



PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”.

John 8:32

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I am incarcerated and I know about guys like me not from someone's words or from movies but from my own experience. I know these people for who they really are: angry and cruel, hypocrites and liars, two-faced and cowards. They are also desperate, disillusioned, broken, and in some rare cases, truly penitent. This last category is who we will speak about today.

Are there many truly penitent (repentant) people incarcerated today? I can say that they are a minority. There are a lot more people who regret being incarcerated a lot more than they regret their actions. A sizeable number of people come to faith in God when they are in prison. However, not all

incarcerated. Christian people who are not in jail don't have a deficit in ministries that they can participate in. Those who are imprisoned often do not know how they can serve the Lord. The scene is very bleak when these brothers and sisters are released from prison. Many of them don't have a strong core (strong faith) and not having grown accustomed to serving God, they stray from the straight and narrow path and even sometimes end up back in prison. Why does this happen? It would seem that a Christian person who is following Jesus Christ would never stray off onto the wrong path but suddenly they go and return to their old ways. The reason is because

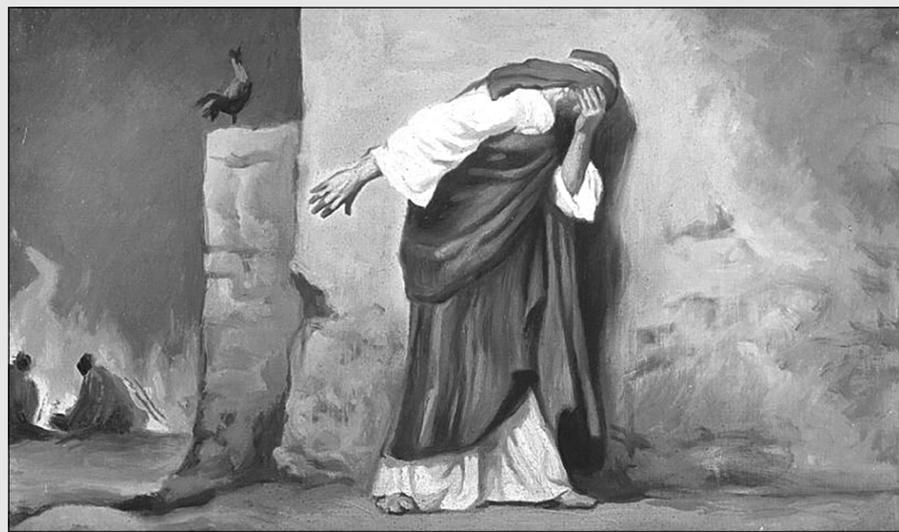
with God's Word which gives us answers to all questions including the one: "How can I serve God while being imprisoned?" The closer we are to God (through prayer and study of God's Word), the better we learn His will in regards to ourselves and the more we receive His gifts. God gives each one of us certain talents in order for each one to serve God wherever we may be. Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans was inspired by God to say the following: *“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching,*

REMAIN FAITHFUL TO GOD

of them are sincere. Regrettably, some use the faith in God as a mask only for the duration of their incarceration. It is quite easy to explain why they do this. Some use this mask to show the administration of the prison that they have become a better person so they can be released early. Others use the mask of faith in order to get benefits from Christians who are ministering to people in prisons. A third category use the mask of faith for both reasons. And only a very small percent of incarcerated people come to God to serve Him. The parable of the sower comes to mind: *“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop — a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown”* (Matthew 13:3-8).

Jesus told this parable to people who considered themselves Christians and who followed Jesus for a variety of different reasons. This is why Jesus explained the meaning of the parable to the people: *“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown”* (Matthew 13:18-23).

This parable illustrates all the people who for one reason or another come to God. Some came and left. Some people acted "holy" for a while but then went back to their old routine. And only a very small percent came to God to truly serve Him. Even at this point, some Christians have questions about how to serve God; this is especially true for those who have repented but are currently incar-



Rejection of Peter. Drawing by Robert Leinveber

when these people were imprisoned, many of them did not listen to what the Word of God says about faith without works. Those that come to God far more easily remember places like *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Isn't it true that it is very comfortable to occupy this position when one is trying to excuse their lack of action in the service of God by citing these Bible verses and taking them out of context? However, the next verse from the second chapter of Ephesians has a very interesting follow-up which says: *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10). In other words, each one of us is God's creation that was created to commit good deeds that God had prepared for us to commit. Faith in God is working in his vineyard. This is talked about in the Book of James: *“For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead”* (James 2:26). Faith in God that is not backed up by actions will always remain weak, and that's to put it nicely in contrast with what Apostle James called it.

Some can say: "But how can I serve God when I am imprisoned?" And true, at first glance, the question might seem very difficult — how? But this is so only at first glance. In reality, all answers to life's questions are found in the only source of knowledge — the Bible. This book contains a wealth of knowledge that is priceless. By immersing oneself into this spiritual source of knowledge, a person begins to be transformed on the inside. And when this book does not leave our hands, we are filled more and more

then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay', says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head'. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:6-21).

I am certain that from what was said by Apostle Paul above, everyone can find for themselves something that he can serve God with. If a person does not cultivate this inside of themselves while they are still imprisoned, once they are released, the chances of them serving God are close to 0%. Remaining faithful to God does not start tomorrow but it starts today, right now, because tomorrow might not even come.

I. GORIK.

CHRISTIAN NEWS

A Handsewn Gospel of Matthew has Entered the Book of Records in Ukraine

A Gospel of Matthew that was sewn by a seamstress from Rivne became the largest sewn book in Ukraine. The record was recorded on November 7, 2019 in the house-museum of Taras Shevchenko in Kyiv.

The children's author Elena Medvedeva dedicated her evenings and weekends for two years in order to sew the book of the New Testament. The result was 60 pages which were 60 by 42 cm (23.6 inches by 16.5 inches) which contain 88,700 words. The weight of the book is 9.4 kilograms (20.7 pounds).

“As it is widely known, there are four canonical gospels. Now I have finished working on the last of them. The Gospel of Matthew which I present today is the largest of all of the handsewn books that I have created both in the number of pages and by weight”. This quote Elena Medvedeva gave to “Facts”.

In the interview, the seamstress talked about how she was inspired to sew books ten years ago by her son.

“In 6th grade, he started to write tall tales; I liked them and wanted to get them published. But Andrey proposed a creative idea: ‘Mom, the text will be printed on cloth and the illustrations will be sewn by you’. Before this, I had never done any sewing works but I took it up with enthusiasm and it almost immediately started to go great” — this was reported by Elena.

The sewn Gospel will be kept in the Literature Museum of Ulas Samchuk in Rivne.

<https://bog.news>

Any social group, whether it be a family, a race, a tribe, a government, needs a set of responsibilities and rights for every member of society, for normal functioning.

The boundaries and the punishment for crossing them must be respected. This requires a system of rewards and punishments without which there will be the domination of power and fear, violence and the trampling of basic laws of justice.

In the creation of man, God displayed the main understanding of the laws of justice in people's conscience. In the fall of man and subsequent moral degradation, the law of conscience ceased to perform its functions. That's why there was a need for an external

THE DANGERS OF REMOVING TEACHING ABOUT SIN FROM THE CHURCH

regulator in the form of laws prescribing norms in the relationship of people with each other.

Making a covenant with Abraham, God drew Abraham's attention to the need to command his descendants after him to do judgment and truth. On the part of Abraham and his descendants, this was an important condition under which God promised to multiply Abraham's offspring and do him good.

Gen. 18:19 — *For I have known him, in order that he may command after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to*

Abraham what He has spoken to him.

This was also the case when the covenant was made with the people of Israel, which God based on the law (**Gen. 19:5**): in their compliance to it, God obliged on his part to fulfill His obligations.

In our time as we turn to God, the basis of rebirth is Christ's doctrine or the Word of God, on the basis of which man determines his adversity and turns to the Savior. Without the Word of God that gauges and con-

victs, it is impossible for a person to understand that he is a sinner and, accordingly, to be saved! And here we see that we need a law.

Although in the New Testament it is called the perfect law of liberty (**Jas. 1:25**), leading to freedom in Christ, and the law of Christ (**Gal. 6:2**), this does not change the essence.

We need a determiner of sin and righteousness, without which it is impossible to be saved.

What happens when the teaching about sin is removed

from the Church teaching? At the same time, the possibility of salvation is withdrawn! Let's try to explain it in other words.

If there is no definition of sin — no sinners.

No sinners — no need for a Savior.

No need for a Savior — no salvation of souls.

So, by removing the teaching about sin from the church, we deprive people of the basics of salvation, leaving the church without the reviving action through the Word of God. And as a result, the church will consist of people who are not born again and not saved.

Aleksandr BORISENKO.

HOT TOPIC!

Who are the sons of God in the 6th chapter of the book of Genesis?

Genesis 6:1–2, 4 — *Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. ... There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.*

Who are the sons of God, who married the daughters of men and from whom the giants were born? The opinion of theologians and scholars on this issue was divided.

Some are of the opinion that the sons of God are aliens who flew from another planet and began to marry women of the earth (version No. 1).

Others share the opinion of the theologian H. S. Leopold, who believes that the sons of God were the descendants of Seth (**Genesis 4:25–5:32**), who were god-fearing people. Leopold wrote: "So who are the sons of God? There is no doubt that they are the descendants of Seth, who for a long time lived far away from the descendants of Cain, but later began to marry the daughters of men because they were beautiful. And the so-called Nephilim were a derivative of these marriages".

As it is known, the rulers of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia often proclaimed themselves sons of God in order to emphasize their strength and superiority over their subjects. They were great people, despotic rulers who had many wives. They are remembered from the ancient times as the mighty men of old (version No. 2).

Still others share the opinion of Henry Morris, stating the following: "These giants are descendants of men and women, possessed by demonic forces. It is thanks to such marriages that the world's population has corrupted so quickly and to such an extent that, as the Bible says, the Lord was sorry that He made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart (**Genesis 6:6**)".

"The Hebrew word, translated as giants or titans, — *nephilim*. This means fallen and quite properly describes the nature of their spiritual parents — fallen angels" (Morris, The Defender's Bible). This is version No. 3.

The fourth opinion is that the sons of God were none other than the fallen angels themselves. In the book of Job angels are called sons of God: *Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (**Job 38:4–7**)*. This is version No. 4.

If we look closely at all these points of view, we can draw the following conclusions: since no place in the Bible mentions God creating aliens, we must discard **version No. 1** that the sons of God were aliens.

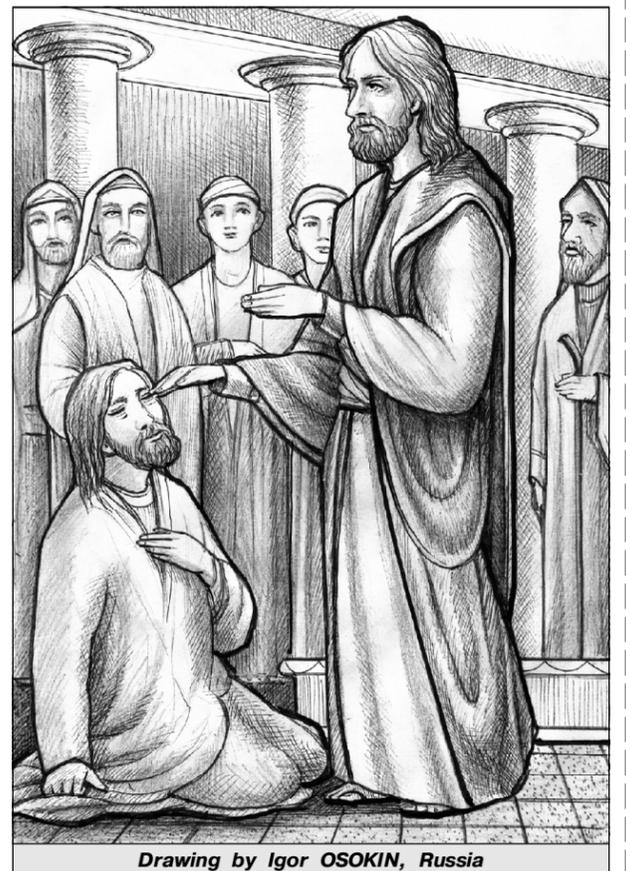
Version No. 2 also does not stand up to criticism, because although the descendants of Seth were god-fearing people, they, like all the other descendants of Adam were sinful people and therefore they could hardly claim the title of sons of God. However, if we assume that they were so god-fearing that they almost did not sin, then how do we explain such corruption and degradation of morality and behavior of their descendants? Would they not have passed on to their children the knowledge of God and the love for Him, which they themselves possessed? Further, it should be noted, that both the descendants of Cain and the descendants of Seth had one forefather — Adam. In fact, they were cousins. And we know, giants are not born from marriages with close relatives. Mutations can happen, but negative kinds, in no way positive kinds. And finally, the comparison with the rulers

of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, made by the theologian H. S. Leopold, is meaningless. It is one thing, what they called themselves, and quite another — to have a special offspring. There is no evidence that the Egyptian pharaohs who married their subjects had children who were giants.

Version No. 3. There is something in it, but, according to Henry Morris, Nephilim were a derivative of marriages between possessed people. However, the Bible refers to men in such marriages as sons of God, and women — daughters of men. It would be logical then to assume that women were still not possessed, like men who married them. This is the first remark. The second — more serious — is that flesh is flesh. And the spiritual possession of parents cannot affect the physical nature of their children. This is the same thing to say: Peter's father was a thief, because of this Peter grew two meters tall and can lift heavy weights. Doesn't that sound funny? However, if we say: Peter's father was a thief, and Peter followed in his footsteps, then such a statement will not cause any laughter or bewilderment. Similarly, parent's possession could in no way affect the physical health and strength of first-generation children. On the spiritual and moral level — yes, but not on the physical.

Version No. 4. A reference to a parallel place in the Bible (the book of Job), where the angels were called the sons of God, and the meaning of the word Nephilim — fallen — support version No. 4. The only objection is the words of Jesus Christ in **Matthew 22:30**: *For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven*. From this statement of Jesus, we can conclude that angels cannot marry and have sex. However, upon close examination of this biblical verse, we can make the following observations:

1. Jesus spoke of God's angels, not fallen angels (demons).
2. He was addressing life in heaven.



Drawing by Igor OSOKIN, Russia

3. He was not talking about marriages between angel-like creatures and humans.

From this we can conclude that, perhaps, the fallen angels, cast down (exiled) to the earth, have or had a unique ability: they could marry women of the earth in order to achieve complete decomposition and demoralization of the world's population (in which they succeeded, judging from **Genesis 6:5**: *Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*).

In addition, version No. 4 best explains the problem of the appearance of giants. Most likely, from such marriages ("crossing" of two parents, so dissimilar in physiological composition of the parents), such extraordinary children were born — giants, who Bible calls the mighty men of old.

We have brought to your attention four theories. Which one to stick to — decide for yourself. What really happened, we can only find out when we meet face to face with our Lord. In the meantime, we can only speculate and build our guesses on the limited knowledge that we have.

<http://www.cogmtl.net/q.htm>

CHRISTIAN NEWS

A boy born brainless continues to amaze the world

Cumbrian boy Noah Wall was born with a cleft spine and with only two percent of his brain. Doctors did not expect him to live even a few hours. However, Noah is already seven years old, writes BBC.

Noah is learning how to count and most recently, after therapy in Australia, he moved his leg for the first time. Parents believe that one day he will be able to walk.

According to *Right To Life*, when a pathology was detected by ultrasound, doctors advised Noah's parents to have an abortion, but the family refused.



"We were offered to terminate the pregnancy five times", said his father in the documentary *The Boy With No Brain*. "That was never an option for us. We wanted to give Noah the same chance for life".

When Noah was born, in his head was less than two percent of the brain. In addition to the almost complete absence of the brain, his lower body from the chest down was also paralyzed. Doctors performed a five-hour surgery, stitching a hole in Noah's back, and then placed a shunt in the skull to pump out excess fluid from the brain.

When the boy turned three, doctors were surprised to find that his brain had grown to eighty percent. Now it is almost fully functional.

"We could hardly believe it, when we heard from doctors, that his brain was almost back to normal", said Mom. "It was like a dream. I have never heard anything like it. Even the consultants were in tears. They are simply amazed at what he can do".

Every year Noah gives out hundreds of Christmas presents to employees and patients at Great North Children's Hospital, where he was born.

Claire Nicholson, Noah's neurosurgeon — consultant, said in 2016: He still surprises us with his life. He is wonderful".

<https://bog.news>

“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’. They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; there is none who does good. God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God” (Ps. 53:1–2).

How sad is it that human society is divided into two categories of people: believers and unbelievers. The former believe in God and affirmatively say that without faith in Him hell and eternal torment awaits everyone. The second category ironically mocks and say that God is only a myth, and faith in Him is just the lot of the weak. As you know, this category of people is much more than those who

the Lord calls to is quite narrow and uncomfortable for those who are used to relying solely on their minds. A person is used to relying mainly on himself, especially if nature has endowed him with high intelligence. Such people think that it is their merit or the merit of their parents, that they came to this world with such extraordinary personalities.

In human society, thoughts of great scientists and philosophers are often used as quotes. Many are amazed at the deep meaning that this or that author allegedly expressed. However, few people know that all philosophy and all government laws are based on biblical truths. Anyone who reads the Bible at least once will understand that no one said anything new in the present

not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones. Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase...” (Pr. 3:5–9)

Unfortunately, many people today do not want to hear this and deny the existence of God. However, it's easier for many to live like that, because you don't have to take responsibility to live an exceptionally righteous life, to which the Lord calls. Walking on a broad path through life is much more convenient and

God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

God left us His word in the Bible. When we get to know it and study it, we clearly see how insignificant we all are in this world without His presence. Believing in God, a person gains invaluable wealth — peace and joy in their soul. The Word of God opens a whole storehouse of wisdom and love for a man, thanks to which life is filled with light and God's grace. For those who have not yet experienced this priceless gift, God through His Word says: **“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jer. 33:3).**

There is a huge difference between sincere believers and the non-believers.

THE ARGUMENT OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

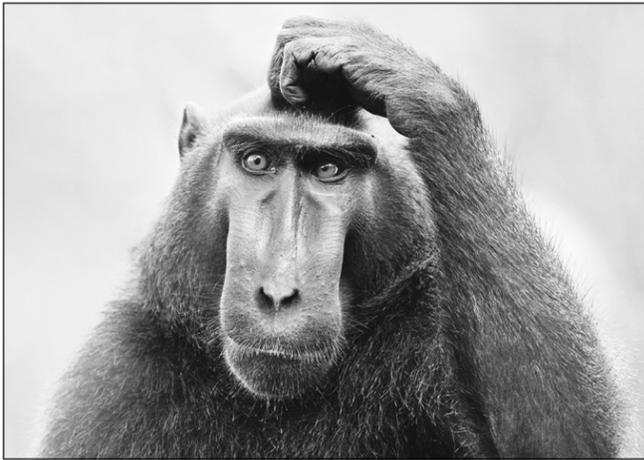
believe that God is real and His work is a confirmation of their faith. So who is right in this extremely difficult matter?

Perhaps, in order for this dilemma to become open to all, it is necessary to find out what the statements of both parties are based on.

So, I will say without the slightest bias that when you hear the conversations of unbelieving people, then, besides unproven emotions, nothing else comes from them. They claim there is no God, but cannot explain where the Universe and all living things came from, that fill our Earth, including human form itself. To the question “Do you really believe that you are descends of a monkey?” opponents usually smile and cannot say anything intelligible. As a rule, you hear Darwin's memorized theory of evolution, but at the same time no one really wants to make themselves equals with the monkeys or recognize them as their ancestors. All this just goes to the point of absurdity: claiming that there is no God, a person cannot provide any evidence in favor of his statement. Empty and stubborn verbosity — is the whole arsenal of what atheists use in such discussions. I personally have often heard when a person with a smart look expressed his “deep” knowledge, saying there is no God. In such cases, I always immediately asked the same question: “Have you tried to turn to Him, before asserting this?” The answer always sounded unmistakably: “No”. So it turns out that most of the population of our planet simply blindly and stupidly repeats one after another that there is no God. In fact, not one of them even tried to call on the name of the Lord in repentance, to verify the falsehood of his denials, and, of course, they never opened the Bible. How stupid is it to affirm something you do not know? Why does this happen? Why don't most people recognize God and have no need for repentance? What keeps a person from recognizing God's authority and submitting to His will? Why, then, only in the most extreme circumstances, do people suddenly begin to seek God and cry out to Him? Here is what the Bible says on this subject: **“For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:21).** And indeed, it is so. People do not want to acknowledge biblical truths and follow Christ, because the path

day, except what has already been said by the ancient prophets through the Holy Scriptures, and will also see that most laws of modern governments exclusively contain the foundations of God's commandments and statutes. The book of *Ecclesiastes* says: **“‘Vanity of vanities’, says the Preacher; ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity’. What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever. The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it arose. The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return again. All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, ‘See, this is new’? It has already been in ancient times before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those who will come after” (Eccl. 1:2–11).**

Perhaps many did not pay attention to the fact that most of the great scientists, philosophers and writers were believers. For each of them understood that the gift they possess was given to them from above, that is, from God. All of them understood that only thanks to Him they can do what today we call genius and talent. And each of them probably knew what the scripture says: **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean**



comfortable, although the end of this path is the same for everyone. Scripture unequivocally summarizes this path. It says: **“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Pr. 14:12).**

Christ, being on earth, in His Sermon on the Mount called people, saying: **“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matt. 7:13–14).**

But praise God that in today's world, among lawlessness and unbelief, there are still people on earth who, without the slightest embellishment, can testify to the whole world of God's real miracles and of His real existence! For he who got to know God, certainly has experienced His presence and greatness, as well as His authority and power. To such people God has shown, that He is truly real and that all of His words, left for us in the Holy Scriptures, are nothing but the truth. No wonder it is said: **“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).** It is worth mentioning, that we become free first of all from ourselves, that is, from that second “I” that often dictates to us and teaches us to live contrary to our conscience and all the good that is inherent in us initially. And the Bible unequivocally says that **“...we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which**

The first — they know, what awaits them beyond the threshold of death. The second, however, — are approaching the old age with horror. If the former (at any age) — have peace and joy, then the latter — a nagging emptiness. Every person clearly feels this emptiness at a certain stage of their life, regardless of their worldly status. The human soul is not satisfied with any benefits of this world. Only getting closer to God gives a person confidence in tomorrow, even if this day on earth will be their last. As the apostle Paul said: **“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).**

Can an unbeliever say the same about himself? Of course not. So it turns out that which for some is joy and gain, for others — depression, disappointments and emptiness that's full of fear, because for them there is no light at the end of the tunnel, that is, at the end of life's journey. But an ancient prophet said: **“Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing” (Is. 40:26).**

You can quote the Bible a lot and give various examples, but it is unlikely that an unbeliever will understand anything, until he kneels in repentance before God and calls to Him. What the madman said in his heart, — “There is no God” — cannot be true, since every new day proves the opposite. His creations and His works are visible in everything, you just need to open your eyes to everything. Earthly life — is a transit and a trampoline before eternity through suffering and a test of loyalty and love. The *Second epistle to Corinthians* has wonderful and inspiring words: **“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17–18).** Perhaps we all should think about this and stop arguing about something that is so evident.

I. GORIK.

A police chief in Kenya has developed an unconventional way of fighting crime on his city streets — by invoking the power of God and trawling through crime-ridden areas armed only with a Bible.

Chief Inspector William Sifuna is solely responsible for keeping law and order in Maralal, Samburu County, where gun-fights erupt daily and robbery and extortion are common.

Over the years, however, one thing that Sifuna noticed was that most of the crimes are in some way related to the theft of livestock. So, the man who is colloquially known as “the preaching policeman”, decided to employ a Biblically-based tactic when confronting suspects — he would instruct them to return what they stole to

“We need God's intervention”. Chief of police arms himself with a Bible to fight crime in the streets of Kenya

the rightful owner, request forgiveness from the person and swear never to steal again.

Immediately, he saw some tremendous results.

Sifuna does not, however, rely on the mere word of the criminals — he also demands that they put together a long-term plan detailing how exactly they will stay out of trouble in the future. It's a form of policing that is far removed from the methods of many other law enforcement agencies, but it is one that he insists continues to work wonders. To fight crime effectively, he says, you need faith.

“To tackle crime, we need God”, he explained. “We cannot do this

by ourselves. We need God's intervention in everything that we are doing as the police force”.

The police chief is also relentlessly dishing out second chances to the many lawbreakers who work the streets of the crime-ridden town. As Christians, he said, we must hold true to the notion that absolutely everyone deserves a second chance, no matter what they've done.

“Before I lock them up, I take



an opportunity to preach to them or counsel them”, he said. “And when they step out of the cold cells,

most of them confess and turn away from crime”.

The respected police officer is also a regular preacher at Elshadai Restoration Ministries church.

In addition, he decided to set up a shelter for children who have been subject to abuse on the violent streets of Maralal. “Most of the children, especially those who were defiled, were not safe at all to go back to the same places where the offenses happened, and I thought for those who the court felt were not safe could be provided with an alternative place as the case proceeded”, he explained.

In light of his incredible work, Mwangi Nderitu, a pastor at Alshadai Restoration ministries, called Sifuna “a whole new definition of a police officer”.

<https://www.inlight.news>

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

Former gangster and drug addict went to pubs and prisons testifying about what God

When Allen Langam was sixteen years old, he began training at the rugby academy and succeeded so much that he signed a professional contract but, pretty quickly he went into drugs, violence, and ended up in prison for a long two decades of his life.

Allen Langam became the author of Taming the Villain, in which he talked about how, with God's help, he managed to end evil in his own soul.

My biggest problem was my father, or rather his absence. At a very young age I got used to violence because older children mocked me. Beatings awaited me at home, as well as a mess and lack of food. Mom was already over forty when I was born, and she was not married to my father.

Mother suffered from chronic depression, everyday life was difficult, so the situation in the house was difficult. Despite this, I know that she loved me. When I was fourteen, I found her dead, and it just tore my heart apart. It hurt me to even think that she was gone. Then, I first started drinking and taking soft drugs.

At that time, I already played rugby and I was noticed by several professional clubs. When I was sixteen years old, I entered the Rugby Academy, and a year later I signed a professional contract. Everything turned out wonderful: I moved to my house, got a car and met a woman whom I fell madly in love with. Our daughter was born but, very soon I was put on trial for violence and at eighteen I got my first prison term. The athlete's career was over. I was a stray child who just needed a little help, but I tried heroin...

Soon after my release, I got a job at a construction site and it seemed like this was the beginning of something good but, again I began to use heroin. I constantly wanted to drown out the consequences of violence, the loss of my father and the death of my mother. I was only thirty, and I was already a completely lost person. I controlled myself less and less. All year I was a chronic drug addict living in the streets of London. I also broke up with my girlfriend and did not see how our child was born. As a result, in 1999 I was sentenced to four years in prison, but in reality, it was a salvation because it gave me the opportunity to get rid of heroin. Drugs ruined my family.

Out of four years of punishment, I served twenty-six months and managed to get rid of heroin. However, there was something that I simply could not control. I have become extremely cruel. It seemed to me that the whole world owed me for the disgusting childhood, beatings and death of my mother.

Throughout my total twenty years in prison, I always felt a craving for church. As a child, I went to it, but I went alone,

none of the adults went with me. I ran away there in moments of the greatest fear. Looking back, I can confidently say that among those people in the church there were those who saw a lonely scared boy and prayed for him. Subsequently, these prayers changed a lot in my life.

I always looked for something: I tried Buddhism, read Hindu scriptures, the Koran, studied philosophy. After seven years of imprisonment, I became a brutal, impulsive gangster, was broken inside and took out this pain all around me. And, I had



absolutely no strength to remain what I became. Another such prison sentence would be the last for me. This anger would kill me. I understood this so clearly that I began to seek help.

In the end, in the Doncaster prison, I visited the chapel and met there with a group of prayer warriors who began to communicate with me and pray for me. I also began to study the Bible. But, having received freedom, I felt unworthy of communicating with real Christians, and returned to my former way of life. Because of this, in 2013 I again ended up in prison, but the very next day I entered the chapel. There was nobody there, only me and God. I whispered: "If you are real, if you exist and hear me, let a white one appear among those pigeons that fly behind my gray window". I went to bed, and the next morning, going to the window where I used to smoke, I saw a flock of pigeons flying away. But, one of them remained in place, a white one.

At that moment, something seemed to explode inside me. I ran out of my cell and started shouting: "There is a God! God exists!" That day I gave my life to Jesus. Every day I was ready to break the grate, just to go down to the chapel — that was my hunger for God. When I began to read the Bible, my faith grew more and more, and Christ began to rapidly change my heart.

I had a terrifying reputation — my nickname was Bang'em (from *bang them*). But, as a convert, all I could feel was love pouring out of me. I took my rage and anger, put them at the feet of Jesus and said: "You know everything". A few weeks later I was miraculously released, and these were my last days as a prisoner. The biggest testimony for those around me was that this big cruel man, I once was, just wanted to hug them.

I used to be so cruel that people crossed the road to avoid meeting me. I could easily pounce and beat someone. I could stand in a pub, and it was enough just to look in my direction so, that I would break such a person's head. But now, after the accepting Christ, I, being freed from prison, went to the pub to pray for people there. None of them dared to refuse me to pray for them, because they were afraid of me. Now, the waterfall of the love of Jesus came from me, and I just wanted to hug them. I was gripped by something more powerful than the evil that was around me.

After leaving prison, I decided to restore relations with children and my family, as well as, return to sports. I managed to lift the lifelong ban to RFL (*The Rugby Football League, the national leadership of the Rugby League in the UK. — Ed.*) and became the main chaplain in the Doncaster Rugby League. Then, I began to serve in prisons. Although, in truth, I didn't even want to be near them.

The first time I returned to prison, my friend and mentor gave me the opportunity to testify before some prisoners. It was a really powerful experience, and many of the prisoners were moved. However, I myself was shocked by my stay in prison. I heard the familiar sounds of door bolts, the knock of grilles, and that turned everything in me. I continued, and God really used me. I was able to talk with prisoners, tell them about Christ. They sat and listened. I asked them to step forward to receive salvation, and they went out. My message is a message of hope, because if you give someone hope, you give him a chance. Most prisoners desperately need this hope to break the vicious circle in which they are in.

I was never part of my daughter's life, but two months after my release, she began to live with me. My middle daughter came to live with me at about the same time. Because of how we broke up with my son's mother, I had to fight in court for the right to take guardianship. Praying before the hearing, I said: "I do not know what you are going to do, but may Your will be done". Six months later, I was awarded joint custody. Now my son is seven years old, he is in church, prays, loves Jesus, loves people and wants to become a pastor. I work in schools and with young offenders. Like adults, I bring them a message of hope, but I focus on the choice. I just share my life with them and say: "Listen, you don't need to go through everything that I went through. Do not spend more than twenty years. Just skip it all and come to Jesus now, today, since He loves you so much!"

Allen LANGEM,
<https://www.inlight.news>

My name is Ivan. I am twenty-eight years old. I was born in a normal family. Dad died early; he was only thirty-two years old. My mother and stepfather raised me. I grew up as an ordinary child, but from childhood I loved to fight, to influence others. From school years I was an instigator.

Already at the age of ten I began to try drugs. At first, I smoked weed, I liked this drug. Among my friends and acquaintances, drugs were considered prestigious. So, by the age of thirteen, I delved into this deeper and tried pills. Then I tried powder substances and went on with my life of "fun": discos, girls...

I studied well and succeeded in everything. There was nothing to worry about. My parents took care of me, protected me, and I successfully fooled them. Slowly, it all began to take on the character of dependence but, hid it until the age of seventeen, until I tried heroin. I realized that this is the best drug that can give a feeling of happiness.

From childhood I was accustomed to work. And, despite the fact that I used drugs, I always worked. I spent the money I earned solely on myself. However, about a year passed, and I realized that I was addicted. I began to destroy everything around me. I deceived his relatives, took everything out of the house not caring about anything, I pleased only my beloved self, constantly deceiving everyone around.

OVERCOME ADDICTION

Then I went to a university and started to study. After studying for a year, I began to use methadone.

Then, my life turned into chaos. The people I started talking with soon rejected me because I was terrible. I shamelessly deceived, stole, did not stop at anything. I robbed all the relatives. At twenty-three, I had a girlfriend. We lived together. We were together for four years, and at this time she lived in a real madhouse. She loved me, and I tormented her. All the time I lied to her while I used drugs. Constant scandals, fights, lies. At twenty-five I tried to quit drugs, but my strength was enough for no more than six months. And, then I made up with terrible speed, destroying myself. With a height of 179 cm, my weight was 60 kg, and I myself looked like a monster. All my relatives turned away from me, because all my life I have spoiled relations and was destroying the connections. Mom always fought for me, tried to fix it, but I didn't want to. I mocked my mother and ruined her with my behavior. And when I was twenty-five, my mother fell ill. She was diagnosed with cancer. She underwent six courses of chemotherapy. My mother did not have the strength to fight either cancer or my unbearable behavior, and instead of helping her, I just abused her. At the last moment, when my mother was already dying, I allowed myself to steal her bank card. My conscience did not torment me. And last year, my mother died...

My family and friends wished for my death; they did not know what to do with me. I can't find the words to convey what a reptile I was. I have already taken everything out of the apartment. Then I almost died of an overdose, but the doctors pumped me out. I deserved to die and wanted to die. My life was ruined, and everything around me, too. Inside of me there was emptiness: I understood that I wasn't needed or useful to anyone. I sat and thought which floor I should jump off from.



However, it turned out that there is One Who needs me and Who loves me immensely. God brought me to a rehabilitation center, and I jumped... I jumped into the arms of Jesus Christ. I lamented and repented, prayed and prayed... And the Lord began to reveal himself to me, I began to understand how He works with me. I asked God to help me understand Him. He answered, made it possible to know His character and taught to listen to Him. Lord gave me revelations about Himself, about what He did for me on the cross. I woke up at night and, panting, realized how this happened. I tasted it with all my heart. I understood that the Lord was calling me to serve Him, so that I would help others like me. When I was offered to stay in the center, I immediately agreed, knowing for sure that it was God's will. I am now fully obedient to His will and grateful for the call to serve Him.

The mercy of the Lord and His generosity were not long in coming. He restored everything destroyed by me. I had a lot of loans, debts, problems that the Lord helped me solve. God restored my whole circle of life. He revived relations with family and friends who were ready to kill me. I did nothing for this, I just prayed and asked God to help, and when the relatives said that I could come to them, for me this was just more evidence of his mercy. What God does for me, how He changes me and my whole life, is immeasurable, priceless. There is.

nothing more valuable than God to me. I rejoice that Christ helps me, instead of destroying, to bear fruit for His kingdom. I rejoice at ordinary things that I have not noticed before: how the sun shines, how the grass grows, that I woke up in the morning. And this joy is given to me by the Lord. God painted my black and white world with bright colors. He continues to teach me everything, teaches to love. How can I not thank such a God?! All glory to Him!

Ivan DZHABRAILOV, Ukraine,
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TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

ALEKSEY

At the age of eight I ended up in a surgical operation booth, says Aleksey Islamov, after which the doctors were forced to amputate both of my hands... He tells me calmly, even casually. He has embraced his condition. After all, he serves in a home for disabled people and his story has become something like a textbook for finding hope and faith. Maybe he tells this story for the thousandth time, and perhaps this story is not all that good. It's not all about persistence and determination of a person who, by his own will, makes his way to the intended goal. At first there were prolonged failures: I tried soft drugs in my teens. Our gang of friends had everything imaginable: alcohol, cigarettes, drugs... It was year 1994 at that time and was as if an epidemic had attacked younger generations. In our country, drugs were even considered prestigious. Parents noticed the trouble and tried to cope with it on their own. But everything was in vain, it only got worse. After another crime, Aleksey ended up in prison. Six years of lost freedom.

Once freed he thought he wouldn't return to his old ways... But the drugs came into his life again. He took hard drugs for two years. The thought that I was disabled, did not give me rest since there was no future for me. Who needs me, the way that I was? I was actually on the verge of committing suicide. My life was destroyed, there was no sense in it. I looked for solace in drugs, alcohol, and dubious companies. And then I met a friend with whom we used to inject drugs together. And he said to me: "You need to go to a rehabilitation center". What convinced me? He became different, he changed, even outwardly. And so, I went to the rehabilitation center "Freedom House" in Prokopyevsk.

It was at the rehabilitation center that I experienced an encounter with God. Aleksey recalls this with excitement. An ordinary prayer... Nobody came to me, did not pray with me, did not direct me. I spoke with God in the usual language, as I can. I didn't know any special prayer words... A simple conversation with God: "Lord, if You are, come into my life, change me". And something at that moment happened to me. I even felt it physically, tears flowed. Jesus died on the cross for me, for who I was! He accepted torment and died for me, atoned for my sin. I wept. And at that moment I decided to complete the rehabilitation course. It was difficult, Aleksey recalls. The most difficult was "to break your character".

A year has passed. I graduated from the rehabilitation course and decided that I would serve the same as me. To help drug addicts as I can: in word, encouragement, my testimony. I worked for seven years in the Freedom House. Now I serve in the house for the disabled at the Church of the Resurrection of Christ in Prokopyevsk: I lead classes, talk with children who have don't have their arms and legs... A man of forty years old, he drank, fell asleep in the cold and lost his arms and legs. This is very difficult psychological; he cannot accept it. I talk with him: "Look at me, I do not despair, I live, I develop. And you can do it too? Someone accepts, someone complains and even envies: "You have it since childhood, you're used to it". Someone blames God for doing this to them.

I pray for such people, just pray. There wasn't yet someone to say: "You don't need to pray for me".

WIFE JULIA

I approached him myself, says Julia. I was about eighteen years old, we lived not far from each other. I guessed that he was using drugs. I said: "Let's be friends. I like you".

Aleksey and Julia ISLAMOV

They became friends. But you (addressing the husband), it seems to me you didn't appreciate me then. Aleksey makes excuses, regrets: I didn't appreciate it... When Julia came up to me, I didn't appreciate her feelings, I put her in the friendzone. I was nineteen years old, and my inferiority complex was so developed that I did not think that I could date a girl, that I would have a wife, that she would give birth to my children. Well, there was such a dream, but I did not take it seriously. When Julia came up, it surprised me

I told Julia that I believed. Then I invited her to church".

TOGETHER

The decision to unite our lives came in 2011. "We have long been ready for this", Aleksey explains. And Julia adds: "I observed him from the side". He had become a completely different person. Imagine: a drug addict who is already dying, finished, roughly speaking. ("Yes, it was so!" confirms Aleksey.) And here is a man with a clear look who speaks about the Bible... Through him I have come to believe in

were completely against it. Only Aleksey's mother helped to do some housework, to babysit with the children. "Mostly we were on our own", Aleksey says and unexpectedly convincingly concludes: "and that is good!"

I understand him, like Julia, who proudly talks about the spacious four-room apartment in which they now live. This is proof of the viability of their union, the right to be a family. The tone of her voice makes it clear: "Today we have a four-room apartment, thank God. For us with the kids, it is spacious enough and good".

Before that, they all lived in one room. To get the apartment they had to go through some struggles. The family had to stand in line for housing for four years. I remember when at the present time our situation was hopeless. Once again, I came to the city administration to see the department for housing matters, and next to me people said: "I've been on a waitlist for fifteen years, and there's probably no sense..." I listened to these people and thought: "Should I continue to come here, because I spend time and money on this?" And one day they sat down with Julia and wrote a letter to the head of the city, where they wrote in simple words about their situation. After that, social services visited them, which examined housing conditions, wrote down something. And

then they called and said: "You will be given the keys to your new housing". "We sold our old apartment: it was small and the area was uncomfortable", says Aleksey. "Our children were accustomed to the school; Julia had a job. It was problematic to move from one area to another. We sold it, added some finances and acquired our four-room apartment, comfortable for us. Thank God! This was a miracle in our lives!" Julia explains: "Mother and close friends helped us with finances". "They helped us a lot", Aleksey echoed. Now there are three children in the family, all sons: Andre, Ruslan and Zakhar. "I thought for a long time about this, Aleksey smiles, and the Lord said to me: "These are your helpers! They will help you". "They already help!" Julia responds. Of course, everything rests on her. She works as a teacher in a child's home and studies as a nurse at Kemerovo State University. "Although Aleksey helps in everything he goes to the store, cleans the apartment, washes the floor. The main thing is that he loved my son like his own. Andre has been calling him dad since he was four years old". "How can I, having loved Julia, not love my son?!" Aleksey responds.

"Aleksey tell them about soccer", prompts Julia. "Yes! I play soccer. I participate in the Christian Soccer League and competitions are held in Novokuznetsk. There are nine teams of guys, I play for the Source of Life Foundation. I liked soccer since childhood. We have a good time, we socialize and we gather in our city where we have tournaments, and not only among Christian teams". I ask what Julia is fond of. She answers: "My children, husband, work. Now I am graduating soon, to become a teacher. It is interesting to me, I love children, especially the preschool age". "We go to church, and this is how we live", she concludes. "We live happily".

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very much and I was embarrassed, although I didn't show it. Well then, we parted. "He used drugs, and I stepped aside", Julia simply explains. "She didn't communicate with me when I was in this state. And I never pulled her along so that she would not be with me and do the same things that I did. I was opposed to the girl who showed sympathy for me, switched to my bad side". After that they put Aleksey in prison, Julia got married (to someone else) and gave birth to her son Andre. Then the husband died, and Aleksey was freed. They met again but drugs and bad habits prevented them from being together. But Aleksey's decision to undergo rehabilitation also changed Julia's life. Julia says, "I approached him again, I first found out from mom how he was doing". "Mom said that Aleksey was in a rehabilitation center". Aleksey continues, "When I went through the full rehabilitation course,

the Lord. He is now raising my Andre as his son.

Who made a proposal to whom? I asked, already guessing the answer. A friendly laugh. "Yes, it's me again", Julia waves her hand happily. "Julia is everything!" Aleksey happily speaks. "I felt this embarrassment. Maybe some kind of fear to take on such responsibility". "After all, we had nothing, neither a home, nor property... We lived in a rented apartment; Ruslan was born there". "Ruslan was five months old when I found out that I was pregnant again", Julia says. "It was a joyful shock, so to speak. And although we had nothing, the thought of abortion did not even arise". They knew: we'll give birth, with God's help, we will somehow live. There were people who supported, and those who condemned, "Are you a fool, or what?!" "Little that she married a drug addict, a disabled person, but she also gives birth to children for him!" My parents



I. DEFINITION OF BLESSING AND CURSE

Often a curse is a concept that is the opposite of a blessing. For example, **Deuteronomy 11:29**: *Now it shall be, when the Lord your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.*

A pronounced curse implied more than just a wish for something bad for a person's life. Something terrible was about to happen to the person against whom the curse had been expressed. At the same time, the blessing pronounced was not regarded as a wish for happiness and prosperity in life. It implied the actual blessing of man and the proclamation of happiness and prosperity in his life.

People always knew that blessings and curses come from above. Therefore, pronouncing their blessings or curses, people seemed to call on God (and often simply turned to the spiritual world, to something supernatural), which could either bring a blessing or curse one or another person. Hence the very widespread practice of magic, divination, corruption, evil eye and various kinds of spells.

The term *blessing* literally means a good, pleasant word. Since the words blessing and curse are diametrically opposite concepts, it would be logical to draw the following conclusion: a curse means bad, unkind words and wishes addressed to a person or God.

CULTURE AND CUSTOMS

People from the ancient times blessed and cursed each other. This applies not only to the Jewish people, but also to the Gentiles.

Biblical examples: Isaac cursed everyone who curses Jacob (**Genesis 27:29**), Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel (the story of Balaam's donkey in **Numbers 22-24**), Goliath cursed David with his gods (**1 Kings 17:4**).

There was also a custom: in old age or before death, a father blessed his children. At the same time, the eldest son received the greatest blessing. Such a blessing, as a rule, was not just a wish (as we now sign the cards for the holiday), but a determining factor in the whole life of children. As a father blessed, so it was.

Biblical examples: Noah's blessing and curse of his sons and grandchildren (**Genesis 9:25-27**), Isaac's blessing of his sons (**Genesis 27**), and so on.

II. CURSE

1. Who had the right to curse whom?

A. Father — children

Bible examples: Noah and his blessing and curse (**Genesis 9:25-27**).

B. The righteous — the unrighteous and wicked

Biblical examples:

Genesis 9:25 — *Cursed Canaan; he will be the slave of his servants to his brothers.*

Genesis 49:7 — *...their wrath is damned, for it is cruel, and their fury, for it is fierce...*

Deuteronomy 7:15 — *...the Lord will remove all weakness from you, and no Egyptian fierce diseases that you know will direct you, but will direct them to all those who hate you...*

Joshua 6:26 — *At that time Joshua swore and said: Cursed before the Lord, who will rebuild and build this city Jericho; on his first-born, he will lay his foundation, and at his youngest will set his gates. Such a curse is not an expression of*

personal anger, malice and vengeance. This is a kind of prediction.

C. God — the producers of sin

Biblical examples:

☉ God cursed the serpent (**Genesis 3:14-15** — *So the Lord God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust. All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel"*).

☉ God cursed Eve (**Genesis 3:16** — *I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.*)

☉ God cursed Adam (**Genesis 3:17-19** — *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return"*).

☉ God cursed the earth for the sin of Adam and Eve (**Genesis 3:17-19** — *Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake..."*).

☉ God curses those who oppose Him and His commandments (**Deuteronomy 27:15-26** — *Cursed is the one who makes a carved or molded image, an abomination to the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen! Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt. And all the people shall say, Amen! Cursed is the one who moves his neighbors landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen! Cursed is the one who makes the blind to wander off the road. And all the people shall say, Amen! Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen! Cursed is the one who lies with his fathers wife, because he has uncovered his fathers bed. And all the people shall say, Amen! Cursed is the one who lies with any kind of animal. And all the people shall say, Amen! Cursed is the one who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen! Cursed is the one who lies with his mother-in-law. And all the people shall say, Amen! Cursed is the one who attacks his neighbor secretly. And all the people shall say, Amen! Cursed is the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen! Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law by observing them.*

2. The purpose and objectives of the curses

The practical context of curses was moral. There was such an

unspoken moral law under which a curse was a punishment for disobedience, and a blessing was an encouragement for obedience.

3. Execution of the curse

A. Curses tend to come true.

There are many examples in life and in the Bible.

B. Undeserved curses do not come true.

Proverbs 26:2 — *As the sparrow flies, as the swallow flies away, the undeserved curse does not come true.*

4. Prohibition of Cursing

A. In accordance with the Old Testament law, it was forbidden to curse and slander (cursing is slander — as was said at the very beginning):

☉ Parents (**Exodus 21:17**),

☉ A ruler (**Exodus 22:28**),

☉ A deaf person (**Leviticus 19:14**),

☉ God [**Leviticus 24:11-15** (curse = slander = blasphemy against God)].

B. New Testament about the curse:

☉ The command of Jesus about the cursed (**Luke 6:28**).

☉ The words of the apostle Paul about the cursed (**Romans 12:14**).

☉ Who is cursed [**1 Corinthians 16:22** (against those who do not love the Lord)].

☉ **Who is under the curse** [**Galatians 3:10** (Curse of the Law)]. Christ has redeemed us from this curse (**Galatians 3:13**).

I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

2. The Power of the Human Word

God's Word has the power to be fulfilled. Man is created in the image and likeness of God, and the human word also has a certain power. Therefore, blessings and curses are fulfilled. A person cannot cancel them. When, out of ignorance, Isaac blessed Jacob instead of Esau by mistake, he could no longer cancel his blessing, and it became part of world history.

Genesis 27:18-41 — *So he went to his father and said, "My father". And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me". But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the Lord your God brought it to me". Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not". So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is Jacobs voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau". And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so, he blessed him. Then he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He said, "I am". He said, "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my sons game, so that my soul may bless you". So, he brought it near*

you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren and let your mothers sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!" Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his sons game, that your soul may bless me". And his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" So, he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau". Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him — and indeed he shall be blessed". When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me — me also, O my father!" But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing". And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!" And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?" And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me — me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted his voice and wept. Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, And of the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; And it shall come to pass, when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck".

So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob".

IV. HOW ABOUT US?

Each person wants to be happy. Perhaps that is why people do not protest prayers for the protection of their lives, for their health and well-being. In the same way they do not resist words of blessing addressed to them. As for the curses, people often ask themselves: "What does God's curse have to do with me personally?"

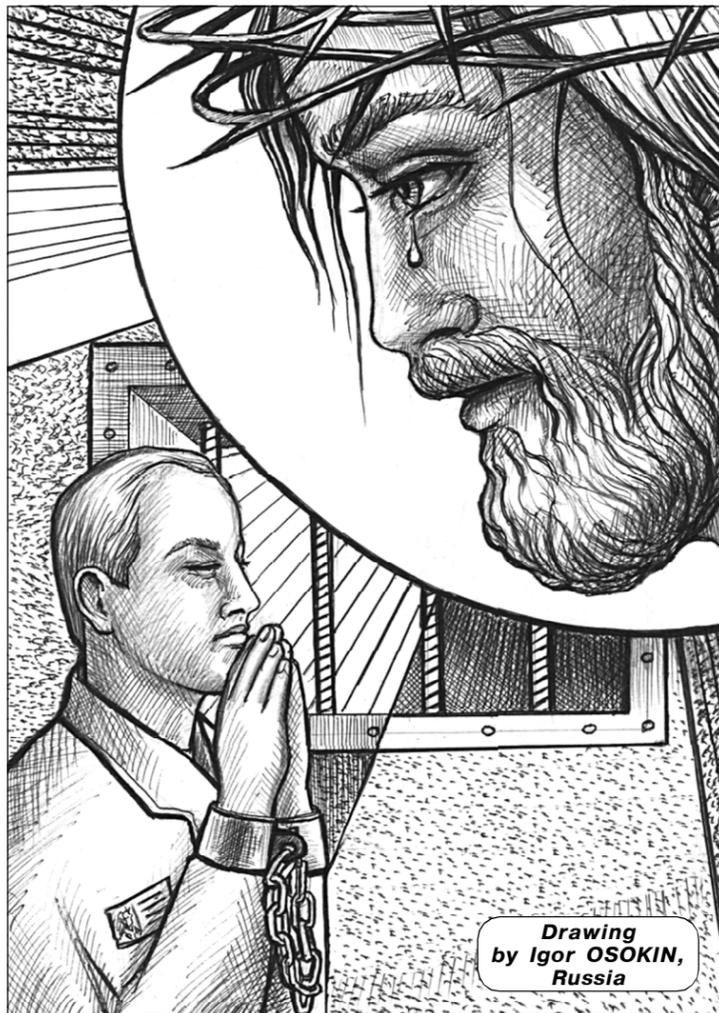
Dear reader, if you are also concerned about this question the answer is as follows: God provided us with a choice. What we choose — His blessing or His curse — depends only on us. In accordance with the Word of God, choosing a blessing means choosing a life, and choosing a curse means choosing death.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 — *I call heaven and earth as witnesses today: I offered you death, blessing and a curse. Choose life, that you may live your mortgage, love the Lord your God, listen to His voice and cleave to Him; for this is your life and the longness of your days...*

The material for the newspaper "Prisoner" kindly provided by the Bible Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada <http://www.cogmtl.net/Articles/O15.htm>

TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

BLESSING AND CURSE



Drawing by Igor OSOKIN, Russia

III. POWER OF THE WORD

1. The power of God's word Unchanging; always fulfills.

Isaiah 55:10-11 — *For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what*

to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son". And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field Which the Lord has blessed. Therefore, may God give you of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve

The Scriptures declare that "God... formed the earth... to be inhabited" (Isaiah 45:18). An impartial study of the Earth soon convinces the student that there is a tremendous amount of meaning behind this simple statement.

The Earth

The Earth is the only planet circling our sun on which life as we know it could (and does) exist. A brief glance at the Earth and all other known planets finds many startling contrasts. The Earth as a planet consists mostly of iron, oxygen, sulfur, silicon, magnesium, and nickel (total, 98 %), with the other two percent consisting of about a hundred other elements. Like no other planet, ours is covered with green vegetation, blue-green seas, streams, rivers, mountains, and deserts which

produce a spectacular variety of color and texture — all other known planets are covered with lifeless soil which varies only according to slight movements made by wind or mild air currents. Completely barren, the surface of most planets is totally in contrast to the Earth's with its blue lakes, green oceans, huge land masses and 500,000 islands. Even from a distance, its colors are quite lively — bright greens, blues and whites — whereas the surface of all other known planets are rather dull.

Some type of life is found in every niche on the Earth. Even in the extremely cold Antarctica, hardy microscopic beings exist in ponds, tiny wingless insects live in patches of moss and lichen, and even two types of plants flower yearly. From the top of the atmosphere to the bottom of the oceans, from the coldest part of the poles to the warmest part of the equator, life persists here. To this day no sign of life has been found on any other planet.

The Earth is immense — 8,000 miles in diameter and weighing roughly 6.6×10^{21} tons. If the Earth traveled much faster in its 292-million-mile-long orbit around the sun, centrifugal force would pull it away from the sun, and if too far, all life would cease to exist. If it traveled slightly slower, the Earth would move closer to the sun, and if it moved too close, all life would likewise perish. The Earth's 365 day, 5-hour, 48-minute and 45.51-second-round-trip is accurate to a thousandth of a second! If the yearly average temperature on Earth rose or fell only a few degrees, most life on it would soon roast or freeze. This change would upset the water-ice and other balances, with disastrous results. If it rotated on its axis slower, all life would die in time, either by freezing at night because of lack of heat from the sun, or by burning during the day from too much sun.

The Sun

Of all the energy the sun gives off, only one billionth of its daily output is picked up by the Earth. The sun does provide the Earth with more than 130 trillion horse power each day, about fifty thousand horse power for each current resident. Even though there are likely several hundred billion galaxies in the universe, there is only one atom for every 88 gallons of space, which means most of the universe (the vast majority, actually) is empty space!

If the Moon were much nearer to Earth, one result would be huge tides which would overflow onto the lowlands and erode the mountains (and with the continents leveled, it is estimated that water would cover the entire surface to the depth of a mile and a half)! If the Earth was not tilted 23° on its axis, but was at a 90° angle in reference to the sun, we would not have four seasons. Without seasons, life would soon not be able to exist here — the poles would lie in eternal twilight, and water vapor from the oceans would be carried by the wind towards both the north and south, and would freeze when close enough to the poles. In time, huge continents of snow and ice would pile up in the polar regions, leaving most of the Earth a dry desert. Eventually the oceans would disappear and rainfall would cease. The accumulated weight of ice at the poles would cause the equator to bulge and, as a result, the rotation of the Earth would drastically change.

The Miracle of Water

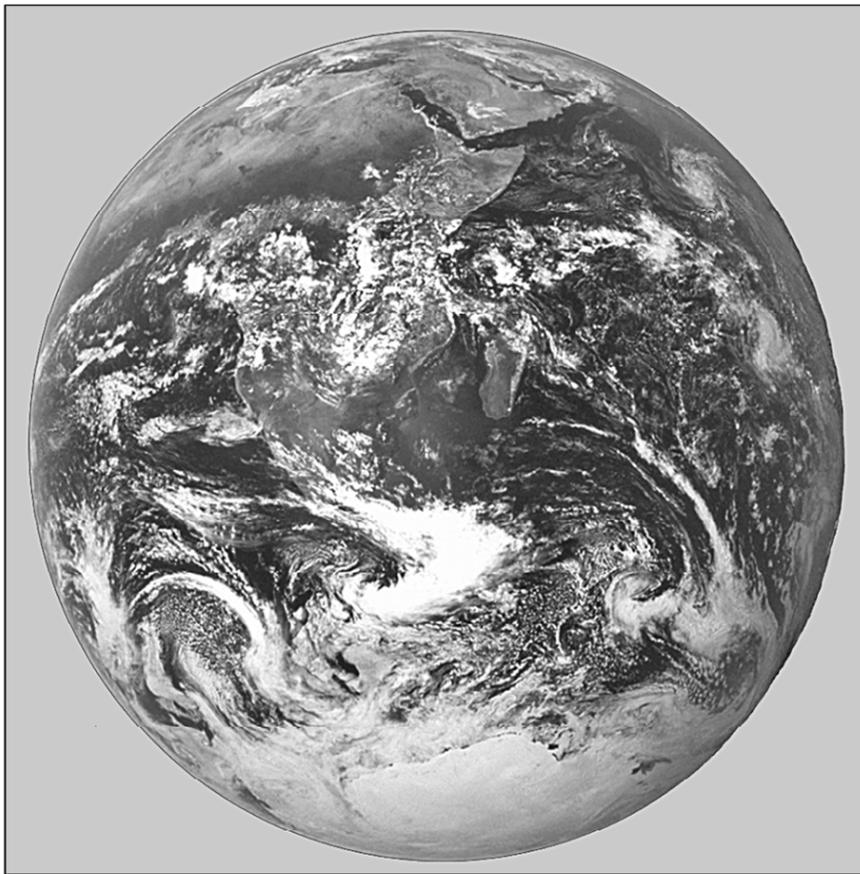
Another example which illustrates the rigidity of environmental variations for life to exist is that of water. The Earth is the only planet with huge bodies of water — 70 % of its surface area consists of oceans, lakes, and seas surrounding huge bodies of land. The few planets that have water contain only moisture floating as vapor on their surface, not large bodies of liquid water as on Earth.

Water is unique in that it absorbs large amounts of heat without much alteration in its temperature. Its absorption speed is extremely rapid — about ten times as fast as steel. During the day, the seas rapidly soak up a great deal of heat, thus the Earth stays fairly cool. At night, the oceans release the vast amounts of heat that they soaked up during the day, which combined with atmospheric effects,

The Miracle of Air

On the land, the opposite happens. Air, after it is warmed, rises — and the air close to the surface of the Earth is heated via light energy from the sun. The air near the surface then rises upward. The result is that the air near the Earth's surface maintains a temperature in which life can exist. If air acted the same way that water did, the temperature on the Earth's surface would be unbearable — and life could not survive for very long. The temperature a few hundred feet above the surface, on the other hand, would be quite cold and, likewise, life could also not exist there. The only habitable region would be a thin slice of air, but even here life could not exist for long. Plants and trees which would be necessary to support the life in the atmosphere could not survive as they

PLANET EARTH: UNIQUE IN ALL THE UNIVERSE



keeps the surface from getting too cold at night. If it were not for the tremendous amount of water on the Earth, there would be far greater day and night temperature variations. Many parts of the surface would be hot enough to boil water in the day and the same part would be cold enough to freeze water at night. Water is an excellent temperature stabilizer. The large oceans on Earth are a vital part of our survival!

The large amount of water on the Earth could create problems, though. If something is heated, it expands, and when cooled, contracts. Thus, given two objects of the same size and material, if one is cooler, it will be heavier. This may not seem like a problem, but in the case of water, it would be, if it were not for a rare anomaly. Water, as almost all other substances, contracts when cooled, but in contrast to virtually all other materials (there are very few exceptions, such as rubber and antimony), it contracts when cooled only until it reaches 4° Centigrade then it, amazingly, expands until it freezes. If water continued to contract when cooled, it would become heavier and thus sink to the bottom of the ocean. Further, when water turned to ice, it would likewise sink to the bottom of the ocean. One result of this is that the ocean bottom would be extremely cold — and many fish would die. In time, more and more of the ocean would become ice as more froze on the surface, sank, and accumulated at the bottom.

Thus, for much of the Earth, the ice that forms in seas, oceans, and lakes stays near the surface where the sun and the warm water below melts it in the summer. Water that is warmer than 4°, being heavier, sinks to the bottom and warms the depth of the oceans. This process of surface water warming and sinking to the bottom, plus the Coriolis effect produces ocean currents. These currents, among other things, insure that most of the ocean stays in a liquid form. Indeed, "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath He established the heavens" (Proverbs 3:19).

would be in the cold zone. Thus birds would have no resting place, or food, water or oxygen. But air rises when heated and thus life can exist on the Earth.

The movement of warm air from the surface rising upward creates air currents (wind) which are an important part of the Earth's ecological system. They carry away carbon dioxide from areas which overproduce, such as cities, and move oxygen to areas in need of it, as large urban population centers.

The mixture of gases usually found in the atmosphere, without man's pollution, is perfect for life. If it were much different (more oxygen, less carbon dioxide, etc., or the atmospheric pressure was much lighter or heavier), life would cease to exist on Earth.

If our atmosphere were thinner, many of the millions of meteors which now are burned up would reach the Earth's surface, causing death, destruction and fires everywhere.

Adaptation to Environment or Creation of Environment for Life?

If evolution works to evolve life to fit the existing environments, why has it not equally conquered all of the environments here and elsewhere? Earth is far better suited for life than any other planet, yet most of the environments even here, are either too hot or too cold, too far underground or too far above ground to support much life. In the several thousands of miles of changing environments from the center of the Earth to the edge of its atmosphere, there are only a few feet of habitable environment, and therefore almost all creatures are forced to live there. Although only the Earth was made to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18) in our solar system, even on the Earth only a thin slice is ideally suited for life.

This thin section, though, is teeming with life. It is estimated that an acre of typical farm soil, six inches deep, has several tons of living bacteria, almost a ton of fungi, two hundred pounds of one-cell protozoan animals, about one hundred pounds of yeast and the same amount of algae.

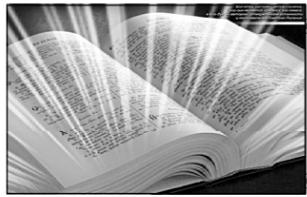
Conclusion

The extremely fine line between an environment where life can and cannot exist is illustrated by the fact that it is estimated that a one-degree temperature change in the average worldwide temperature would, in time, seriously affect life on the Earth, and a two-degree temperature change could be disastrous to life. The tolerances are extremely small, and if there are any other planets in the universe, it is unlikely that any of them could have life, due to the extremely rigid conditions necessary for life to exist.

The chances of a planet being just the right size, the proper distance away from the right star, etc., are extremely minute, even if many stars have planets circling them, as some speculate. The mathematical odds that all of these and other essential conditions happened by chance are astronomical — something like billions to one!

PASTOR'S WORD

REASONS FOR THE DOWNFALL OF GOOD CHRISTIANS



Sometimes members of a community church learn something about certain actions, decisions, or details of other members. They are surprised: "How so? We knew this Christian family as an example, but they had such a fall", "We knew this preacher as a good brother, and now he began to drink alcohol", "This sister sang in the choir and was no different from all of us, and now she left her husband and children for another man. Horrible! How could this happen? This could happen to one of the weak and shaky members (calling out specific names) of the church". However, the weak and faint although staggering, do not fall, and those about whom it was impossible to think that this could happen, fall quickly. Most people ask: "Why did the Lord allow this to happen?"

I would like to bring to your attention some reasons that may lead to such a quick downfall.

Reason No. 1. No Spiritual Growth

Let's say some Christian begins to think that they already know what the Lord wants and what His will is. This usually happens after serving God for many years. The Christian ceases to seek God's continual guidance. Such Christian disregards the need for constant communication with God, and, not noticing it, switches control from the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the intellectual and logical. The speech and outlook seem convincingly correct, but there is no God's light or renewal. **There is no novelty or originality of the Holy Spirit which fills true children of God.**

Romans 7:6 — ...we should serve in newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

Such a Christian still goes by inertia for a while and then can have a spiritual crash at any moment. This delayed fall usually reveals that his internal structure is completely different than what he/she thought it was.

Bilateral communication with God and guidance of the Holy Spirit are necessary at any stage of the Christian life, and the lack of these is a warning signal of fatal danger.

1 Corinthians 10:12 — Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Reason No. 2. Self-Righteousness in Ministry

This reason is very difficult to detect. Along with devotion to church service, such a worker begins to think that he has great merits before the Lord. He thinks more and more about how important his ministry is to God and people. Moreover, he assumes that many years of faithful service to God become a certain guarantee for his salvation. This condition may negatively affect the state of one's heart. A reverent awe of God and a state of complete dependence on Him are replaced by a state of complacency and self-righteousness. There is a certain confidence and the ability to "correctly" judge the condition of other Christians and their

decisions, which he had previously sought to avoid in order not to sin. Constant church load supersedes prayer communication with God and occupies the entire consciousness. This condition can be called serving God without God. It is very dangerous and leads to a downfall.

Reason No. 3. Termination of the Sanctification Process

The process of sanctification in the Christian begins from the moment of rebirth and ends with the last breath. Sanctification is a process

of understanding yourself and the teaching of Christ. These processes help a person change and make him more and more like Christ. The process is filled with joy, many spiritual insights and is accompanied by **breaking ego**, tears and suffering.

Self-loving souls usually reach their limit in their sanctification and stop, not wanting to suffer further. But the Bible says that we will reign with Christ only if we agree to suffer with Him.

Romans 8:17 — ...if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

2 Timothy 2:11-12 — For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him...

John 12:24-25 — Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

The process of dying is associated with suffering. If a Christian stops on the path of sanctification, this will lead him to a downfall.

Reason No. 4. Harmless passion for earthly things

Most faithful Christians are completely free from earthly pursuits. They joyfully serve God in abundance or poverty. They are modest in desires and do not allow thoughts that they should have any advantages or privileges. If they somehow have a better thing than other Christians, they think not to use it themselves. Rather, they strive to give it to someone who they think needs it more than they do. This meekness is an adornment of the teachings of Jesus Christ. But time

passes and the first love for God is gradually dulled. For some Christians, it begins to seem that they are no worse than those who achieve earthly wealth and seek to live well on earth. Initially, a harmless desire takes possession of them. Somehow, in their minds, it starts to get connected with the gospel teaching. They talk more and more about how rich were Abraham, Job, David, Solomon, etc. They begin to like the Old Testament texts, which promised an earthly blessing to those who obey the law. Although they do not intend to comply with the Mosaic Law, they are not against receiving the promised wealth and success.



Drawing by I. OSOKIN, Russia

Such Christians find themselves in a dangerous zone of a spiritual decline.

Reason No. 5. The desire to relax a bit

Yes, the life of a Christian is walking a narrow way full of struggles and difficulties. When the right relationship is established with God, most of these difficulties will be resolved without much overload. However, sometimes a temptation comes: "Look at other Christians. They have time to relax, go somewhere, and travel. Are you worse than them? When was the last time you rested?" Though when the Holy Spirit does not accompany you in such a "rest", there is emptiness and heaviness in the heart. The devil draws everything in a pink color and turns away the thoughts of the God-fearing Christian in his direction. As soon as the Christian agrees with such thoughts and lets them in, joy and gratitude to God leave the heart and... downfall is not far off.

1 Corinthians 10:12 — Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Reason No. 6. The desire to do one's own will

Insisting on fulfilling your dreams can also lead to a downfall. Many Christians are outraged when they hear about rejection of themselves and their crucifixion with Christ. They have their cherished desires and demand their fulfillment from God.

In the parable of the prodigal son, we see a classic example of this occurrence. The wonderfully beloved son suddenly wanted independence. He had every right to take advantage of this independence as an adult. However, it would be better if this initiative did not come from him, but from his father, who knew his son better than the son knew himself. The son, as it was discovered later, was not ready for complete independence. Many Christians end up falling away, because they allow themselves to dream with disregard to God's will for their life. So, let's strive to ensure that we can always tell God: "Thy will be done". Such an approach is pleasing to God and will protect us from demise.

Reason No. 7. Resentment

Resentment is a reaction of the decrepit, sinful nature of man to supposed injustices; it never benefits the person. It paralyzes sound thinking and begins to dictate a style of behavior. That is why it is sometimes difficult to defeat, as it may seem fair and justified. Resentment is a manifestation of the flesh, but those who care about their flesh cannot please God.

Romans 8:8 — That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God (New Living Translation).

The feeling of resentment is the result of insulting human dignity and is directly related to the presence of pride. The magnitude of internal pain of an offended person depends on the magnitude of his own significance. The premise of resentment is the expectation of a greater respect than the one you receive.

The reasons for personal resentment are quite arbitrary. Personal resentment flares up when sensitive subjects are raised or there is a desire and conditional benefit from resentment.

If the resentment is not defeated on a thought level, then it captures the feelings and makes it almost impossible to keep inside. Offended people can, without noticing it, "bestow" with their poison of unforgiveness other people, splashing out what they themselves are aggravated with. They usually stop noticing their own mistakes. By indulging their offended "Ego", such people contribute to the cessation of their spiritual growth. Their "Ego" progresses intensively in conflict situations.

Resentment is impossible to hide. **Proverbs 27:16** — Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand, which bewrayeth itself.

Offended people eventually become quarrelsome, galling and ultimately disgusted with themselves.

Aleksandr BORISENKO.

The story of Anabel Bim is still a matter of debate. However, there are very significant facts, so that what happened to her can be safely called a miracle.

When the girl was five years old, she was given a terrible diagnosis. In simple words, her stomach was unable to digest any food, which followed to a complete atrophy of the intestine. All food Anna ate was left to lie in her intestines. This caused a lot of side effects. She was fed through a special tube through her nose, which was going deep into the intestines.

"When she got sick, I was lost", says her mother. "Why is my darling baby suffering so much?"

Such patients die sooner or later. It was only a matter of time. When Anna was thirteen years

old, she became sharply worse. She had to be transferred to a private clinic in Boston, to one of the best pediatricians. He gave the girl an experimental drug, which, unfortunately, did not work. There were no hopes left.

Anabel's father was very devout, which cannot be said of her mother, who held atheistic views. But what soon happened, forever, changed her ideas about the world.

One day, the girl was playing with her sister. She climbed a tree, stumbled during the game and fell from a ten-meter (33 feet) height to the ground. In the emergency room, everyone was surprised to find that the girl has no fractures, internal bleeding, or anything else.

After a couple of days, she was discharged, and what happened later just struck everyone.

The girl's mother began to notice that she had become unusually mobile and cheerful. Moreover, Anabel stopped taking her medicine for controlling the pain. Most importantly, the stomach bloating was gone.

On examination in Boston, doctors, perplexed, recognized the fact of the girl's full recovery. They could not understand how this could happen. The stomach and intestines worked as if they had never hurt.

During long discussions, the world of medicine decided that the girl hit her head during the fall and this could trigger certain

processes in the brain that activated the gastrointestinal tract. They could not come up with anything else.

Anabel herself tells a completely different story. She says that when she hit her head, she got out of her body and sat for some time, watching her unusual condition. "At first it was scary, but then it passed", says the girl. She also says that, walking along a beautiful field, she met a stranger who said that it was too early for her to stay here, and that she needed to go back and live her life as a healthy girl. She said goodbye to the smiling man and, when she opened her eyes, she realized that she was in the hospital.

"I believe that a certain power

healed me", the girl notes. "You can call it God. Now, I am completely healthy and I can eat whatever I want. I want people to understand: no matter how terrible the circumstances may seem, you do not need to lose faith, because this can help you get through everything. It's not in vain that it was said: 'It will be according to your faith'".

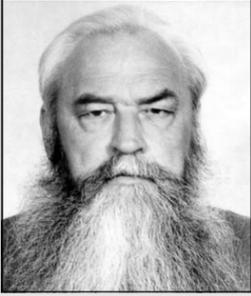
Many were very skeptical regarding the words of a twelve-year-old child who could invent anything. Others began shouting about the greatness of God. Many believe that the "man" was no other but Jesus himself. What do you think of this? What do you think happened?

<https://gcshep.org>

She fell from a tree and everyone thought this was her end...

QUOTES FROM FAMOUS PEOPLE ABOUT GOD AND THE BIBLE

Ulrich JELINEK
President of Severna Industrial Company in New Jersey, USA. He's a world-famous inventor and designer of instruments and systems for space exploration.



"I never had a conversation with people without telling them about my faith in Jesus Christ. (Jelinek often lectured at special seminars at universities and at meetings with professional scholars.) As a forgiven sinner, I have eternal fellowship with God who created the Universe. My desire is to tell others about the Good News at every opportunity".



Wernher von BRAUN
The man responsible above all for the successful astronaut launch to the moon.

"One of the most fundamental laws of nature, confirmed by science, is that in the physical world there is nothing causeless. It is simply impossible to imagine creation without the Creator.

Nothing is so well organized and arranged as our Earth. The Universe must have a Creator, a Master. There can be no other conclusion".

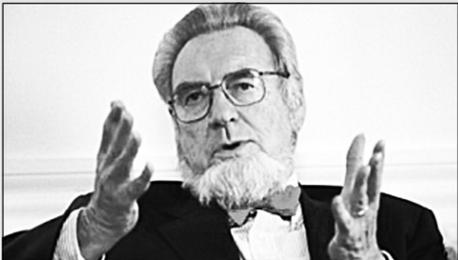
Elmer William ENGSTROM
A world-famous scientist, a pioneer in the field of color television. He was awarded the honorary doctorate by fourteen universities.



"I see a well thought out and developed plan by which creation was accomplished. And today I see God's hand over His creation, I see how prophetic statements of Scripture are being fulfilled. The Bible is the highest authority for our lives. We must accept all this by faith and ask God for guidance. Then we need Christ in our personal lives. In our time, the return of Christ is proclaimed to such an extent as never before".

Everett KOOP
The Chief Surgeon of a Children's Hospital in Philadelphia, USA. One of the most famous surgeons in America.

"I know that God never makes mistakes.



God gave the natural laws for the development of a child before birth. But there are other laws that violate the order in the development of the child. It does not shake my faith when I see a man walking down the street, falling and breaking his arm. I see no reason to blame God for the fact that sometimes a child is born with a birth defect, just as I see no reason to blame God for the fact that there was a pit on the sidewalk where the man fell".

I. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The Hebrew word **qin'ah** and the Greek word **zelos**, which are translated to be jealousy in the Bible, mean *warmth or heat*. Both words in the Bible are used in both positive and negative contexts to emphasize a positive or negative connotation of feelings.

The most interesting thing is that this word is translated in different ways depending on the context: jealousy, envy, annoyance (when you make someone angry), resentment, indignation, a flash of indignation caused by injustice, zeal, diligence.

II. JEALOUSY AS A HUMAN FEELING

When the Bible speaks of human jealousy, it can mean either a good feeling or a bad one.

1. Jealousy as a bad feeling

A. The word translated as envy

Acts 7:9 — *And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him...*

Romans 13:13 — *Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.*

1 Corinthians 3:3 — *...for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*

2 Corinthians 12:20 — *For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such*

the door of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the image of jealousy was, which provokes to jealousy. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I saw in the plain. Then He said to me, "Son of man, lift your eyes now toward the north". So I lifted my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, was this image of jealousy in the entrance. Furthermore He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations".

Why does God have the right to demand fidelity from us?

Most often, this question is answered by the fact that God has the right to demand faithfulness from us for the following reasons:

- ☉ He is our Creator,
- ☉ He is our Father,
- ☉ He is our Savior,
- ☉ He is our God,
- ☉ we fully belong to Him.

All of these answers, without exception, are absolute truth. But there is another very important reason why God has every right to demand that we be faithful to Him. It is **God's faithfulness**. He loves us with perfect love and remains faithful to us even when we cheat on him.

God's love is so strong that nothing can separate us from it.

TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

WHAT DOES THE EXPRESSION "JEALOUS GOD" MEAN?

as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults.

James 3:14, 16 — *But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth... For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing is there.*

B. The word translated as jealousy

☉ Marital Jealousy

The Bible mentions jealousy as a powerful feeling experienced by a husband in relation to the purity and loyalty of his wife: **Proverbs 6:32-34** — *Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor he will get, And his reproach will not be wiped away. For jealousy is a husband's fury; Therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.*

☉ The Law of Jealousy

The "Law of Jealousy" as given to people by God in **Numbers 5:11-31**. The law of God explains what to do when the spirit of jealousy comes upon the husband and he will be jealous because of his wife.

2. Jealousy as a Righteous Feeling

Such jealousy in the Bible is called the jealousy of God or jealousy for the Lord, because this feeling is based on the desire to honor God.

1 Kings 19:10 — *So he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life".*

2 Kings 10:15-16 — *Now when he departed from there, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab, coming to meet him; and he greeted him and said to him, "Is your heart right, as my heart is toward your heart?" And Jehonadab answered, "It is". Jehu said, "If it is, give me your hand". So he gave him his hand, and he took him up to him into the chariot. Then he said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord". So they had him ride in his chariot.*

2 Corinthians 11:2 — *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

Romans 10:2 — *For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.*

Jealousy, according to the Bible, is a feeling peculiar not only to man, but also to God.

III. JEALOUSY AS A FEELING PECULIAR TO GOD

1. God as a Spouse

When the word jealousy is used to refer to the Lord God, it always has a touch of righteousness. In such cases, as a rule, the biblical description is anthropomorphic (humanizing), because it uses the language for describing the relationship between husband and wife, in particular emphasizing the just feeling of a husband who has full rights to his wife.

Zechariah 1:14 — *So the angel who spoke with me said to me, "Proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal'".*

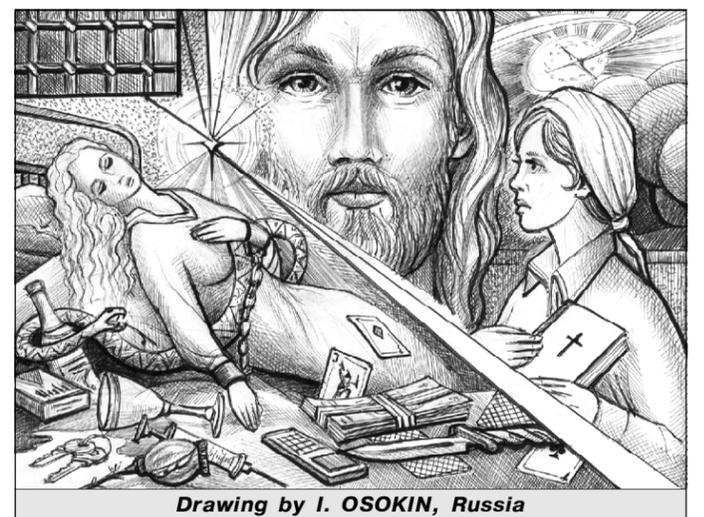
The Bible constantly uses a similar language in relation to the relationship between the Lord God and His people. God Himself called Israel His wife, from whom he requires full and unconditional consecration. The Word of God calls unfaithfulness to the spouse God, expressed in worship of alien gods and idols, adultery. It is this spiritual adultery that incites resentment and jealousy in the heart of God.

Deuteronomy 32:16-18, 21 — *They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear. Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten the God who fathered you. ... They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.*

1 Kings 14:22 — *Now Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done.*

Psalms 78:58 — *For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their carved images.*

Ezekiel 8:3-6 — *He stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my hair; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to*



Drawing by I. OSOKIN, Russia

Romans 8:35, 38-39 — *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2. The Covenant with God Is a Covenant of Marriage

A. The Commandment to Remain Faithful to Your God

When the Lord God made a covenant with the people of Israel, He gave them His Law, which forbade them to worship anyone other than the Creator.

Exodus 34:14 — *...for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God...*

B. Warning of the consequences of unfaithfulness to God

God not only forbade His people to worship idols, but also warned that punishment the people of God would face for disobedience and unfaithfulness to their God.

Exodus 20:4-6 — *You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

3. Jealousy as a Manifestation of God's Righteous Wrath

A. Very often the word jealousy is used to describe the righteous wrath of God.

Psalms 79:5 — *How long, Lord? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire?*

B. The wrath of God is kindled by those who hate Him and do not obey His commandments.

Deuteronomy 6:13-15 — *You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you (for the Lord your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth.*

C. God's wrath has the same strength and energy as God's perfect love.

Song of Solomon 8:6 — *As a seal upon your arm; For love is as strong as death, Jealousy as cruel as the grave; Its flames are flames of fire, A most vehement flame.*

Speaking of the jealousy of the Lord God, it is necessary to understand that such a language (the conjugal symbol) is used by the Bible in order to illustrate as clearly as possible the feelings peculiar to our Creator. Marital infidelity breeds resentment, jealousy and anger in the heart of a loving spouse. Our Creator experiences similar feelings when we — His creation — turn out to be unfaithful to Him.

1 Corinthians 10:22 — *Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?*

Will you decide to provoke the Lord to jealousy?

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

My life did not differ much from the life of other kids who also came from dysfunctional families. My dad drank and my mom was ill (her kidneys did not work well). I was the youngest of eight kids and I practically was left to my own.

socializing with him, through the instruction of faith, God radically changed me. I was freed from my smoking addiction, profanity, and drug addiction.

In some miraculous manner, I was freed one year and four months before

NOW I SERVE CHILDREN

We lived in New Kakhovka. The streets were my main upbringing. At the age of six, I started smoking. At the age of eleven, I tried marijuana. At the age of sixteen, I tasted opium for the first time. I became addicted. After a few months, I realized that I was now a part of a system and I could not break free from my own.

Three years later, I was convicted for theft and drug possession. I was sentenced for five years.

After my sentence was up, I was set free; but, I was not planning to change my lifestyle. Shortly after, I ended up behind bars again. I was convicted once again for six years. This is when I started to seriously consider my life's purpose. Obviously, God noticed this and started to lead me. This took place in the Olshanka of the Mykolaiv area. Although I was still leading a criminal lifestyle, my heart came to the realization that I needed to repent. Soon, believers visited our colony. One of them was my old friend whom I had not seen for almost ten years. After

my sentence was up. But I started serving God while I was still in the colony. I bravely walked wherever I could and preached with my friends about Jesus Christ's salvation.

Now, I am fully convinced that God led me out of prison. At the beginning of my sentence, I had regime violations that eliminated any possibility to leave on parole. Yet, when I came to the prison's court regarding my parole, it turned out that there were no violations listed in my case. All of my violations disappeared and my mind could not grasp this...

After I was set free, I instantly left for the rehab center in Kyiv. At first, I had doubts whether I should stay at the rehab center. I thought to myself, "I've been a believer for three years already. Why do I need rehab?" But I stayed and I don't regret it one bit.

Shortly after, I started to participate in church ministry by helping children in orphanages. I was noticed and got offered a job at one



of the juvenile centers in Kyiv (in Troieshchyna). Half a year later, I joined an international non-profit organization "Child Rescue Service" as an educator in a social hostel for teenagers. That is where I met my future wife Nadia. I completed my education at the National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy", Prof. V. Poltavets School of Social Work and became a social worker.

Today I work for a city service for the children in the Shevchenko region of Kyiv. Aside from that, I help my church with a prison ministry along with other believers. Visiting prisons, I witness to the prisoners how my life transformed thanks to faith. It transformed thanks to faith.

Grigory MAMUSAYEV,
Ukraine.

I was born and raised in Kyiv (Shuliavka). My parents were quite decent people. Due to my criminal activities, they had to pick me up from the regional police station more than once. After I finished

masks: one for school; the second for vodka, drugs, and immoral life; and the third for thoroughly planned apartment burglary. In spite of this, I regularly attended the gym and did boxing. My acquaintances



school, I somewhat got a hold of myself. I got accepted to a private university majoring in law. This was a good sign for my parents. However, I did not plan on leaving behind my criminal ways. I became a part of money laundering with my street fellows. We were scammers. Our gang grew. At that time, I lived with three

suggested that I transfer from the private university to the Academy of Internal Affairs. Seeing the potential, I asked to join the army sports' division. The service was very specific so I still had the opportunity to study, take my exams, and resolve my "affairs". The life tempo that I set for myself did not permit

AFTER PRISON I WAS ACCEPTED TO THE ACADEMY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS A SECOND TIME

any stopping. I slept about four hours per day. I systematically drank and practically became an alcoholic...

Our gang was caught in 2001 after I served six months in the army and had just completed my fifth course at the academy. I was unable to bribe my way out.

For the very first time, in prison, at the age of twenty-three, I started to think about my life. "What will happen if I die tomorrow?" This question would repeatedly return during my stay at the prison in Volyn.

One evening, I was left alone in the furniture workshop. I got up on one of the machines and hung my legs over it. I looked into the fireplace for a while thinking about my life. All of my actions and aspirations were all plain evil. So many people hated me — even my own brother! If I could only change! "God help me!"

The next morning, I woke up in the barracks. I could not

recognize myself. Instead of feeling irritation and anger, I felt peace and calmness. Since then, I started to attend a church of believers. When my sentence was up (by God's mercy, I was able to leave two years sooner), I completed rehab. Today I am responsible in the ministry among teenagers who have problems with alcoholism, drug addiction, a premature sexual life, and so on. I am also a deacon, youth leader, and a judicial department leader. By the way, I was able to resume my studies at the academy and complete the Academy of Internal Affairs which was unreal with my criminal background! At church, I met my spouse Elena. We now raise our two wonderful boys — Ephraim and Elisha.

I want to address all the guys who are intrigued by the romanticism of theft and easy money. Friends you are going down the false path which will eventually lead you to rock

bottom. Stop before it's too late. It doesn't matter where you are now; only Jesus can change your life.

Know that if God does something then He does it in full. When an inveterate criminal whose thoughts were all about lying, back-stabbing, and taking advantage of people suddenly repents, then the Lord forgives. The Most High no longer remembers your wrongdoings; contrary, He abundantly blesses. He changes their inner-being and cares for their spiritual and material well-being. Is this just? "Yes", says God. Just like decent people who don't consider themselves sinners fill themselves with mediocre "half-full" measures and never find satisfaction. The Bible says that the only source for wholeness is found in Jesus Christ. And to attain this wholeness, all we have to do is come to Him in repentance.

Vladimir MIHAILENKO,
Ukraine.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

How to Be a Wife of An Unchristian Husband?

We find the answer to this question in **1 Peter 3:1-6**: *Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this*

is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

It's worth noting that Peter suggests that all women should **first** be submissive to their husbands; and **secondly** (especially those whose husbands are unbelievers and disobedient to God's Word), to lead a reverent life according to God's Word. Submitting and leading

a righteous life may lead to the repentance of the husband and his turning to the Lord.

Many wives try to convert their

husbands by lecturing them or preaching to them. However, a husband comes to God when He sees his wife's genuine love toward



God that is expressed in her deeds not words. According to Apostle Peter's words, it is pleasing for a wife to submit and lead a reverent life before God.

It is also worth remembering that if a husband inclines his wife to godless actions, the wife must listen to God beforehand. And by saying, "submit yourselves to your own husbands", Apostle Peter means for wives not to bicker and get into fights with their husbands; but rather, faithfully fulfill her duties as a wife in keeping the family's health and home while caring for her husband and children.

<http://www.cogmtl.net/q.htm>

LOVE FOR LIFE

Very often you hear from young couples who are experiencing a breakup, such a phrase as *Our love passed* or even in general, *We never loved each other*.

If this happens in a marriage it causes a lot of problems such as: scars from a divorce, suffering of children or horrible life with a stranger. Parting before marriage is often associated with less serious psychological problems.

All couples probably want their relationship to last a very long time, and not end after two or three years.

So, can love last a lifetime?

Why do so many couples break up now?

WHAT IS LOVE IN GENERAL?

Scientists have long discovered a number of hormones that are responsible for certain feelings, and the feeling of falling in love is no exception. The hormone of love is called phenylethylamine. However, the Bible writes about love between a man and a woman as a supernatural sacrament, which is the union of two people into one whole person: *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh (Mark 10:7-8).*

If there was no such feeling as love, then we would never have met with the opposite sex. But if love was based only on feelings, then it would not be eternal, as the hormones responsible for the feelings sooner or later die off.

How does it work? You fall in love with a person and whenever you see or hear him your brain releases phenylethylamine. For the body this hormone acts as a drug, we like it and we find pleasure in it. An interesting thing happens: you walk with your loved one, you feel good, it feels like you're flying in the air, but as soon as your loved one disappears from your sight, you fall into misery (drug addicts call it "brittle").

Some Christian scholars call this hormone phenylethylamine "heavenly glue", which is given by God for a time to put a couple together. But this hormone lives in the body from a year and a half to three years (for this reason, many couples

are in crisis and get separated during this period). Therefore, the principle of love has to be present in addition to feelings; willingness to love someone forever no matter what changes time will bring and what attitude you will have towards your loved one.

IS IT WORTH LOOKING FOR THE IDEAL ONE?

Do not set yourself up for the idea that you can meet a person who will ideally suit you. Psychologists say that there are more than twenty points, physical and psychological, that should match in two people to make a perfect pair. Do not look at other couples that are around you and do not be jealous of their relationship to each other. Those who lived their whole lives together, as a rule, did not just fit perfectly together, but worked hard so that their love would not fade. Love — it is not just emotions and passion, but also integrity, willingness to work on the relationship, and forgiveness. Now that we understand what love is, we can talk about how to save it.

DO NOT HURRY!

Very often young people having fallen in love begin to rapidly develop relations, but is it a growing relationship? For love to be life long and true, you need to know each other well at the very beginning of a relationship. In fact, often it turns out that people learn only apparent features of another person (the greatest attention was drawn to the outer person), but the real and unchangeable remains within. Thus, people not knowing each other well enough move on to physical acquaintance, forgetting about the inner person. In the future, when the outer features of a person change (unfortunately, it happens in hundred percent of cases), suddenly it turns out that it was the only thing that kept a relationship together; the inner person was never known. There comes a great desire to break the relationship, but it cannot be done because the physical relationship has gone too far.

Therefore, having fallen in love with someone, try to understand who you have fallen in love with, what this person is inside, would you like to live with him (her) your whole life. Do not rush to



move on to the physical contact, otherwise you will not be able to clearly assess your future spouse.

MAKE FRIENDS!

The only way out is to make friends. When you meet with a person who you like, do not let your passions go out of hand but talk to him/her a little more. Take time to learn that person's internal state and start off as friends. In my fifteen years, I loved very many girls and today, when I see them again, I cannot understand why I loved them so much. My hormone has died in relation to them and I no longer experience those feelings towards them. It was not even interesting to speak and be around them for more than ten minutes.

Today, if you do not waste time on empty physical affection and physical contact, but instead try to spend time together on activities that interest both of you, then, even if in three years this love hormone will die your relationship will still be growing. Then another year will pass, and feelings will reappear, and that will continue throughout your whole life. It is safe to say that friendship is the foundation of a durable and long relationship in both marriage and before marriage.

Love is a feeling that needs to be cherished and cultivated by friendship. This is a principle that is possible only when you value a person and you are connected by something more than hormones. The Bible describes love that never ceases. Strive for that kind of love!

God is love! By looking at Him, one can learn to truly love. For life.

Eugene KAFTANOV,
<https://proekt7d>.

QUESTION AND ANSWER



As we read the Scriptures, we are faced with cases of demon-possessed. Demon-possessed is the state of a person possessed with unclean spirits. The New Testament describes several stories on possessed people from who Jesus cast out demons: **Matthew 9:32-33** — *As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!"*; **Matthew 12:22** — *Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw*; **Luke 8:26-33** — *Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?"*



CAN THE DEVIL HAVE A HUMAN APPEARANCE?

And he said, "Legion", because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned.

The Bible also describes a case of a possessed person in whom satan himself entered. We are talking about Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus Christ to the high priests: **John 13:21-30** — *When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, I say*

to you, one of you will betray Me". Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke. Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it". And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly". But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. 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. Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.

Therefore, a person can be possessed with unclean spirits, thereby allowing the devil and other fallen angels to roam the earth in human appearance. But we should also take into account the ability of angels to take human form while that person is unaware of it. Reading the Bible, we come across stories when God's angels also appear in human form. The Bible also warns that unclean spirits are able to appear under the appearance of angels of light. If fallen angels have the ability

and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

The Word of God repeatedly warns us that we are living in the end times and that the spirit of Antichrist is already in the world: **1 John 2:18** — *Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the*

to appear as a good angel then, of course, they can appear in human form: **2 Corinthians 11:14-15** — *And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

The Lord Himself warns us that at the end of the world the Antichrist will appear in the world, who will be none other than Satan in the flesh. He will look like an ordinary man, but will amaze people with false miracles (meaning through high technology) and force them to worship him as God. **2 Thessalonians 2:8-10** — *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth*

last hour; 1 John 4:3 — *...and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world; 2 John 1:7* — *For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*

Therefore, we live in the very end of times and the end is near. The Lord calls us to be good about the rational, relying on His Word, and to keep vigilant in prayers: **1 Peter 4:7** — *But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.*

<https://www.cogmtl.net/q.htm>

Joyce Meyer's Father repented of sexual abuse and accepted Christ

Christian author and speaker Joyce Meyer has opened up about the day her father admitted that he sexually abused her for years when she was young, and asked for forgiveness and accepted Jesus Christ.

"If we love the way God loves, that means that we're going to love when there's nothing in it for us. When it's just giving out. I know it will win people to Christ, including some of the hardest people you can imagine", Meyer said in a sermon posted on her Facebook page on Monday.

"My dad sexually abused me for many years. My mother knew what was happening, she just was a very fearful woman who didn't know [how] to deal with him, and so just let it happen", she told the audience, recounting her story of abuse that she frequently shares.

"Later on, many years later, after I thought I had totally forgiven [them], God put it in my heart that I needed to buy them a better house to live in, and take really good care of them until they died", she continued.

The evangelist explained that was the "last thing" she wanted to do, and wrestled with God, asking Him what her parents had ever done for her, given the history of sexual abuse.

Eventually she realized that "God wants us to be good to people who haven't done anything for us, because that is the best way in the world that you can do spiritual warfare and keep the devil under your feet".

She warned that focusing one's life on revenge only brings about "poison".

Meyer explained that it took three years of taking her parents to the doctors, paying their bills, taking care of them in a variety of different ways, plus buying them a good house, before one day her mother told her that her father had been crying and asking her to come over.

The evangelist noted that throughout all those years, he had not only never apologized, but "never admitted what he did". But it was in that meeting where, with tears in his eyes, he said, "I'm so sorry for what I did to you when you were a kid".

After that, he asked Meyer to pray with him, he asked to receive Christ, and was baptized 10 days later.

"One of the main reasons people don't walk in love is because love is an effort. Real love is going to cause some time, some effort, some pride — you're going to have to be willing to swallow your pride", she reflected.

"When somebody has hurt us, one of the hardest things in the world is to wait and let God bring our vindication", she pointed out.

Meyer said back in April 2016 that her father raped her at least 200 times when she was growing up.

"He didn't force me physically, but through lies, and manipulation, and fears, and threats, I was still forced", she said in an interview.

"My father did rape me, numerous times, at least 200 times".

The author noted that the shame was very hard to deal with, especially as her father also sexually abused their neighbor's daughter.

"Sexual abuse is so shaming that nobody talks about it. Nobody knows how to talk about it", she said at the time.

Meyer said that she is sharing her story with the world to inspire those struggling to find hope, telling them that recovery is always possible.

<https://christianpost.com>

Holiness is a tremulous word. Holiness is a concept that is not universally liked. It even irritates some Christians. Holiness is a righteous and sinless life. Holiness is a certain level of dedication to God and His Word.

It is not easy to live a holy life. Holiness is out of reach for many. It is much easier not to think about holiness, it is much easier to allow yourself some liberties and sins. It is so much easier that many people live like this. People often underestimate and do not realize the terrible consequences of their sins. They can allow themselves to be a part of the church of God and continue to sin constantly or periodically. They think

Does sin have consequences in the lives of Christians?

that sin cannot affect their lives in any way. What a monstrous and vile lie — the devil's lie! God has always reacted, reacts, and will react to sin. That's who he is. He is a Holy God and has never had anything to do with sin and will never have. It's an axiom! And the consequences for the committed sin always come!

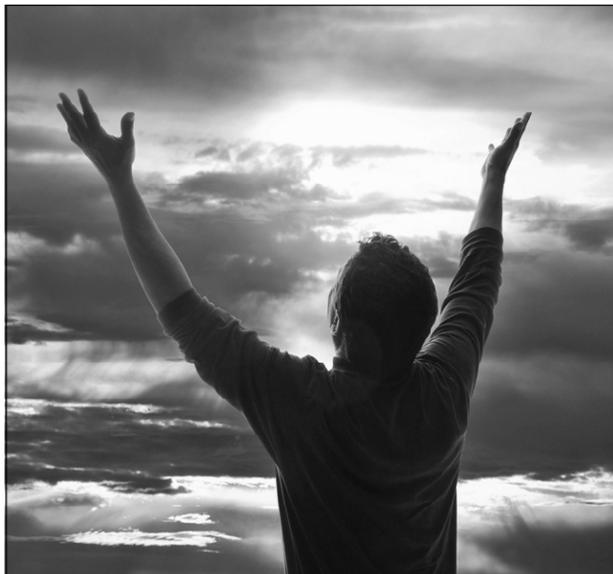
In modern Christianity there are such common misconceptions that if a person is a believer, he or she is no longer afraid of sin and can afford liberties without fear of consequences. Such as, I'll repent and that's it... If I sin again, I'll repent again. And so it is possible to infinity. Sin — repent, sin — repent... That's a great idea! God will forgive everything, at least a hundred times a day He will forgive our sins. But I want to say that this belief is heresy, it is completely inconsistent with God's Word.

The Bible says: *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:4-6).* Because such people, doing so, crucify again the Son of God and blaspheme him. They crucify in themselves Jesus Christ, who settled in their lives when they first repented of their sins. And now, every sin on their part is a mockery of the Son of God. We need to understand and realize the seriousness of our sins when we have already become believers. Sin is very dangerous! This does not mean that there is no hope for sinners or Christians who sin. It is possible to repent, but the consequences of sin will continue to be a part of the life of such a person for a long time. Sin always has consequences. Even if a person has repented after his transgression, there will still be consequences for the sin in his life. It was so in the time of the Old Testament, it is also in the time of the New Testament. There are no New Testament sins that have no consequences. And a person who sins in the New Testament times and repents still bears the consequences of what he or she has done.

It may be objected, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Yes, it cleanses the sin but the consequences often remain. I can illustrate this with a simple example. A participant in a street fight got a tooth knocked out, he came home and regretted his negative action. The next day he came to church and repented of his deeds. However, repenting did not cause his tooth to grow back. Another example are drug addicts or alcoholics who lost their homes. After repentance, their homes are not automatically returned. They will bear the consequences of the sinful lifestyles for years to come.

I am not saying that the consequences of sin are impossible to eliminate. The consequences of sins remain, but they can be



overcome. But this requires a sufficiently long period of time during which a person will still bear the consequences of his or her sins in their lives. The apostle Paul tells us: *whatever a man sows, that he will also reap... (Gal. 6:7).* The spiritual laws of sowing and reaping continue to apply in the New Testament. Sin does not happen without consequences. In the Bible we read about one of the greatest men of God — David. There were not many sins in David's life, and for each of them he repented to God. But let us look at the consequences of these sins. David first son from Bathsheba died. His son Absalom killed his brother Amnon for raping Absalom's sister. Absalom himself, rebelling against his father and in the sight of all Israel, dishonored David's concubines, thereby bringing shame to his father. Absalom was killed soon after. God did not allow David to build the temple, saying that he had a lot of blood on his hands. David was haunted by his enemies throughout his life. The sword did not move away from his house.

This is only a short list of the main consequences of David's sins, we do not go into the details of all the experiences and heartaches that David went through as a result of his sins. It is very, very dangerous for the righteous to sin. There will always come consequences. It is better not to tempt God, and to not put your life and fate in jeopardy.

Konstantin SHAPOVALOV,
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PRISONER

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