but remember the solemn divine services in churches where singing, scripture, sermons and greetings created a special atmosphere and it was so easy to imagine how it would be in heaven when all the children of God glorify God, where there are no divisions among people. Christmas is very dear to all those who love and honor God.

Don't lose sight of what's important

There is another side to this holiday, in which, unfortunately, there is no depth and mea-

the wise men from the East came to worship to Christ and why God sent His Son into this world.

We also live in the midst of this world, in which God is not He Who came to us from heaven, but the human selfish «me», with its insatiable desires and whims. How important it is for us, Christians living in the twenty-first century, to clearly define our attitude during this time, the birth of Jesus Christ.

It is known that police officers in-training learn how not to lose sight of the car they are pursuing. The main task is to keep the escaping the vehicle in sight and pursue. No matter how busy the highway is, no matter how many similar cars are there, nothing should distract the attention of the officer from the car that he/she is pursuing. Often, in the race of this life, we may lose sight of what's

where the acquisition of material wealth and the possession of all that you can have becomes the norm and the goal of life. Of course, people during these holidays will look for great gifts to give their friends and family, however, they also expect to receive something in return. How different it is from what God has done for us! He gave us the most expensive gift: He gave His only Son, knowing in advance that He would receive ingratitude, disregard, hatred, spitting, blows from executioners, nails, wounds and a cross in return. God the Father knew all this, but He did not refuse His gift to us people...

Today we are painfully dependent on shopping and the endless pursuit of material accumulation. It seems that the advice of the Apostle Paul, *to be content with*

Look at the needs of your neighbor

Let's take a closer look around you. The world has not changed at all, and if it has changed, then, perhaps, for the worse. Today we have hungry, destitute and poor around us. More than ever in the history of the Christian church, thousands of Christians are tormented and many lose their lives. More and more insidious epidemics appear, sowing death and carrying unsaved souls into eternity. Looking at all of this, we may blame others for not helping save souls or may just say that these are signs of the last time. However correct we are defining the end, last time, does not free

Christmas: Don't lose sight of what's important

pay tribute to our tireless rival: time has victory over us. Time made some changes in us. Someone has aged or, on the contrary, from an inexperienced youth has turned into a sensible adult. Time sent new tenants into houses, new additions into families, and, perhaps, someone departed to a place where time itself no longer has power over one.

It is probably difficult to come to terms with the thought that one more year of our earthly calendar has sunk into eternity. Whether this year was joyful or sad, successful or on the contrary there were more blunders in it, may each of us decide for ourselves. Depending on our age, we react differently to the departure of another year from our lives. Older people look painfully into the future, while young people are happy to have the opportunity to undertake in life where age previously restricted them. As for children, for them the end of the year is the joy of the winter holidays, fresh snow (in some places) and, of course, the expectation of Christmas and everything associated with this holiday.

A holiday that is loved and cherished

Currently we are at the turn of the year. We could probably all agree that Christmas is a big holiday for all Christians; it's the birth of Jesus Christ. This holiday affects many lives, there are very few people for whom this holiday in no way affected their life. For some, these are the brightest and most joyful memories of childhood, of that childhood, in which there was no place for earthly cares and everyday worries: the smell of mother's pies, the noise of enthusiastic children, mysterious gifts under the Christmas tree and the general feeling that life is so beautiful and good. All this is so vivid in our memory for a long time after.

These memories are bitter-sweet for us. Perhaps someone still has a lingering memory of a reunion with a very close and dear person, which occurred precisely during these Christmas days. Long years of parting — and here together again! There are also many of those who remember this day not only because of the birth of Christ, but also because of their own rebirth. Under the special impression of celebrating the birth



Picture by Vladimir KULIKOV

ningfulness of what happened two thousand years ago in a small village called Bethlehem. The world around us offers us a completely different Christmas, where instead of the center being the unborn baby Christ, it's the people themselves, and where the bliss of receiving instead of the bliss of giving is encouraged. Colorful advertising shop windows, catchy labels of big sales, artificially created excitement in supermarkets against the background of music and songs that have nothing to do with the theme of Christmas itself. All this leads away from the main meaning of the world's greatest event, in when God Himself came down to His creation. In the understanding of this world, a well-spent Christmas holiday is an opportunity to have a hearty dinner with family or friends, discuss the latest events of the world or local importance, exchange gifts and just have a good time. Of course, a well-spent vacation is an important part of the holiday, but not the most important one. Self-centered people are not interested in discussing why

most important and, exhausted in pursuit of the secondary, lose from the field of spiritual vision that which is worth living and suffering for — our faith and eternal values, and in the Christmas holiday itself, miss the birth of Christ Jesus.

«To give is a greater blessing than to receive»

What should be most important for us in during Christmas holidays? In other words, if we needed to describe what Christmas means in just one phrase, which one would we use? In the well-known scripture, Apostle John said, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son... (John 3:16).*

Therefore, Christmas is first and foremost a time when, in a special way, we should dwell on Christ's promises and ponder what He said while on earth. *It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).* This does not sound very fashionable in today's world

having food and clothing (1 Tim. 6:8) sounds unrealistic and even absurd in our time, when there is an opportunity to have much more than we need. Yet the Bible, without condemning wealth or rich and powerful people, shows us the path of generosity, kind attention to the needy and lonely, the opportunity to share what God has bestowed on us. Without even noticing it, we, Christians living in Western countries in the midst of material well-being, are accustomed to many comforts in this life and no longer imagine how we can live without all that which makes our lives so comfortable. Can you judge Christians for this? It is important not to pass a condemnation, but to correctly define one's position. Living in abundance, we should be generous donors of earthly and heavenly blessings for those who have a harsher share in life.

Returning to the theme of Christmas, let us reflect on how we can celebrate this day in order to receive real joy and inner satisfaction for the soul. So, the first thing we need to remember is that this birthday is not ours, but our Lord's, our Savior Jesus Christ, and if so, then, according to human notions, we are just invited guests and all our attention should be focused on Him. But how can we achieve that practically? After all, it is rather difficult to bring an expensive gift for someone and pay Him attention when He's invisible. It is important to understand that God Himself does not need anything, since He Himself is the beginning of everything and in His hand is the wealth of the whole Universe. However, God commands us to love our neighbor and to take care of people, each of whom wear the image of God.

Wise men from the East brought rich gifts to the Infant, for He is the King, worthy of royal honors. Let's not forget that these gifts also served Joseph and Mary, especially in the first years of our Savior's earthly life because there was still a flight to Egypt. For the same reason, Jesus Christ said that in the future life there will be many people surprised by the King's statement that they served Him when they shared bread with the hungry, gave cold water to the thirsty, received and housed the poor, comforted the sick, encouraged them with hope for God, were not afraid to intercede for the prisoners and personally visited them.

us from actively laboring for the benefit of our neighbors. We may not be able to help everyone, but the least we can do is not think about ourselves and what gifts we can receive, but think about how we can become those who give to others. The point of life is not in material gain. You can start with the simplest things, which are not even worth money, but nevertheless are so valuable and so necessary: our attention and love towards others.

Let us ask ourselves a simple question, when was the last time we devoted a few minutes of our time to those who are near and dear to us? Our wife, husband, children, parents, or a lonely person living next door to us. At least today, can we forget about ourselves and our problems and turn our attention to those around us? After all, they also need human warmth and love. Attention and love is greater than money and what we can buy. It's a gift everyone can give but most don't. A gift we all want but most do not have. Before God, it is a significant sacrifice.

Before we begin to think about how we will give gifts and listen to a long list of everything our children want, we need to find time and explain to our children what the birth of Jesus Christ really means. Try to make them aware that by giving something to others and doing good, they will get much more joy, because that's the example God left for us. He brought His gift to people and told us to do good to others. This will help us avoid the danger of raising self-centered children. From early childhood, we, the parents, should help our children understand that they are not in the center of the universe and that there are far more people in the world who need a helping hand than those who live in full prosperity. Therefore, this year during Christmas time, we will try to use our contribution to help others, instead of buying and giving something we can easily do without. Believe me, this has, and will bring a very profound effect on our souls.

Finishing off, I want to wish all the readers a most joyful and happy Christmas in Jesus Christ. I hope this holiday to be a turning point in our lives, understanding Christ's full sacrifice, and hope we will start giving more and taking less.

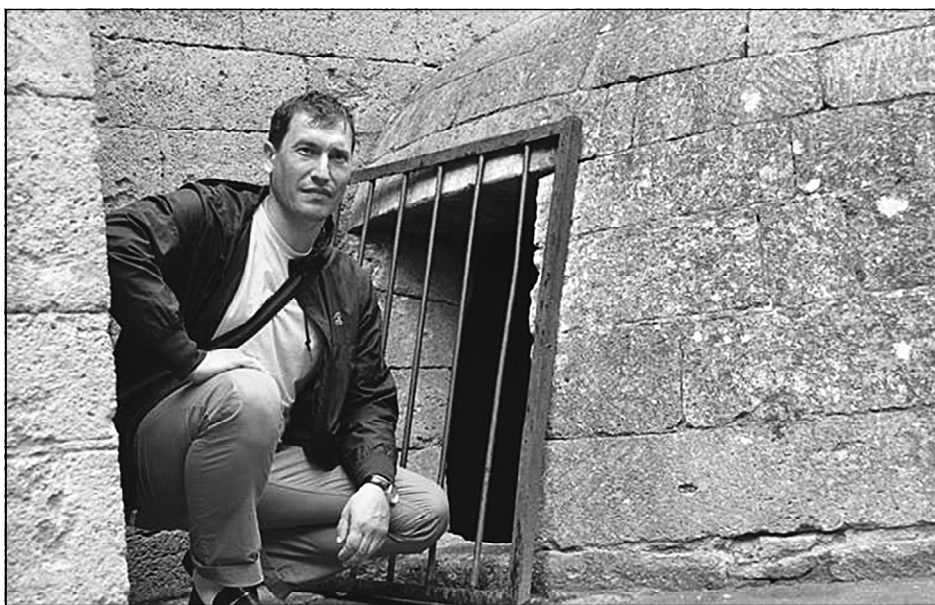
Yevgeny BALAKIREV,
Spokane, Washington.

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

He came into my life bringing order

Hello, my name is Andrew and I'm thirty-two years old. I want to tell you how God changed my life and freed me from drugs. Through my testimony I hope to glorify His name and give hope to those who do not know that there is nothing impossible for God and that He is ready to help anyone who will call upon his name.

I grew up in a good family. When I was five years my dad sent me to play sports. The 12 years I played sports I was quite successful. Then the time of the nineties came, a wave of crime, drugs and disorder in our country. By this time I had grown up and my father had passed away. My father raised me with severity. At seventeen, I realized that I had grown up. My mom could not do anything with me: she worked all day to feed me. I thought that I could achieve everything myself, because the street offered many opportunities at the time. I didn't even want to think about morals or whether what I was doing was wrong. I started to make money by deceiving people; at the same time drugs came into my life. I thought that relaxing on the weekends was normal, that I could always control the use of drugs and never be addicted. I didn't realize that drugs had already begun to control me. A year later, I was already in a drug treatment hospital, thinking



about quitting forever because I was waiting for my son to be born: I thought that with his appearance everything would change. However, I continued to be a drug addict, and took everything from the house and sold it for my next dose. Two years later my wife took my son and left. After they left, I really wanted to prove to everyone that I could live a normal life.

I quit drugs and dedicated myself to sports. After a year and a half I lived in Moscow and worked as a

performer in the Moscow Circus. I went on tour, spoke and thought that I could beat my illness, but the drug just waited for a convenient time. That time came with my injury. I left the circus and returned home where I met old friends and everything started as before: drugs, theft, deception, fraud, conviction...

The result of all this was loneliness, as well as a large dose of the drug and thoughts of death. I thought that no one could help me. However, I was wrong. For there is an almighty God

who helps all those who believe in Him. At that time I knew some recovered drug addicts whom God supposedly helped, but I was driving God from myself because of my disbelief, thinking that I alone could help myself, nothing worked. I decided to go to a rehabilitation center — just to observe everything and not spend the winter on the streets. I did not believe that someone could love me and that anyone could help me. At the rehabilitation center, God gave me freedom from cigarettes and drugs right away. He entered my life and brought order into it, the order that I struggled and could not create for 30 years of my life. I am very grateful to God for everything. For more than three years now I have been living with the Lord, walking through this life with Him. I have a family, a wife, improved relations with my mother and relatives. I am grateful for everything to our God, for only He extended a saving hand to me and pulled me out, one might say from the grave when I was almost dead.

My dear people, remember that everyone who is still alive and in a similar situation still has hope. God can help you, as He helped me. You only need to repent and turn to him.

Andrey TSEPURKIN, Russia,
<http://nehemiah.ru>

No philosophy can be compared with the Bible

It is said that a person in his life must do three things: plant a tree, build a house and raise a son. I had all of this or at least most of it by the age of twenty.

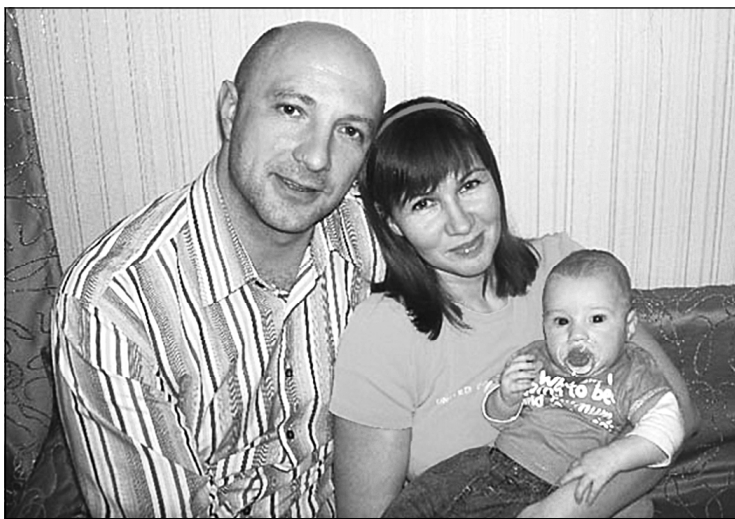
We had a good intelligent family: my mother was the head accountant in a reputable firm, my father was a teacher my grandfather was a colonel, and my uncle an Olympic champion. I graduated from an architectural school with a red diploma (honors), and completed the Kyiv Institute of Civil Engineering. I secured a great job, purchased an apartment. I got married early and already had a child — in short, everything other guys of my age could only dream of... And then life became boring, I had no incentives, nothing to continue striving for.

I began to drink and party. I was arrested and imprisoned for 4 years for disruptive behavior.

When I got out of prison, the apartment was no longer there, my grandmother and father died, my wife and child left. I moved in with my mother, got a job, and earned some money, but I was bored again. I sought out different entertainment and started gambling,

In order to forget what spiritual desert I was in, and to numb my heart and soul I drank, injected drugs, and smoked «weed» — at the same time.

When I went to prison the second time, it was in some way a relief to me. In our hut one of the prisoners was a believer. Amidst my multitude of philosophical literature the



prison spotted a bible. He told me «read the parable of Solomon or the Book of Ecclesiastes — no philosophy can compare». I began to read and really saw the light, wisdom, depth; for each verse

you can write a book! I found the very thing — the right thing that I've been searching for all my life. God revealed himself to me through the Bible. I started going to meetings of believers. God filled

my heart with peace and joy.

At that time, serious changes took place with my relatives: my mother became an alcoholic and my sister became a drug addict. They sold the apartment and became homeless. I began to pray earnestly for them, and when I was released, I found them and brought them to a Christian rehabilitation center. Here they, like me, saw the light of God. Mom began to serve in the women's rehabilitation center, and my sister underwent rehabilitation and got married. I got married too. Together with my wife Anya, we are raising a son Timothy. Thank God for everything!

Sergey TARASOV, Ukraine,
<http://www.skinia.org.ua>

THE FOOL

The blond boy skipped along beside the young woman, trying to grab her hand. The young woman just pulled her hand away, muttering:

«Why were you born, born to make my life more miserable?»

«Mom, when we return will you read me a fairy tale about a grasshopper?»

«Poor boy,» passersby's mumbled, «silly, he doesn't know that she is leading him to an orphanage».

When the boy grew up and was able to visit his mother, he tried to spend time with her as often as possible. Often as a teenager he found his mother in a drunken stupor. He would call an ambulance and, while the doctors



were driving, gently stroked her hand and kissed her dirty cheek: «Why are you so, mommy? Be patient, everything will be fine».

«Abnormal child, just a fool. No respect for himself. She didn't have enough love for him, but he still continues to run to her and save her», his friends wondered.

School days quickly passed. The young man received a

diploma with honors. Everyone predicted that he had a bright future. And he predicted a good career future. But to everyone's surprise he went to work in a school.

Acquaintances were indignant, «fool, he threw away his potential and future, went to work in a school raising slackers».

His mother died and he did not forget about her, visiting her grave often with his young wife, a girl from his neighborhood.

«Stupid», grannies did not get tired of gossiping. «What a handsome man, so many girls wanted to marry him and he chose a lame and ugly wife».

They did not see what the young man saw and understood. The young couple lived in perfect harmony, but alas they had no children. Soon the neighbors saw

the couple walking in the park with two kids — a boy and a girl. Abandoned by some, these children became dear to this couple.

«Fool» concluded the surrounding people, «she cannot give birth, but he still loves her with all his heart. Let them raise their orphan children».

But the opinion of surrounding people absolutely did not trouble this friendly happy family. The years went by, the children grew up, obtained good education and created their own families. They visited their parents often.

One winter, the father of the family was walking along the embankment. He walked up to a crowd, who watched with interest a dog stuck on a stranded piece of ice. The animal whined piteously, begging for help. But,

apart from idle interest, this event did not create a response in their hearts. Only the elderly man, without hesitation, rushed into the icy water...

Neighbors tirelessly discussed his deed:

«What a fool! To do that after a recent heart attack! He was born with no mind and did not get any wiser with age. He was born a fool, and a fool will die».

In eternity he stood waiting for his turn at the gates of heaven.

«What is your name» the angel asked at heaven's gate.

«I forgot what my name is», the man answered, «but I remember the people around me called me Fool».

«Come in, you are recorded in the book of life, your name has another sound — Love».

<https://pritchi.ru>

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

My Relatives Brought Me to Church

I understood that my life was coming to an end, and thought that I hadn't seen anything good in my life. From the age of sixteen, after the death of my father, I spent all of my free time on the streets. It was the mid-nineties, when the old ideals had already gone, and the new ones had not yet matured. Our worldview was formed from overseas films with criminal romance. Therefore, when the question arose of how to make a living, I chose the easiest way: I joined the racketeers brigade. Easy money opened the doors of expensive shops, restaurants, and various institutions in front of me. But very quickly it all became boring.

I wanted something special. This is how drugs appeared in my life. I, like any other addicts, began to quickly deteriorate. Thank God, I had a family of believers (my grandmother's brother and his wife), who invited me to come to the house of prayer, told that there is a rehabilitation center where people



like me are saved. Prior to this, of course, there have already been many attempts to quit drugs: hospitals, different healers... At the Sunday service, I went out to the altar and repented. On Monday I came to settle into

the rehabilitation center, I thought, «I'll sit for a month or two and rest a bit». I did not believe that they would be able to help me, as I had 10 years of experience in drug addiction, but I soon became convinced that God really changes people.

At first, I was reluctant to talk about myself, I looked at everything, I expected some kind of trick. I thought that at the rehab center, as in any men's team (in the army or in prison, for example), everything is subject to the law of power; I thought it was necessary to show that I was strong and would not bend my neck, then everything would be fine. Therefore, I was alert. Amongst the brothers, I found (by tattoos and other signs) someone similar to me, I began to communicate with him carefully, expecting at any moment some kind of trouble. But oh how wrong I was. This man happily began to serve me: he made tea, conducted a tour of the rehabilitation center, helped in everything that was necessary. Other guys were no less than pleasant people.

Some time passed, and God touched my heart. I became a free man. Later I learned that in the village of Pochuyki in the Zhytomyr region (where one of the rehabilitation centers is located), my believing relatives live, who all this time had been praying for me. The power of prayer made me, a lost child, a new man. Later I met and fell in love with Alla, a doctor by profession. Today I am a deacon of the church. Together with my wife Alla, we are raising two wonderful children: a little boy with a biblical name Mark and a daughter Katya.

Yury SABADASH, Ukraine,
<http://www.skinia.org.ua>

Hearing Mohammed, caused me to ponder

I was born in 1970 in the village of Belye Berega of the Bryansk region. I was a calm boy, did not get into troubles, did not mess with the police, was fond of sports especially martial arts. In 1990 I returned from the army. In those days, finding work was difficult. I worked hard in karate, devoting all my free time to this sport, and a year later I won first place in regional competitions, and within the year I had two first places in the region and fourth place in the Russian championship. I was offered a job as a money collector. I had to carry large sums of money.

Once handed over the money. It turned out that one large pack was missing. The owner, for whom I worked, did not believe that I did not take the money, and deducted it from my salary. Feeling very offended, I wanted to take revenge. I got acquainted with the guys involved in crime. When the owner transferred me to guard the trade-procurement base, I arranged that during my duty they would rob the base and take out the goods by loading a large semi container. Two weeks later, the crime was revealed — for complicity in the robbery, I was threatened with eight to fifteen years in prison.

Once in prison, I was desperate. For three days I did not want to eat or sleep. It seemed to be the end of life that I wanted. Everything inside rebelled, but I could not do anything

and after a while resigned myself to fate. In court, the sentence was changed, and I received only two years.

When six months remained before my release, I began to think about how to live, if I were to work a similar job, I can again end up in prison. If I work a blue collar job, there is little money for a good life; the life that I would like. I did not know how to live, whom to look like and where to find happiness, but I no longer wanted to be in prison.

One day in the yard I met a Dargin (from the Dargin ethnic group in the Russian republic of Dagestan). His name was Mohammed Magomedovich. He used to be Muslim, before he turned to Christ. Mohammed asked me about the meaning of life. I tried to say something about sports, but he pointed at the dried up puddle where just mud was left, said: «One day you will die and turn into the same mud.» These words penetrated deep into my soul. I understood that this is a fact with which one cannot argue. I did not want to live for the sake of such a prospect.

For two weeks I spent hours looking for the meaning and purpose of life. Despair seized my heart. At one point a group of Christians visited our prison. After speaking with me, the believers gave me a book, a biography of an alcoholic who had family problems and thought about suicide, but met Christians and turned



to God. The life of that sinner changed so much that even in schools, teachers set him as an example. That was what I was looking for — a way out of the impasse!

I didn't get out of bed for almost a day, reading the book they had left me, and when I finished the book, I said to myself, «What could be better than living with God?» I decided to entrust my life to Him. At that moment, a miracle happened in my soul; I felt so free and light that it seemed that if I jumped, I could fly. Looking at the bars and barbed wire, I thought that one could live their whole life in prison, when one feels this way inside, so bright and happy.

From that day, I began to speak with other inmates who were believers and began to read the Bible. The eternal life that Jesus talked about in the gospel had been revealed to

me. I believed in the resurrection: that if I die, I will be resurrected and will live forever in paradise, which I already felt in my soul. In 1994, I was released from the prison and was able to attend church. A year later, I was baptized, placing my life in God's hands, and the Lord began to gradually change my habits and character.

Once at work, without understanding the situation, my boss shouted at me and strongly offended me. I wanted to do the same, but I, after asking God for strength, forgave my boss. Previously, I could not cope with anger, but with the Lord everything is possible. I have developed relationships with relatives. And in 1997, God sent me a life partner, Lyudmila, from the church in Karachev, which is located thirty kilometers from our village. Living with God, I got a lot more of what I dreamed of. I have a wife, four children (three boys and one girl), a house, own a business and everything necessary for life. In the church I serve as a pastor and, most importantly, I know: if my life ends, this is not the end, but the beginning of eternal life with God in paradise, where everything is much better than what is here on earth.

More than twenty years have passed since I decided to entrust my life to Jesus Christ and have never regretted it. Despair and meaningless existence are forever gone from me. I thank God for His love and salvation that He gave me.

Aleksandr VDOVIN, Russia,
<http://old.krinica.org>

CITY OF SHACKLES

Once a merchant went to another country and came to a strange city in which all the residents were in shackles. The merchant thought: «If they put shackles on me too, what will I do?»

Suddenly at that very moment the guards appeared and, seeing the new free man, immediately chained him in shackles. Having lost the opportunity to return home, the merchant was depressed. He turned with questions to the unfortunate citizens, asking why they are all in shackles. And they answered that such orders had long been in their city. The merchant asked:



«Are all the inhabitants of the city doomed to wear shackles all their lives?»

People answered him, «According to rumors, sometimes an old man comes to town, who is free and does not wear shackles. Only he knows how to get rid of them. He so rarely appears that many doubt, is it true?»

«There is nothing to do,» the

merchant thought, «maybe I will see this old man and find out how to free myself».

Many years passed since then, the merchant grew old and turned gray. One day he unexpectedly saw an old man walking freely down the street and not chained in shackles.

«Grandfather», exclaimed the prisoner, «help me break free from the bonds».

«Son», the old man replied, «mentally say to yourself: «Let the guard immediately release me from the shackles» and you will be free».

The prisoner thought it was an unfortunate, bitter joke, but decided to try it and uttered to himself the cherished words. Immediately the guard appeared and freed him from the shackles.

The merchant hurried away

from this strange city, surprised at what had happened. Running out of the gate, he again saw the very old man who had helped him free himself.

«Grandfather, tell me,» said the merchant, «what is the secret of this strange city?»

«This city is not simple», answered the old man, «because in it they become prisoners and are freed from bonds, only after thinking about it». That's why you escaped because you believed my words. And those who do not believe me remain prisoners of this city, and I can no longer help them.

«...If you abide in My word, then you truly are My disciples, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free» (John 8:31-32).

<https://pritchi.ru>

«... So you appear to be righteous to people, but inside are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness» (Matthew 23:28).

Two thousand years ago, the Lord described the scribes and Pharisees in this way. Do these words apply to us today? The answer is simple: they do. Unfortunately, after two thousand years, little has changed in mankind. Both then and now we're and are people who are sincere believers as well as those who simply hide behind the faith, using the so-called piety for their own selfish purposes. These people are today's scribes and Pharisees. They are everywhere, and often you would not even suspect that such a person may be near you.

A huge number of letters from both prisoners and free citizens come to our editorial office. Recently in the letters from believers out of prison, one can read words like «They have not only learned to skillfully lie, but also to carefully cover themselves with the mask of faith.» These words are becoming common. One Christian wrote to the editorial office, «...imagine, I treated him like a son: I took pity. He wrote to me that he was an orphan and was seriously ill. I collected everything and sent it to him. I told him to place all hope in God, since he wrote that he is a believer and loves God. One day my opportunity to help him was over. It was at that moment that I discovered who he really is. Not only reproaches began, but even threats with references to biblical texts. A person literally changed completely in a short period. I did not expect such hypocrisy. Are all prisoners like that?!»

This is just a small excerpt from a letter from one person. When such letters are found, it becomes very ugly and you feel an incredible sense of shame in your soul. It is a shame for those who abuse trust and fool people on the outside, telling them orphan stories and other pitiful

stories from supposedly personal life. Perhaps, there is nothing more disgusting than when there is a lie, envy and hypocrisy in a person all at the same time.

Prison is the very place where such defects are made prominent and glorified. Why is it so? That's easy to answer. It has long been the custom that places of deprivation of liberty belong to extreme risk groups, where a person is so much forced to self-preservation, and not only in terms of food, which is very different from home, but also in moral, psychological and physical terms. When a person crosses the prison threshold, his instinct of self-preservation kicks in, because bondage refers to herd socialism, in which, as well as among animals, the strongest survive. The mask is put on by almost all inmates, with the exception of a small percentage. In prison it's not acceptable to tell the truth about yourself. Therefore, the success of the prisoner in his later life depends on his eloquence and ability to manipulate other people. Of course, the main trump card is money. If a person has them, it is much easier for him to survive in this system. Another weighty argument in places of deprivation of liberty, of course, is physical strength. In general, willy-nilly people have to take root in prison, get on with the game and survive. Those who are stronger, more powerful and with money are, of course, among the leaders.

The rest are looking for and finding themselves in something else to survive, including finding themselves in the faith. The only difference is that some come to God with an open heart and repentance, while others simply imitate, or rather, hypocritically pretend to be

Hypocritical people are very scary people, because they think one thing, say another, and do the third, and it is absolutely unimaginable. These people, as a rule, are very fond of flattering, especially when it is profitable for them; they are very secretive and, accordingly,

false. The righteous Job spoke of these: **«He will strictly punish you, even though you are hypocritical and secretive»** (Job 13:10). In the Book of Proverbs it is said: **«A hypocrite ruins his neighbor with his lips...»** (Proverbs 11:9).

What could be worse when a brother or sister you trusted turns out to be a hypocrite? Such people are hypocrites not only before their neighbors, they are also hypocritical and before God. Their faith is a complete mask, which they put on themselves solely for mercenary reasons. The Lord speaks of this, **«these people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me, but in vain they honor Me, teaching the teachings, the commandments of men»** (Mark 7:6-7).

From time to time, when I encounter a manifestation of hypocrisy among so-called believers, I involuntarily ask myself the question: «Are these people not afraid of God?!» Unfortunately, they are not afraid. And they are not afraid because, in fact, they do not know God. All their so-called piety is nothing more than a mask. In such cases, I just want to shout: «Stop, people!»

Belief in God is not a game. In contact with the spiritual world, a person falls either under the grace of God or under the wrath of God. Not a single sinner is left unpunished by God. He who doubts that God punishes man for his sins is simply stupid. It is not for nothing that it is said: **«Do not say, «I have sinned, yet what has happened to me?» for the LORD is slow to anger!»** (Sirach 5:4).

Fortunately, today there is still time for everyone to repent and change their lives for the better. The Lord will not have any promise unfulfilled. In his letters, Apostle Peter says: **«The Lord is not slow in fulfilling the promise, as some consider it slow; but long-suffering to us, not wanting anyone to perish, but that all should come to repentance»** (2 Peter 3:9).

Dear brothers and sisters, all those who have had or have contact with prisoners, I want to ask your forgiveness, for all of the deception and hypocrisy that you may have faced from prisoners. Believe me, not all prisoners are like those about whom you write in your candid letters to the editor. There are many sincere Christians among the prisoners. Therefore, prison ministry due to dishonest individuals should not be terminated. Your letters and your spiritual support are needed by many stumbled and lost souls. Unfortunately, we are all imperfect people and in varying degrees, allow unwitting sin. But as it is said, **«If we confess our sins, then He, being faithful and righteous, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness»** (1 John 1:9).

In conclusion, today I want to say with the words of the Apostle Peter: **«So, putting aside all malice and all deceit, and hypocrisy, and envy, and all slander, like newborn babies, love pure verbal milk so that you can increase it to your salvation...»** (1 Peter 2:1-2).

I. GORIK.

HYPOCRISY



religious people for the period of their release. It is precisely these false believers who disgrace and discredit the sincerely believing Christian prisoners. Much to our regret, the scribes and Pharisees are present today. In fact, over two thousand years, man has changed only outwardly, internally he has not changed much. Hypocrisy both then and now is present in many people, and this is a terrible thing. It is not for nothing that it says: **«...the hypocrites have anger in their hearts...»** (Job 36:13). The Lord emphasized this word when he said: **«Hypocrites!»** (Matthew 23:13). He called the duplicity of man precisely this word.

In his book, the righteous Job asks the question: **«...what hope will the hypocrite take when the God blows his soul out?»** (Job 27:8).

Interview with Yaroslav Simashko and Aleksandr Parazinsky

Once again, I met interesting people. I do not cease to astonish and admire how God changes people!

The readers are offered an interview with Yaroslav Simashko and Aleksandr Parazinsky. Today, these brothers are working in the Vinnytsia Mercy House, where homeless people are rehabilitated, as well as former prisoners who do not have a specific place of residence. Let the stories of their lives force people who are in such conditions to reconsider their lives. As it turns out, there is always a way out, even from the most hopeless situations.

— Dear brothers Yaroslav and Aleksandr, on behalf of all the staff of the newspaper «Prisoner», I greet you with the love of God at your rehabilitation center. I would like to ask you a whole series of questions that interest us. For example, how did you come to God — yourself or did someone lead you to Him? Please tell us how it all happened to you and how your ministry began in this house of mercy?!

Yaroslav SIMASHKO

— I was born in a normal educated family. My mother was a kindergarten teacher and father a scientist. My life went on, let's say, in a decent family. But the moment came when everything began to change dramatically. When I was nine years old, my father died. My older brother was twelve years old. Mom was left alone with us, so she began to work more, and spent less time with us. After all, we needed something to wear and something to eat. Being boys, immediately we appeared on the street, friends, acquaintances, an empty apartment. Because my mother was at work for days. She, like her mother, tried to provide for the family, and we, in turn, with

my brother began to grow completely out of control. Over time, all this resulted in a big problem. Alcohol appeared very early in my life, and I also very early learned what drugs were. I began to use drugs from the age of seventeen. Everything in my life began to crumble and fall apart. I do not want to remember what depth of sin I knew, because I did things that I myself was sourly ashamed of. I do not want to go into detail, but theft, deception and the police — all this was present in my life, because the drug is a drug. Sin demands its payment, requires sacrifice. You become this victim, you are forced to do what, perhaps, you would never do by yourself. So I lived like this until I was twenty-three years old.

One day, walking down the street, I began to think that, perhaps, it was time to end my life by suicide, because the life I lived, in no way suited me. But at this moment on the street I met a girl with whom we studied at the same school. We talked, and she suggested that I come over to her house for tea. I do not know why, but there I began opening up and told her about everything in my life, that was happening. At that time, rarely anyone invited me to their house, because of my countenance and, accordingly, my condition did not inspire confidence. For where I appeared, there surely was theft, deception, fraud, and the like. I was pleased to communicate with her. We then met and

communicated again. With her appearance even somehow a pleasant ray of light lit up in my life. Then I thought: «If I could start a family and be with her, I could try to leave sin in my life and completely change my life.» But then I did not read the Bible, and therefore did not know that only the knowledge of the Truth gives us freedom and there is no other

became destructive to act on our relations and our further life, which was already difficult to call family. It turned out this way: I could go out for bread and not return home for a week or go out into the corridor and disappear for a few days, and then it happened for a whole month. What kind of family life can there be when friends and

companies are constantly getting into the way? In general, I behaved completely wrong and atrocious. As a result, the moment came when we stopped living together. Three years have passed. I went back to my mother, and there the drug-filled streets destroyed me even more. At this very period of time, some guys came to me and said: «Yaroslav, you need Jesus!» By this time I had already tried everything: I was treated with medicines, hospitals — I tried to do everything to get rid of my drug addiction. When the drug ended — alcohol began. When alcohol was running out — the drug started again, and so life went round in a circle. I did not know that only God can give complete satisfaction and joy in life. But when the guys started talking to me about God, some



The tenth child of Yaroslav Simashko

option. For a period of time — and it was a short period — I even stopped sinning. But, unfortunately, I was free for only a month and a half or two, because then, when we were a family, I came into great disappointment. I did not get the expected freedom, and even the goal of becoming a family did not motivate me to leave sin. On the contrary, I brought sin to the family. It

bright light appeared in my heart, or rather, a lightning. I thought then: «I have already tried everything in my life, but I have to make a decision to try it again». That same day I went to church, though in a state of narcotic intoxication. My brother approached me at the service and asked everyone to pray for me.

(Continued on the 7th page)

Interview with Yaroslav Simashko and Aleksandr Parazinsky

(Continuation. Beginning on the 7th page)

I stood out from the crowd: my appearance, my gray, thin face — a very eerie sight. After that, I started attending services. One time, some brothers came from a rehabilitation center and testified about Jesus Christ. They talked about how bad and wrong everything was in their lives: alcohol, prison... I listened to their testimonies and thought that everything wasn't so bad in my life, since I had not been in prison. Of course, I had been brought home drunk at nine, I started to do drugs at twelve and take pills at fourteen. All this I did with alcohol each time, and at seventeen I started to do serious drugs, injecting them into my veins. And it was all very sad. For the time came when I began to use all this at the same time. It's amazing how my liver and whole body could withstand it all. I went with the brothers to the rehabilitation center. At that time, my wife and I no longer lived together.

After a while I came from the center and met with my wife, I began to tell her about God, about Whom it is written in the Bible. After listening to me she decided to attend the congregation where the gospel was being preached. From what she heard, she understood what the Truth is about. After learning about my baptism in the Holy Spirit at the rehabilitation center, she asked to be taken to this center to learn how to be a Christian. I took her to this rehabilitation center and decided that I, myself, should go into business for the well-being of the family. Unfortunately, the business did not start of well, and disappointed, I again returned to a sinful life. Upon learning of this, my wife came and took me away so that I could continue the rehabilitation course again. The month of sinful living contributed to the fact that my liver became really inflamed. After a while, I returned back to Vinnytsia in order to restore my relationship with my wife. After that, I stayed in the rehabilitation for another year. A year later, an even greater test came into my life than before: I became very sick with tuberculosis. I did not pay attention to this for a long time, I significantly lost weight, but at the same time I prayed and fasted. I thought that everything would be fine, that is until I felt very sick: my temperature was too high. When the x-ray was taken, it turned out that I had lesions in both lungs and there were holes on both lungs. The doctor said: «There are cases when this can be cured...», but in his eyes I read the opposite: «Usually these people die». When I started treatment at the hospital, my condition began to deteriorate more and more. There came the moment when I couldn't get out of bed any longer, and my body looked like bones covered by skin. I had only one prayer room — under the pillows. How valuable it is when you have the opportunity to attend a service, but how difficult it is when you cannot attend one because you have a problem: you cannot walk. Everything inside me hurt. There was inflammation of the pleura, accompanied by a terrible pain the liver. One doctor told me: «I don't know what you will die from: if we treat your lungs, your liver won't be able to withstand the drugs, and if we treat the liver, the lungs will destroy you faster». They tried to somehow do it in parallel, but the words of the doctor «I do not know what you will die from...» did not give me any optimism. However, this was what the doctors were saying, but God had a different plan for my life. I prayed then and asked: «Lord, I have lived little on this earth, and I am already coming to You. I understand that I am forgiven by You. I understand that there is an eternity where You are. And I want to be grateful to You for what you did for me on the cross.» I understood perfectly well that my gratitude to God would be expressed through having people become saved through my life, through my direct participation in their lives. The very fact of death disturbed me the least, compared to the fact that I might stand before God empty-handed. I wanted to be grateful to Him, and as a token of gratitude I really wanted to participate in the salvation of other people. I also wanted to receive water baptism and to please all my relatives with the fact that within myself I became a new person. All this I said to God in prayer. After all, my entire adult life, I was a drug addict, bringing sorrow and grief to my mother, wife, and relatives. When I prayed, I asked: «Lord, will I die soon?» And you know, God gave me an answer. That's why you hear me now, because I heard His voice. This voice

sounded tenderly and gently inside me. And the power of God came down, which is impossible to describe. I felt within me an incredible state of God's presence. God touched me, for every cell of my body sensed this presence. I began to breathe evenly and cry at the same time. I wept not because everything inside me hurt, but because I felt the presence of God. At that moment, the iron bed and crumpled hospital mattress turned into wonderful warm palms of God, which warmed me so much, that that kind of warmth does not exist on earth. This will probably happen only in heaven, and only in the presence of the Lord! I actually want to go there, but I do not want to do it empty-handed. In a tuberculosis hospital, a lot of deaths happen before our eyes. Some have time to repent before death, and others don't. In my case, after a prayer appeal to God in the full sense of the word, there was a real reset. In a very short time period, I gained twelve kilograms and promptly began to recover. There were believers next to me, and we often went to the forest to pray together. This I show God lifted me out of bed and led me out of the hospital, where I was actually dying. I took literally five and a half months until I was discharged from the hospital with a diagnosis of «Healthy!». Everything that people cannot do, God can.

Our family recovered, and my wife and I returned to Vinnytsia. We began to live on together, and we started having children. My wife and I prayed and asked: «Lord, in the place where You give us a home, we will help and participate in the salvation of people». And through my mother, God gave us a house where we moved after the birth of our third child (today we have ten children: five boys and five girls). Time passed, we settled down and started to take people into our homes. By participating in the prison ministry, we began to take into our home the guys who were released from prison. Some came themselves, others were picked up from the streets. It all started from the summer kitchen, which we converted into a room. The first guests were four



that He has preserved the union of my family, which I now have. My wife gave birth to ten children. Our oldest daughter is twelve years old now, and the youngest is two years old. We are happy to have them.

To date, five of the brothers from those being rehabilitated have been baptized in water, promising God to live with a clear conscience. I thank the Lord for this work!

When you have the love of God in you, when you have Jesus Christ in your heart and you have intimacy with Him, then you will be drawn to those who have problems in their lives and need our help. Today I understood one thing: my gratitude to God for what He did for me on the cross of Golgotha can be expressed through the salvation of people, in whose lives I can participate, for only the Lord Himself saves.

— You have been participating in this ministry for eight years, but at what stage of your Christian life did you decide to do this?

— When I got into rehabilitation myself, I realized that this was a ministry according to my heart. I wanted to do this. God seemed to put this desire inside me. For



people, then it became eight. Accordingly, it became cramped, and God gave us the opportunity to make an extension to the house, in which the number of people increased to twenty — twenty-five people. But even in this extension we were always crowded. I began this ministry almost eight years ago, having neither the support nor the physical ability, because I was weak after the illness I had acquired as a result of my sins. However, in my heart there was a great desire to serve people. Three years ago, brother Aleksandr came and also joined this ministry. I met him in the eighty-first colony, where he was in charge of the prayer room. Upon release, he wanted to come here.

The work that started in my house was noticed by the brothers, and they made it possible to build a house like this where thirty-four people now live, although this is still far from the limit. After all, we still have not completed the upper, third, floor, where you can also place people. Feasible work, Bible lessons, reading the Bible, prayers, attending services — all this leads to the formation of a person into a Christian. Christians are not born; becoming a Christian is a choice that is made in life, where Jesus Christ is chosen as the person's Lord and Savior. I thank God

me, engaging with people and leading them to God and repentance is an inspiration and pure joy. It's as if I've always had this desire. I can't remember now when exactly I made this decision. I repented and received Jesus Christ into my heart. Along with this, a desire was born within me to help those like myself. Of course, I did not engage in this ministry immediately, only after size or seven years of my conscious Christian life. I understood that this had to be done, because God was preparing me for this. Education here is also very important. I graduated from a college in Brovary and entered the Vinnytsia Theological Seminary to study. We receive an education from the Bible from Jesus Christ, but there is also an experience from brothers through which we quickly begin to understand the truths that are necessary for us, and we convey them to the people with whom we work. We have Bible lessons here. Every morning, the guys who are in rehabilitation take the so-called exams, that is, answer theological questions. We encourage them to understand the Word, and we try to train them correctly.

— Is there any specific program in your rehabilitation center?

— The main thing is to accept Jesus

Christ into your heart, learn to repent and read the Bible. The main task of the house of mercy is to separate the person from his former environment, where he lived, the circumstances he was in, and give him the opportunity to live far from his so-called friends and circumstances in order to form in a new way. However, this formation takes place on the basis of his personal faith and his personal desire. It's no secret that many people come and go.

— Are there people who come to you yourselves?

— Of course, there are.

— Perhaps you find those that have, as they say, «one foot in the grave»?

— There are some. There exists a ministry that provides free lunches for the homeless. Those kinds of people are found among them.

— Can you please tell me if people mostly come to you yourselves or if you find them somewhere?

— It happens differently. Sometimes, someone hears about us and passes it on to another. Lunches for the homeless at the station — we also take people from there, as well as those who are released from prison. They know about us in the churches. Our church in Vinnytsia alone numbers about two thousand people. Oral information about our house of mercy runs throughout Vinnytsia.

— I know from the experience of other houses of mercy that people without a specific place of residence, that is, homeless people, usually come to such places to save themselves during the winter season. They are washed there, heal, fatten up and with warmer weather they return to their normal place.

— Yes, that also exists. Everyone has their own way and their choice. Initially, we cannot know what is on the mind of a person. We moved to this house just a year ago. It's been nearly eight years of this ministry, of which seven years we served in my own home.

Regarding homeless people, we have a phenomenal case today: thirty-four people who have been with us since summer. Of course, only love and care change people. Then they respond. Of course, they all come prickly, like hedgehogs, someone not even the first time. We have a quarantine for this — separate rooms. There we wash them, we dress them, we take them to the hospital for tests. If you decide to continue to live with God, then you will live here with us. If not, then you're free. No one can force a person to be saved if they don't make that decision themselves.

— Surely among them there are people with disabilities, blind, one-legged or armless?

— Right now, there are those who have frozen their legs, one had a little cut off, the other is on crutches. And we have a miracle of healing: when the bone of one brother appeared. He broke his leg several times, after which it became diseased. The bone rotted out, and the doctors simply did not know what to do with him. He repented, prayed, and God showed him mercy in the form of a new bone. The doctors decided to perform an operation — to replace the bone, but then they suddenly discovered that he had started to grow his own (new) bone. Now he walks without crutches on his feet. Thank God!

Tell me, do those who are physically able, work for you?

We do not have permanent, stable employment. Those who ask for help, we help. Who will bless us with anything, we accept.

(Ending on the 8th page)

Interview with Yaroslav Simashko and Aleksandr Parazinsky

(Ending. Beginning on the 6th and 7th pages)

If there is an agreement between the brothers to go and earn money, then we buy food with the money we gained. We mainly exist on donations from those people who are sympathetic to our service. We cannot force rehabilitants to work by force. We know about the existence of economic courtyards in Ukraine, where people are only forced to work — without lessons and conversations on the spiritual theme. This is not our way. We care about people spiritually and materially. We are not yet able to do physical labor to make money. Maybe over time, someone will be able to organize some kind of business and allocate some money for the ministry. We pray that these people could later arrange their lives: find a job, a family. In any case, we explain to them that physical work is necessary.

— **Do you cooperate with an employment center?**

— No. Probably, we have not come to this yet. Perhaps, further we will be able to restore the documents to these people and employ them. We, literary, just came to the point when everything is organized. The conditional course of stay here is six months. At the end, the person goes to get a job, but still lives with us, prays with us, and attends services to God. This is an adaptation for these people. After people works for two or three months, they are able to rent a place for themselves. Then they can live on their own and only come to visit us. This is an example of an approximately scheme.

— **Were there such rehabilitants fell back into sin?**

— I will tell you more — a very large number leaves and returns back to the sinful life. I can definitely say that this service is not easy. However, many cannot already live without it. Sometimes you come home late at night, sometimes after midnight. There is no time to talk to a wife or just be with the children. However, thank God, my children are believers and understand that their dad is serving the Lord. Service to God and family are high priorities. If we have the first in order, that is, intimacy with God, He will give us the wisdom how to balance everything else.

— **I understand your mom's happiness when she saw her son freed from sin...**

— Oh yes! It was an extraordinary joy, but at the same time it was a big anxiety when I was in the hospital with severe tuberculosis. She cried and worried very much. Thank God that all this is already left behind. Only the Lord and His love saved me!

Aleksandr PARAZINSKY

— **Aleksandr, please tell us about your past. How did your life begin? What did sin lead to? How did it all go?**

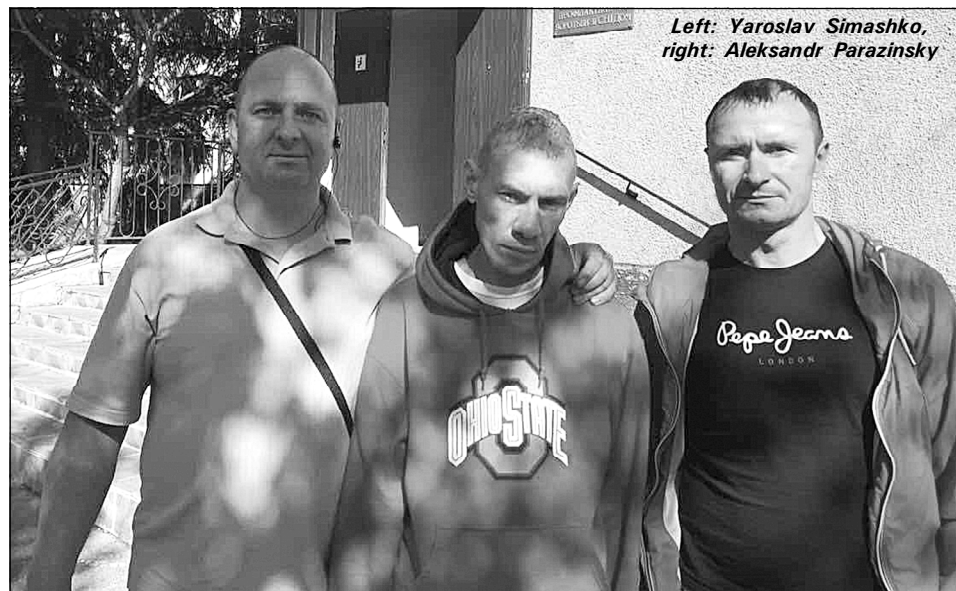
— You know, it is very pleasant to

communications (that is, bad company) *corrupt good morals*» (1 Cor. 15:33). This is exactly what happened to me. I was kicked out from one school for a bad behavior; from the second one — for a fight. I was also kicked out from the third one. Mother did not know what to do with me. She asked my father to take care of me, but he had another family and his own problems; therefore, he did not want to engage in my upbringing. Due to my lack of control, I was sent to the orphanage in city Tuzla, Tatarbunary district, Odessa region. Unfortunately, I stayed there for just four months because I had a fight there over one girl Alyona, whom I fell in love with. Of course, they kicked me out of there. Outside the orphanage, I met more bad company on the street. They taught me how to steal. The older guys of the group were in prison for several times already. I was young. I wanted to live well and have everything. However, I was used by the older guys, who were already wise in stealing. They called us «torpedoes». They used us because I was young, in good health, and had no intelligence or wisdom. As usual, there is health but no wisdom when you are young. When you are old, you are smarter, but health is not the same. I have not even turned fourteen years old when the police already knew me. If some kind of theft occurred, it means either I did it or involved me somehow. At the age of thirteen I visited juvenile detention center. At the age of fourteen, I was conditionally sentenced to three years and six months. Do you think I had changed? The answer is no. I again followed the same path and robbed six stores three months after trial. This time I was pressed charges and went to prison for three years and six months. I was sent to juvenile detention in Western Ukraine, Ternopil region. When I arrived there, I was scared a little bit, of course, but I got used to everything very quickly. I learned the «concepts of prison» very fast. I walked this path and I knew this is not the last time I will be here. I remember the first letter my mother wrote to me: «Son, it's not you who are in prison, I'm in prison. I do not sleep at night. What are you doing? My neighbors laugh that I gave you life. Instead of rejoicing, I cry all night. I have only one son». And I also remember how I wrote my first letter to her: «Mom, I corrected myself and became a man. I will get out of prison and will be a different person». Unfortunately, these were just empty words. When I got out of prison, I was a good person literally for three months. I started to steal again and ended up in prison again and again. «Once I set my foot on this path, all went just like a cycle». I even began to worry about how best to earn credibility in prison. I was taught in prison this way: first you need to earn yourself authority, and then authority will work for you. I met «thieves in law» and studied their concepts of how

came to Russia to be closer to me. She got a job there to help me by sending me goods. However, nothing has changed in my life except that prisons and circumstances were different. I told her that I did not need her money, since I myself could help her. However, my mother could not do otherwise. She sacrificed herself for me. During this time, I was informed in a letter that my father hanged himself in his own apartment. Six months later, my grandmother died. Everything in this life has become unimportant to me. Now I could only deceive and do more crime: I wanted to be strong otherwise I could not survive in prison. Of course, inside myself, I wanted to be good, but I had to put on a mask and play this role because everyone there was like me. Any other way simply did not work. I fought with myself. I told myself that I would become more cunning and would never return to prison every time after my

became very angry, even worse than I was before. At night, I went out into the street and just robbed people, taking their money and valuables. Civilians and the police were after me, but I was absolutely not interested in anything. I was drinking to an extent when I did not remember or understand anything. The devil really used my flesh when I was drunk. In the end, I woke up in prison again...

This time, I first began to read the Bible in the prison. The librarian said one day: «This book saved more than one person; you just need to believe in it. If you don't believe it, you can miss your salvation.» At first everything seemed like a fairy tale, but then I became interested. I myself did not notice how I began to simply absorb everything written in the Bible. I abruptly stopped expressing obscenities, and I wanted to talk about good. The Bible just began to enter me. I saw that there is a good life, and just as a snowdrop awakens



Left: Yaroslav Simashko, right: Aleksandr Parazinsky

release. No more than six months passed, and I again went to jail. As it is written in the Bible, *«For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out»* (Romans 7:18).

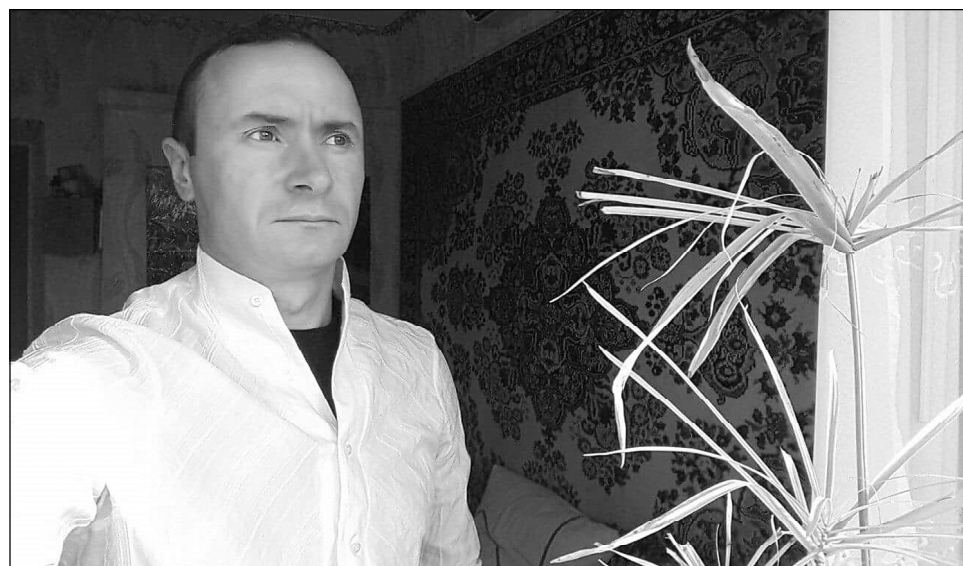
To do well in life, I needed to get to know the Lord, but, unfortunately, I was not acquainted with someone I needed back then.

In 2005, when the day of my freedom came, I was summoned to the head of the prison and handed a certificate that I was wanted in Ukraine and I should be deported to a judge there. I spent six years in Russia, and they kept me there for another three years to send to Ukraine. The whole time I was in a huge old Catherine chamber where sometimes one hundred and fifty people changed in a week. During these three years, I met at least nine thousand people. While I was transferred to the city of Kharkiv to Ukraine, I stopped in another ten prisons and one and a half more years passed in stages. I had ten months left to serve in the city of Ismail in Ukraine. I was finally released after 13 years and 8 months of isolation. While I was going to Ukraine, I got news that my mother was missing. I still don't know where she is. I wrote letters, called, searched, place ads, but she simply disappeared. Upon release, I came to the house where I was born. No one lived there, everything was taken by thieves, the wooden floors rotted, the grass in the private house was taller than me. I remembered how we lived there. My mother and grandmother were telling me: «Son, grandson, we are your friends». However, I believed in those friends who drew me a beautiful picture and some incomprehensible authority. As a result, I lost all my relatives and friends, whom God gave me. I began to look at the photos and found a letter, the same one that I wrote to my mother where I promised her to get out of prison and become a completely different person when I was in prison first time. I fell to my knees and began to shout. I was so hysterical that I thought I was already crazy. I screamed for two hours and broke my voice. Scared neighbors came to the screams. I saw a terrible reality of my life... Later I came to my grandmother to ask for help so she can let me live in her house and give an opportunity to adapt until I find a job. Unfortunately, I did not find support at that time. I again met old friends at the pub and began drinking nonstop. Of course, all my problems remained problems and did not disappear anywhere. I began to steal and

after winter so did I awaken by God's Word. I cried when I found stories in the Bible similar to my life. The Lord showed and revealed a lot to me through His Word. I read and cried under a blanket asking the Lord not to leave me. I asked to send me a believer as I longed to talk with someone about God and learn more about Him. And here it is a miracle! After two days of prayers, I was transferred to a new cell where there was the believer. There were of course many trials ahead, but I firmly wanted to find the truth that God has, to have joy in Him and become spiritually rich. Today I want to say that there is still time for everyone to come to God. You just need to repent, leave your pride and come to Jesus Christ. All those concepts for which I lived for in prison is nothing to God. I realized that the most difficult thing is to defeat myself, my own character, who does not want to obey, who wants to listen only to itself. The Scripture says: if anyone wants to be higher, be lower. When I humiliate myself, God elevates me. I read the Bible every day, prayed, went to meetings, wanted to change, and quit smoking. I had a lot of time. I studied every denomination and checked everything only through God's Word. The twenty second of February of two thousand fourteen is my very best day, the day of my new birth. On this day, I repented and received water baptism. I began to walk and preach that the Lord lives and that He changes people from that day. God accepted me into His family in the church. I finished the seminary and became a prison chaplain. I could not escape from prison for eighteen years, but now I can go to any prison in Ukraine and tell people that God is alive. What a joy that I can preach the Gospel today! All that I do is not me, but God does through me.

There are still many people in the world who have nothing, but we can help them! The Lord came on earth and showed us how to do it. The pleasure in life can be obtained from the fact that you benefit others instead of from vodka and drugs. The real truth as it turns out is all in the Bible, I mean in God. I, unfortunately, searched for it elsewhere. And until we accept this truth, our truth will not save us. I wanted to end my life in the cell several times, but God did not allow this. Today I want to live for God and do good for people. May the Lord bless you all!

Interviewed by Irina DOLGUSHINA.



witness the miracles that the Lord performs. My name is Aleksandr. I'm forty-two years old. I am from the Odessa region, the city of Kiliya. I am the only child in the family, no brothers or sisters. I was eight years old when my father left. I was raised by the street. I often skipped the school as children usually do when they are left to themselves. My mother could not handle me; my father had another family and other problems so he did not have time for me. I met bad company as it is often happens in such cases. As I later learned from the Bible: *«evil*

to live correctly. I got to the point that I myself pointed out to others how to live correctly. Even the police were afraid of me since I was already in charge of certain things. Ninety-seven times I have been in prison. I was strong in my convictions and lived according to the rules of thieves. In March 1997, I had to have a trial in Ukraine, but I left to Russia. Moreover, I became addicted to drugs and everything became sad in my life. I left my mother in the city Kiliya and just left. I committed a crime in Russia, and they put me in jail. My mother

(Ending. Beginning on the 3rd page)

What the New Testament has to say about charity

During the time of Jesus, asking for alms was a very common thing: **Mark 10:46** — *Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means «son of Timaeus»), was sitting by the roadside begging; Acts 3:2* — *And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple.*

As previously stated, in the days of Jesus’ life on earth in Israel, there was the practice of two collections of alms for the poor. In addition, there were thirteen so-called treasuries for voluntary donations to the needs of the poor in the yard of the Temple: **Mark 12:42-44** — *But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, «Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on».*

I. JESUS CHRIST AND THE IDEA OF GIVING

1. The teaching of Christ on charity was that the giver should under no circumstances advertise his act of charity. Jesus, taught that the one who shows mercy should seek rewards only from God: **Matthew 6:1-4** — *Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that our giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

2. In addition, Jesus taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive: **Acts 20:35** — *In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: «It is more blessed to give than to receive».* We do not know exactly when Jesus said these words. We know them only from the words of the disciples in the Acts of the Holy Apostles. But the same idea is traced in the following words of Jesus: **Luke 14:13-14** — *But when you make a feast, call the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed that they cannot repay you, because you will be rewarded at the resurrection of the righteous.*

3. Jesus and His disciples also had a donation box for the needy, where they donated their savings and collected donations from other people: **John 13:29** — *For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, «Buy those things we need for the feast», or that he should give something to the poor.*

II. ACTIONS OF THE APOSTLES AND THE DOCTRINE OF CHARITY

1. In the book of Acts of the Apostles, there were Christians who practiced charity:

☉ A woman from Joppa, Tabitha: **Acts 9:36** — *At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.*

☉ God-fearing centurion Cornelius: **Acts 10:1-2** — *There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always*

☉ Disciples of Christ (early Christians): **Acts 11:29** — *Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.*

2. Charity among the early Christians

Charity among the first Christians was

not a requirement, but an act of goodwill, generosity and grace to the brothers and sisters in Christ: **Acts 5:4** — *While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.*

When believers shared their wealth with each other and shared with each other their property, it was not socialism. People voluntarily shared with each other what they had. Everything collected, was distributed between believers — not lazy people and idlers who did not want to work, but between truly needy families: **Acts 2:44-45** — *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

have something to share with those in need.

2. As Christians, we are called to help those in need

☉ John the Baptist: **Luke 3:10-11** — *«What should we do then?» the crowd asked. John answered, «Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same».*

☉ Jesus Christ: **Luke 6:30** — *Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back; Luke 12:33* — *Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.*

☉ Apostle John: **1 John 3:17** — *If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity*

plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: «The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little».

4. Helping Other Christians in need should be a priority in our charity: **Romans 15:25-27** — *Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord’s people there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord’s people in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4* — *Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.*

IV. DO GOOD DEEDS CONTRIBUTE TO SALVATION?

Charity and doing good deeds are attributes of righteousness, but in themselves they do not justify a person and do not grant him salvation. **Acts 10:1-6** — *At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, «Cornelius!» Cornelius stared at him in fear. «What is it, Lord?» he asked. The angel answered, «Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea».*

As we can see from this text, centurion Cornelius did a lot of good for the people. However, this was not enough to save him. Just like any other person, Cornelius needed to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior.

So charity does not save the giver. And at the same time, charity is good deeds that please the Lord God. This is what He expects of those who believe in Him. We are not saved by good works. However, charity and mercy are works of faith, that is, works that prove our faith in God through practice. Works of faith, such as charity, prove our love for our others to which we are called by the Lord:

1 John 3:17 — *If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?*

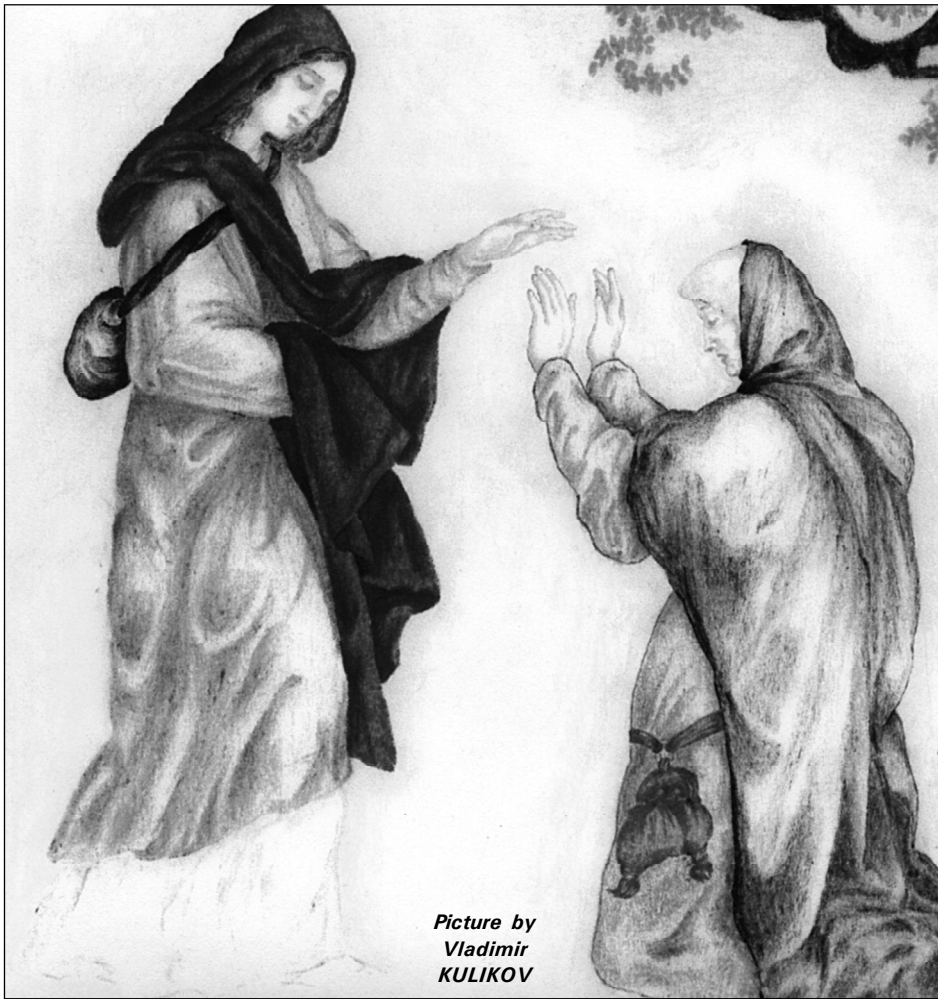
1 John 4:7-14 — *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.*

1 John 4:20-21 — *Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.*

The material for the newspaper «Prisoner» was kindly provided by the Biblical Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada <http://cogmtl.net/Articles/097.htm>

TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

CHARITY



Picture by
Vladimir
KULIKOV

3. The election of deacons

Deacons, that is, ministers, were elected from among Christians in order to follow the fair and honest distribution of donations and alms to those in need: **Acts 6:1-6** — *Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, «It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word». And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.*

III. CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD CHARITY

1. Christianity does not approve laziness: **2 Thessalonians 3:10** — *For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: «The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat»; Ephesians 4:28* — *Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may*

on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

☉ Apostle Paul: **Romans 12:13** — *Share with the Lord’s people who are in need; Hebrews 13:16* — *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased; 1 Timothy 6:17-18* — *Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*

3. The condition of the heart of one who does good is more important to the Lord than the significance of the deed itself: **Mark 12:41-44** — *Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, «Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on»; 2 Corinthians 8:12-15* — *For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your*

PASTOR'S WORD

THE PURPOSE OF HUMANITY

PERSONAL LIFE REFLECTIONS

Over a quarter of a century, I lived in a western capitalist country and observed the lives of immigrants. This is the picture I saw: immigrants, who face new living conditions, face a lot of strain at first to reach the desired conditions for their families. They need to learn the language, buy a vehicle, and show their hard and honest work ethic at work. They spend a lot of energy, strength, and health on that. That is understandable. Well, another phase of life begins afterwards when the language is moderately learned, when life is somewhat stable, and profit increases. What changes take place in a settled immigrant's world outlook? This is a mere example to think over although such changes occur in the lives of people regardless of their immigration status or country of residence. Some people who used to struggle materialistically shift to the category of well-paid residents; the ill — move to the fully healthy category; former inmates are freed. This makes a person happy, but... not for long. These factors are not the source of genuine joy. In time, the feeling of gratitude toward God or destiny (depending if a person believes in God) numbs, and indifference and dissatisfaction takes over. That is the human nature.

Similarly, a Christian goes through the same phases in their spiritual life. At the beginning, after a human turns to God in repentance, a person sees how much spiritual work they have to do with themselves. They must take out the old, sinful habits, change their mindset, take charge of their negative emotions, and learn to make the right decisions. Afterwards, noticeable change takes place.

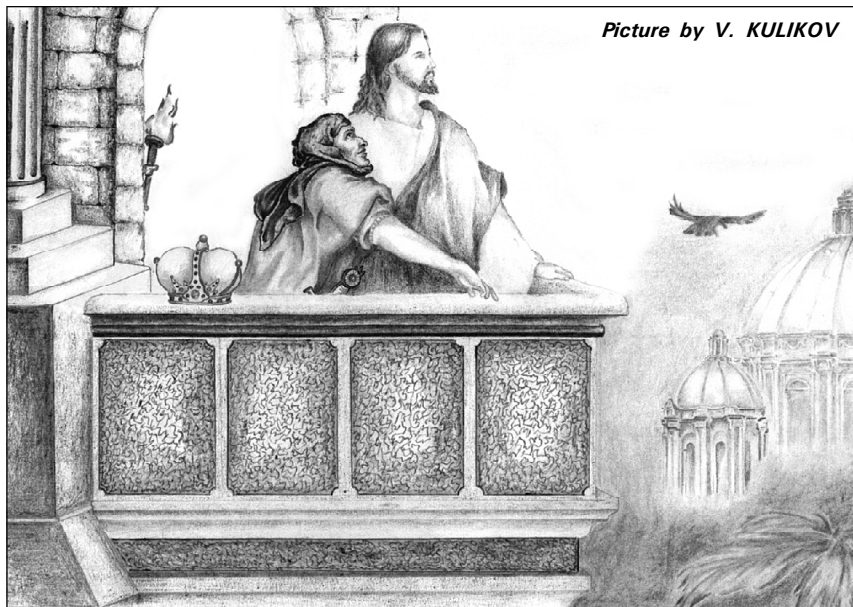
With God's help, a human is able to develop the skill of obedience to truth, and turn away from temptation's fights. Endurance and wisdom appears. God's blessings come along with a settlement in life. There is also an acknowledgement from the surrounding people. With this comes relaxation and carelessness that lead to the spiritual fall of a Christian. It is a lot easier for the devil to defeat a self-assured and self-satisfied Christian...

LIFE, IS STRIVING BY TOWARDS GOALS

One of the most spread mistakes is when people lose their present for the sake of the future. In essence, this begins in the childhood, when a child dreams about growing up and they taste the life of a grown-up's life through the prism of their child's mind. Some kids dream that when they start a job, they will buy ice-cream and candy and eat it all in one sitting. Yet, they mature with time and their desire to fulfill their childhood dreams passes... and frankly, these childhood dreams come across funny. Such euphoria of anticipation holds many people afloat, but when the wish is fulfilled or if they «outgrow» it, they lose the thing that stimulated them and gave them the strength to overcome hardships. When you do not have something, you want to own. When you attain it, it does not bring the anticipated joy, thus stripping us of the stimulus, and we no longer have anything to strive after.

This is where the phenomena of unhappy yet wealthy people comes from. The state of materialistic success that was sought after does not bring them happiness. In fact, success or wealth is not guilty. The loss of stimulus and aspiration is at fault. When people achieve what they sought after, they start looking for new and heightened goals, and this saves them from depression

and disappointment for some time until it brings them to the same results. Who knows of the proverb: Happy is not the one who has a lot but who wants little. In other words, we can say that the level of happiness does not depend on materialistic wellbeing, good health, or the possession of freedom. Just like a human loses interest in childish games as they age, the same thing happens in the spiritual maturation when materialistic items decrease in their importance. For a Christian, the most joy and happiness is found in abiding in God's will and the fulfillment of His ways. This is when the torment from unfulfilled desires goes away. Life in this case is focused on the most important point, the purpose of their existence and why they were made for.



Picture by V. KULIKOV

NOT DOING YOUR JOB

Let us look at people who do not fulfill their destiny. Let us suppose that a talented musician works on a construction site as a bricklayer. After some time, he starts to bring his dear violin with him to the site and passionately play musical composition that world known musicians play. How long will the construction workers put up with such a worker who rather than meeting deadlines is playing world-acclaimed pieces? Who needs such a musician at a construction site? Who needs a worker who distracts others and created a hazardous workplace?.. Who needs a chef who is an expert cobbler but does not know how to properly prepare food? Will such a cobbler be valued in a kitchen?

Similarly, this is how our life goals come about. If we are created for one thing but we are busy with another thing, will we reach happiness? Will our Creator be happy when He made us for one purpose, gave us the necessary talents, but we neglect them and try to do something different. What are we made for then? What productivity can be talked about in such a scenario? It is no surprise that a person meets depression and disappointment on such a path. They brought it upon themselves. It is necessary for us to find an occupation in which we will flourish and bring plenty of fruit for God and people in the short days of our life.

1 Corinthians 7:17 — *Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.*

You may ask, «But what if I do not know what my calling is?»

Then you can start in God's general will that is reflected in His Word. Try to fulfill what it says and His personal will will open up to you.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 — *For this is the will of God, your sanctification...*

Romans 12:2 — *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Ephesians 5:17 — *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE?

What is a human living on the planet for? What should his or her goal be?

We will try to promptly respond to these questions.

1. Restore the lost fellowship with God

In the Garden of Eden, humans were able to communicate with God in an easy and simple manner and this fellowship brought satisfaction to both parties. After the fall of man, this fellowship was lost and its restoration is only possible under certain conditions. Fellowship with God changes a person and makes him or her in the likeness of God and that is why this is so valuable.

Genesis 3:8-10 — *And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, «Where are you?» And he said, «I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself».*

Romans 8:14 — *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

1 Corinthians 1:9 — *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

2. To be in the likeness of God and His Son — Jesus Christ on Earth

Romans 8:29 — *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

3. Sanctification

1 Corinthians 15:49 — *Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.*

1 Peter 1:15-16 — *...but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, «You shall be holy, for I am holy».*

Revelations 22:11 — *Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy».*

4. To fulfill the personal will of God for each one of us

The fulfillment of God's will brings us to a fruitful and glorious human life!

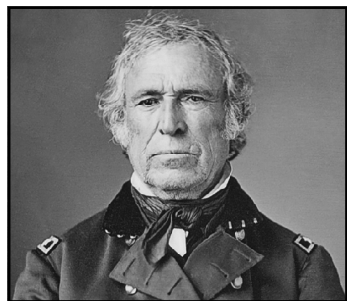
1 Corinthians 7:17 — *Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.*

1 Peter 4:2 — *so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.*

Aleksandr BORISENKO.

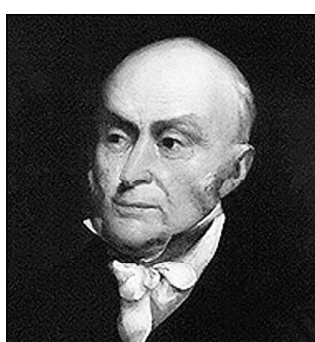
QUOTES FROM FAMOUS PEOPLE ABOUT GOD AND THE BIBLE

Zachary TAYLOR
12th President of The
United States of America



«The Bible must be given to the hands of especially young people. It is the best school book in the world. What I learned as a child is much better remembered than what I read now, and I would like all citizens of our country to be under the influence of this Holy Book».

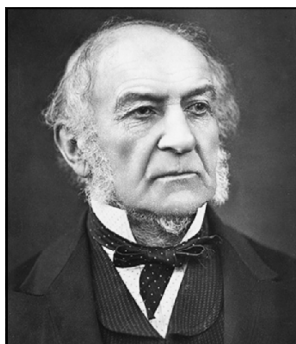
John Quincy ADAMS
6th President of The
United States of America



«My respect for the Bible is so great that the sooner my children start reading it, the more I will be sure that they will become useful citizens of their country and respected members of society. For many years I have

been keeping to the custom of reading the Bible once a year».

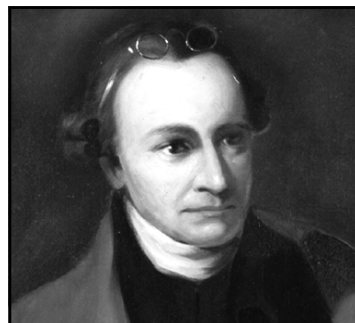
William GLADSTONE
English State Leader
and Writer



«At one time I knew ninety-five prominent people in the world, and eighty-seven of them were followers of the

Bible. The Bible stands out for its origin, and an immeasurable distance separates it from other books».

Patrick HENRY
American Independence
Advocate



«The Bible is more valuable than all the books that have ever been printed».

Horace GRILI
American Journalist



«It is impossible to enslave mentally or socially the people who read the Bible. Biblical principles underpin human freedom».

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

In my opinion, in the Epistle to the Romans chapters sixth, seventh and eighth are very important, but I cannot fully understand them. When you read these chapters, what do you see in them? I hope that the Holy Spirit will tell you what to write. There are many Christians who do not have a complete understanding of what is written in chapters six, seven and eight

in the Epistle to the Romans. Let the Holy Spirit lead your heart so that you can explain each of these chapters in detail.

I will be sincerely grateful for the answer. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ always be with you!

With love, Roman.

AN EXPOSITION ON ROMANS CHAPTERS SIX THROUGH EIGHT

In general, the entire message of the Apostle Paul to Christians who lived in Rome is unique. In the first verses (**Romans 1:1-5**), Apostle Paul defines the essence of the gospel message: that God through Jesus Christ came into the world to save people from eternal destruction. Unfortunately, like in all times, there were people to whom the doctrine of man's salvation by God's grace was not understood, and those people remained on the «old rail» of attaining salvation by their deeds and merits. This forced Apostle Paul to point out the magnitude of human immorality. And in the first three chapters of this epistle Apostle Paul shows that all people are guilty by their nature and their affairs, and are subject to God's wrath and judgment and cannot be justified and saved. Therefore, God, out of love for people, gave His Son Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for the sins of all people, so that everyone who believes and follows Him can receive the remission of sins and God's justice.

Romans 3:23-25 — *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood...*

Also, in Roman church, there were people who turned the grace of God into a motive for lust and claimed that, according to the teachings of Apostle Paul, one could sin.

Therefore, Apostle Paul in chapter six of Romans authoritatively counters this error, and begins the chapter with a rhetorical question: *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* (**Romans 6:1**). And the answer: *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* (**Romans 6:2**). Further, he explains in the form of a dialogue with the supposed opponents of God's truth: *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection...* (**Romans 6:3-5**).

Paul points out that immersion in water at Christian water baptism symbolizes the identification of the one being baptized with Christ in His death and burial, and the way out of the water symbolizes the beginning of a new life, united with the resurrected Christ. Then, Apostle Paul explains that the Christian's duty is to consider one dead to the world and sin and thus free from the domination of the previous lusts of the flesh, which, by old habit, still have the tendency to make note of itself. Moreover, it is not our physical body, in which we live and serve the Lord, but our sinful nature, inherited from Adam, with its sinful inclinations is subject to mortification.

Romans 6:11-13 — *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.*

Further (**Romans 6:14**), Paul shows an advantage in being under grace, and not under the law.

The law, under the penalty of death, demanded the execution of its commands, condemning the person outside and inside. And the grace of God, unlike the law, penetrates and changes the inner, spiritual principle of man, judging his thoughts and intents of the heart, making sin be disgrace to him (**Hebrews 4:12**).

2 Corinthians 10:4 — *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds...*

Being under grace, a person is free from the slavery of sin and can present oneself

to God for His work. At the same time, God does not force anyone to serve Him. This is everyone's personal choice.

Romans 6:23 — *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Chapter 7

In the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Apostle Paul explains that the life of Christians saved by faith is incompatible with sin, and should be dedicated to God for good works. Later in the seventh chapter he reveals the difficulties that a Christian encounters on one's life's path.

The first problem was the request of the Christians practicing Judaism that not only do the new Christians converts from pagans for salvation, but besides having faith in Christ they still must practice the Old Testament law. For example, Apostle Paul counters this false teaching of marriage between people. He explains that a person cannot legally be in two marriages: *For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God... But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter* (**Romans 7:2-4, 6**).

This means that the salvation of a Christian does not depend on the fulfillment of the principles of the Old Testament law, but on the acceptance by faith of the Christ's sacrifice and the agreement to follow Christ and His teaching. Recall, in the sixth chapter, Apostle Paul testifies that a true Christian is one who is united with Christ in His death for sin and in His resurrection for a new life for God: *Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord* (**Romans 6:11**).

Unfortunately, a newly-converted Christian, having reconciled with God by faith, forgets that the victory of the spirit over the flesh is achieved only by the power of God, and begins to fight against the lusts of his unreformed flesh with his own strength. Soon, in perplexity, it reveals the unsuccessfulness of this fight: *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I* (**Romans 7:15**). And such Christians begin to understand: *Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing...* (**Romans 7:17-18**). But how to deal with this evil? And he cries: *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* (**Romans 7:24**). The answer to this cry of

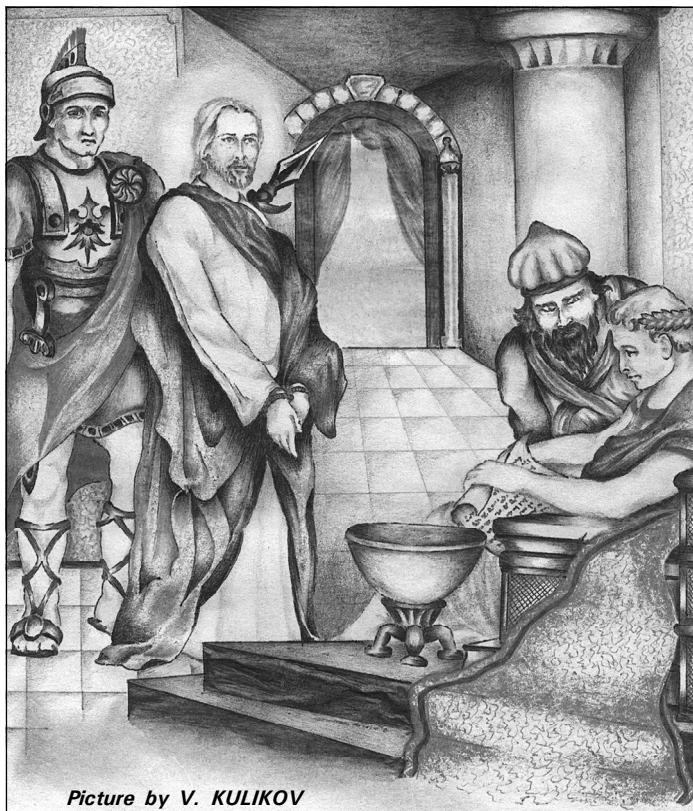
the soul, exhausted by struggles, Apostle Paul gives in **Romans 8:1-2**.

Chapter 8

Freedom from condemnation and victory over sin is obtained by those *which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit* (**Romans 8:1**). Only unity with Christ can give a Christian victory over sin, as Paul says in detail in **Romans 6:6-10**. He seems to be saying: «Remember where you fell from».

We receive salvation by faith in Christ,

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS



Picture by V. KULIKOV

and faith gives us victory over sin, which unites us with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Colossians 2:6 — *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him...*

2 Corinthians 5:17 — *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...*

And only those who are in Christ are obedient to the guidance of the Holy Spirit can live a righteous life, according to God's law, and thereby testify that the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and righteous and good... (**Romans 7:12**).

Romans 8:4 — *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Therefore, it is necessary for a Christian to have a clear understanding of the spiritual definitions of what it means to live by the spirit or the flesh. Sometimes the misinterpretation of these definitions not only confuses sincere Christians, but also gives way to heretical teachings.

Some «zealots» taught that life in the spirit is the physical mortification of our body (as a method of approaching God). From here asceticism and retreat were born.

Apostle Paul condemns this teaching as a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh (**Colossians 2:23**).

The scripture does not call us to exercise the death of our body, as for in our bodies we must serve God and people, but calls us to control the body's needs within the framework of rational existence. In the Old Testament, the word «flesh» is used as a synonym for the word «body», the physical

part of a person, but in his epistles Apostle Paul gives this word a different shade.

He calls the flesh not only the physical body, but also the spoiled part of human nature, which can manifest itself in a person even after his conversion to God and is still the worst enemy to a person. The flesh is the manifestation in the body of sinful human nature.

Galatians 5:17 — *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

To live according to the flesh is to be held captive by the greedy sinful desires of the flesh. This applies not only to drunkenness, drug addiction, fornication, perverted sex, mental pleasures from watching sex scenes in films and similar readings in books, but also self-esteem, pride, exalting others, and wasting precious time that we have to prepare for eternity.

This self-satisfied fleshly «I» wants to live only for himself, in his own name, for his personal interests, regardless of the will of God. Even in people that go to church there are fleshly people who seek recognition of authority and his own glory in the midst of God's people Christ sharply rebuked such people: *And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life* (**John 5:40**); *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?* (**John 5:44**).

Christ warns that being too involved in life cares can be a dangerous source of fleshly thoughts: *And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting... cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares* (**Luke 21:34**).

Therefore, *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God... So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God* (**Romans 8:6-8**).

Where is the source of spiritual thoughts? God also proclaimed the blessings of the New Testament through the prophet Jeremiah: **Hebrews 10:16** — *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, «I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them...»* (**Jeremiah 31:33**).

And to every Christian, whose spirit was revived through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit, God bestows the ability to think, speak, feel and act according to His will, that is, to be a new creation in Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:17**).

And if a Christian follows the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who directs to do the will of God, written down by Christ in His spirit, then comes victory over the law of sin and death in the flesh (**Romans 7:24-25**).

Romans 8:2 — *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

But victory does not come automatically without the efforts from the person. God does not save man without his consent. Apostle Paul speaks of a decisive struggle: *...I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway* (**1 Corinthians 9:25-27**); *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...* (**Galatians 2:19-20**).

In order to achieve the victory of the spirit, this desire of a Christian must be the goal of his life. And he should concentrate all his thoughts on achieving this goal As Solomon said, *For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...* (**Proverbs 23:7**).

Apostle Paul was completely absorbed in this great, holy purpose, setting an example for us: *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* (**Philippians 3:13-14**).

(Continued on the 12th page)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

AN EXPOSITION ON ROMANS CHAPTERS SIX THROUGH EIGHT

(Ending.
Beginning on the 11th page)

We can't do God's will and live according to our carnal thoughts. For this reason, Scripture tells us: *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things (Colossians 3:2). No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else. He will hold to the one, and despise the other, Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24).* A Christian should be very attentive to the sources of information which feed his spirit. The apostle Paul advises in his letter to the Philippians: *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:8-9).* The promptings in our spirit, emanating from the Holy Spirit, always guide us to actions or thoughts for the glory of the Lord, to do God's will to bring fruit to the Lord in every holy deed, and direct us to identify with Christ in His death for sin and life with God.

But if we are inattentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, then these promptings become weaker, and the impulses of the flesh can tempt us to take the path of death. **Matt. 6:33** — *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* A Christian must constantly reject the carnal desires of our sinful nature. **1 John 2:15-16**: *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — comes not from the Father but from the world.* And in this struggle for life in the spirit we must remember that only fellowship with Christ gives the Christian victory over the flesh, for the Heavenly Father sent His Son Jesus Christ to *proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18).* And the apostle bears witness: *For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God (Rom. 8:13-14).*

This permanent union with Christ, giving the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, in the spirit of the Christian produces an experience of intimate communion with God as with its own Father. So a Christian with childish gullibility turns his spirit to God: «Abba the Father», which means «My Father». This is a real statement of sonship that God will give to His children. And the apostle proclaims the miraculous effect of this union: *This Spirit itself testifies to our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children are, then heirs, heirs of God, co-heirs to Christ, if only with Him we suffer, in order to become famous with Him (Rom. 8:16-17).*

But this blessed affiliation with Christ and His heritage is inevitably associated with the suffering that Christians endure as a result of their rejection of the system of worldly life.

This suffering can come from three sources:

- 1) from the world corrupted by sin (**Gal. 6:14; John 16:33**),
- 2) from our flesh, which resists the spirit (**Rom. 8:13**),
- 3) from the heavenly spirits of evil (**Eph. 6:10-18**).

But all these temporary sufferings, sorrows, humiliations and persecutions from the world should be regarded by Christians as absolutely insignificant in comparison with the eternal comfort, peace and joy that holy and faithful victors in Christ will receive (**Rom. 8:18**). And this suffering of the children of God is shared by all creature (that is, living and inanimate nature), which has been subjected to the destructive consequences of the curses of human sin. But all this suffering will come to an end, when the original order of nature will be restored along with the inheritance of the saved children of God (**2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:3-5; 22:3**). But until the liberation from slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God has come (**Rom. 8:21**), the whole creature groans collectively (**Rom. 8:22**). And the Apostle Paul writes: *...and not only she, but also ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, and we weep within ourselves, awaiting adoption, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23).* Here there is an indication that our flesh is subject to temptations by the law of sin and death, with which Christians have to constantly fight, waiting for adoption, redemption of our body. **1 Cor. 15:53** — *For this perishable must be clothed with the imperishable, and this mortal be clothed with immortality...*

And now the Spirit also supports us in our weaknesses, that is, it shares our sorrows with us, sympathizes with us in our needs and supports our spirit in intercessory prayers for us according to the will of God (**Rom. 8:27**). Each child of God has two Divine Intercessors for himself: Christ intercedes for us in heaven before the Father (**1 John 2:1**), and the Holy Spirit intercedes in the believer himself, stirring up prayer words in his spirit (**Romans 8:26; 1 Cor 14:14-15; Jude 1:20**) by the will of God (**Rom. 8:27**).

Rom. 8:28 — *Moreover, we know that those who love God, who were called according to his purpose, all work together for good.* Here the questions immediately arise: what contributes to the good and to what good? Yes, indeed, no matter what happens to us in our lives: joy or grief — all of this is part of God's individual plan of education and, with the right attitude to it, will necessarily change us for the better. All the vicissitudes of our lives encourage us to seek answers from the Lord, who is always close to all seekers and can solve all our needs.

ATTENTION!

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

Jer. 33:3 — *...call to me, and I will answer you, show you the great and the inaccessible, which you do not know.*

Matt. 11:28-30 — *Come to me, all who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest; Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is good, and my burden is light.*

By eliminating all causes that can divide us with God and deprive of His leadership (**Isa. 59:2**), we correct

persist and do not submit to the truth, but indulge in unrighteousness, wrath and anger (Rom. 2:6-8); On the contrary, glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good... (Rom. 2:10); ...There is no favoritism with God (Rom. 2:11).

Justification and glorification of the called ones are accomplished only through their repentance, confession of former sins and their dedication to God for a holy life, the ultimate goal of which is to transform into the image of Christ (**2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Peter 3:21**). The expression «transformation into the image of Christ» means «sanctification of the believer so that he can think, feel and act like Christ».

Gal. 2:19-20 — *I was crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*

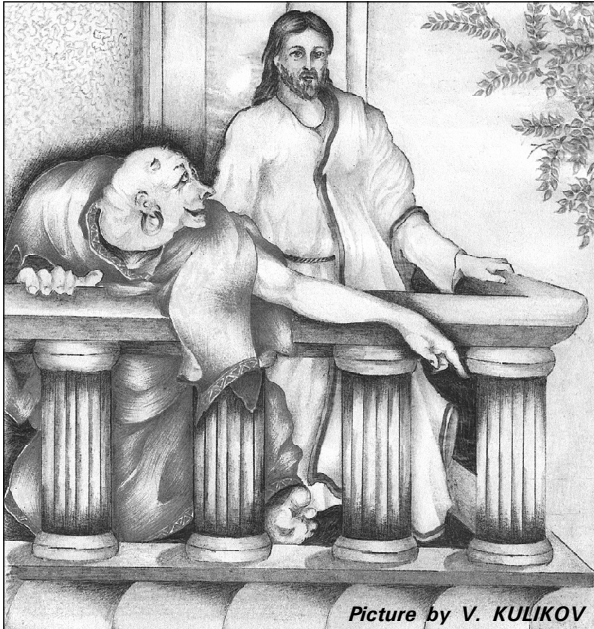
Gal. 5:24 — *...those who are Christ, crucify the flesh with passions and lusts.*

Rom. 8:31-37 — *What to say to that? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but betrayed Him for all of us, how with Him does he not grant us all? Who will blame the elect of God? God justifies*

them. Who condemns? Christ Jesus died, but he was resurrected: He and the right hand of God, He also intercedes for us Who shall separate us from the love of God: sorrow, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? as it is written: for you they are killing us every day, they consider us to be sheep, doomed to slaughter. But all this we overcome by the power of Him who loved us.

From the days of the first church, Christians suffered persecution, grief, cramping, hunger, sword, and other sufferings for the name of Christ. But the blood of the martyrs, according to the testimony of history, was the «seed of the church», with a surplus of replenishing the fallen heroes. And now we know that the death and resurrection of Christ is the guarantee of His unchanging love and the victory of our faith: *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor the beginning, nor strength, nor the present, nor the future, nor the height, nor depth, no other creature can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38-39).*

Eduard KORCHEMNY,
Senior Pastor of Colville Church,
WA.



Picture by V. KULIKOV

our ways and, if necessary, repent and reconcile with people and with God (**1 John 3:21-22**). This search brings us closer to the Lord, and, looking at His glory, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord's Spirit (**2 Cor. 3:18**).

It is this very great good for man — transformation into the image of Christ — that God wants to attain in us. **Rom. 8:29** — *...whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...* God knew in advance those who would accept the death of Christ as the sacrifice of atonement for their sins, and the righteousness of Christ as their justification.

Rom. 3:24-25 — *...receiving justification by gift, by His grace, redemption in Christ Jesus, whom God offered to be propitiation in His blood through faith...*

Rom. 8:30 — *And whom he predestined, he also called those, and whom he called, those he justified; and whom he justified, he also glorified.*

And if some unbelieving critic asks the question: «What is such honor and glory for the elect?» — this is what God's answer says: *...who will reward everyone according to his deeds: those who constantly seek goodness, honor and immortality in good deeds — eternal life; and to those who*

Dear readers of «Prisoner»!

The publication 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

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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