

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!



PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free".

John 8:32

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If I had to speak with full honesty, was I suffering all these long twenty-eight and a half years that I spent in jail? I can truthfully reply: No. This is not because being here is comfortable for me. No. At times, it was unbearably hard, especially the first six years when my worthless life was spent on death row. In a jail there is very little that can bring a human being any joy or satisfaction. Jail is a place where the spiritual and physical human nature are in constant conflict between each other until one of them defeats the other. This is what determines if a person suffered or not. Praise God that in the fight between the two forces, the spiritual one received victory! This is why I can definitively say I did not suffer in jail all the years I was there but served and continue to serve the punishment that I earned while living a sinful life. This is what my conscience is saying (which God has awakened in me when I first turned to Him with repentance, a quarter-century ago).

No, friends! I am not suffering but I am serving time that I deserve! If asked, am I tired of life in jail? I would definitely say: of course! I

Having suffered so much, He carried His cross toward Golgotha. The heavy hammer drove giant nails into his hands and feet. The pain that He felt would spring forth from his parched throat. The terrible injustice that people committed on Golgotha can't be described with words. The most painful and evil style of execution to be invented, humanity used on the One who loved and forgave us all. Would any of us, sinful and as some people claim; "suffering in jail" be able to sacrifice ourselves for the salvation of others and be able to bear the suffering that Jesus Christ went through and forgive those some people that crucified Him?! I can say for a fact: No!

Let's say someone was forcefully nailed to the cross against their will and were unable to escape, would that person be able to forgive the people that did this to them? Very unlikely!

What Christ endured for us all on the cross — that is what we can truly call suffering. Can the limitations, discomfort, and lawlessness that we personally acquire through our own stupidity and thoughtlessness be called suffering? Nobody entices us to come to jail. People end up in jail exclusively

Sadly, people today, live like they did in the times of Noah. Very few people hear the call of Christ. He, the same as He was back then, is calling people to come to Him: *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30).

Many people think that all of what is said in the Bible is not said for them. They say: two thousand years have passed and nobody came to earth; all of the prophecies are old and are not being fulfilled. However, only people who are spiritually blind talk and think like this. The Holy Scriptures clearly state the reason why the Lord has not come to judge the earth yet. This is what the Bible says: *"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Also, when we talk about time, from the outlook of outside this universe, time goes by

SUFFERING

have hated the jail from the moment that I stepped into it. However, despite the negatives that jail brings, it has one positive side. The positive is that it makes a sinful person think about their life from the very beginning and make a choice. What choice every person makes for themselves is their decision. However, it's a fact that prison causes each of its "visitors" to review their life and look at how they lived because there is an ample amount of time to think while you're in prison.

On the topic of suffering, I want to talk about the people who truly suffered in jail. I don't think that anyone will contradict me if I label the people who are now in jail on made up charges as people who are suffering. I will also say that people who suffered in jail are the people who were incarcerated for their faith. These are the people who are truly suffering in jail. I am familiar and know several of these people and in light of their stories, my tongue cannot even move to say that I am suffering. What these people are going through, only God knows. Besides these people, there was One who truly suffered for all mankind; His name is Jesus Christ! *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

He is the one who suffered for every one of us sinners, His name is Jesus Christ. He, as a righteous one, was given for the unrighteous ones for our salvation. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).

Today, on the eve of the Resurrection of Christ, I can't help but think about the suffering that our Lord and Savior suffered for us all. What kind of great love did He need to have towards all of mankind to consciously give himself up as the sacrifice for our sins. The Holy Scripture says: *"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

If we even think for a minute what kind of suffering and torture Jesus Christ went through for us sinful people, then our hearts involuntarily shudder and we get goosebumps. The kind of humiliation and beatings that Jesus suffered before He was crucified is hard to wrap our minds around.



by committing individual sins (I am not talking about people who are in jail but are innocent). So, we as Christians, who have come to know God within these walls, should be ashamed to say that we are suffering especially given all the suffering that Jesus Christ endured for our salvation. The Righteous for the unrighteous, He endured all of this and forgave us. Not one person who lived before or who is currently living would be able to do what Christ did for all!

Execution, including death by hanging on the cross, was forced upon many people and many people died through this torturous death. However, willingly and knowingly going to die by this method for the salvation of others, nobody did this. This is the only example in the history of mankind when one Person knowingly gave himself up to torture and death for the salvation of all who live on earth.

I really desire that on the glorious day of the Resurrection of Christ, people would even think about what sacrifice our Lord went through so that we could have salvation! This day should not be a day of being drunk or for eating good food, this day should be a day of prayer and of singing praise. Today, every person still has a chance to be saved if they make the right choice, for tomorrow might not come...

differently than it does for us living on earth. The Bible also talks about this: *"But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"* (2 Peter 3:7-8).

Today, like never before, humanity is standing on the threshold of end times because not only have the minor prophecies, but also the major ones been fulfilled. The Good News of the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead has reached even the most remote tribes thanks to missionaries from different countries. Very soon, absolutely nobody living on earth will be able to say that they have not heard about Jesus Christ and His call to all people. The Bible clearly says when the end will come: *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come"* (Matthew 24:14). This is the last thing said by Jesus Christ that is about to come true. Everything else has already been fulfilled and humanity is standing on the threshold of the end times. How many days, years, or decades are left until the coming of Jesus Christ nobody who lives on earth knows. However, we know for a fact that humanity with all of its technological progress has reached its apogee of complete amorality and lawlessness! In the same way as was during the days of Noah, the majority of people are living completely carelessly, and very few are worried about what will happen tomorrow. Everybody needs everything now, and the more the better. Very few hear the One who truly suffered for all of us and who went through unthinkable torment for us to have a chance to be saved!

I believe the time has come for all of humanity to hear the Creator of the entire universe! He gave His Son to go through suffering so that when He endured the suffering, having died, would resurrect from the dead for the salvation of all people!

Let the words of faith, hope, and joy come from the mouth of every person today: "Jesus Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!"

I. GORIK.

We have many reasons to rejoice in the resurrection of Christ. We will look at seven of them.

1. Jesus was resurrected from the dead

This is an unprecedented event in the history of mankind. The resurrection of Christ is different from all resurrections that have ever happened. Jesus at one time resurrected Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus and a young man from Nain. We know that Peter also resurrected some people. We see in the Bible that Paul resurrected — the young man Eutychus, who fell out of the window. We even encounter the resurrection in the Old Testament: someone was thrown on the bones of Elisha and he was resurrected. We see different biblical resurrections in history.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is fundamentally different. Because every resurrected being died anyway. This affects even those people who escaped death: Enoch, who is written to have walked with God and he was gone, and the prophet Elijah, who was taken alive in a chariot. When you open Revelation,

Wherever we go, we find the graves of these leaders. They testify against their own teachings. Because the path that their followers follow also leads to the grave. The tomb of our Jesus Christ is empty, and by following Jesus we come to eternal life, not to the grave — that's what the resurrection of Jesus has given us.

Maybe you are one of those who hesitate to receive the remission of your sins. Maybe Satan is accusing you, tempting you, trying to do something with your soul. I remember the story of Mary Magdalene. This is the woman from whom Jesus cast out seven demons, He freed her. And she loved Jesus so much that she followed Him wherever He went. Then Christ was seized, crucified, He died, and He was taken from the cross and laid in the tomb. Mary was one of the first to arrive. I imagine the torment of her soul: *Probably, these demons will return, will they torment me? Perhaps I will again plunge into this darkness, hopelessness? Will my life be a nightmare again?* While waiting and when the angels were sent,

already seated in Heaven. If you look at this from this angle, then the devil, who is in the atmospheric habitation, is under our feet.

Faith enables us to look through the eyes of God. And Scripture tells us how to look. When we get to Heaven, we will simply take our rightful place in the new body. In spirit, we are already there.

5. The Resurrection of Christ Frees Us from the Fear of Death

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:14–15).

Fear makes us slaves of Satan, slaves of this fear. But it is written that Jesus came to remove the fear of death. It is this fear that is in the first place in the modern world. By the way, in second place is the fear of public speaking.

Jesus came and through His resurrection declared that death no longer had power.

If you feel a lack of God's love in your heart, it's very simple: get on your knees and experience it. Let God pour this love into your life.

The problem is that many people are *malnourished*. The Bible is read one verse a year, and then they say: *Why do I have such problems? Why am I already a semi-apostate?* Because you don't eat well or have proper nutrition. Because you have a weak spiritual appetite, you have developed spiritual illnesses. You don't get filled with the Holy Spirit. And God says: *Do not get drunk with wine, from which there is debauchery; but be filled with the Holy Spirit.* We all have the same opportunity, so strive to be filled with the Holy Spirit and God's love. Then you won't be afraid of death.

6. The resurrection of Christ made His power available to the believer

The power that raised Christ is within us. This is the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that abides in us.

SEVEN REASONS TO BE JOYFUL FOR THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

you see two prophets having come to earth to confront and fight against an antichrist. It says that they will also go through death and then be resurrected. Even those who have ascended will pass through death. The resurrection of Christ is different.

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).

What is His birthright? Jesus Christ is resurrected, and death has no more power over Him.

When He resurrected, He has put on a new body, incorruptible.

After the resurrection, He went through the closed door without opening it and said to His disciples: *Peace to you!* In this very body He ascended to Heaven, in this body He will return, and in this body He will remain forever.

2. The same miracle will happen to those who believe in Christ

We will receive an incorruptible body like Jesus. There will be two options either we will be resurrected incorruptible, or at the coming of Jesus Christ we will be taken up and will change in an instance.

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:51–54).

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25).

3. The resurrection of Christ makes our faith in Christ not in vain

And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty (1 Corinthians 15:14).

And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! (1 Corinthians 15:17).

Our faith is not built on anything other than the resurrection of Christ.

I remember a man preaching. He said: if suddenly the world learns that, for example, Buddha and Muhammad never existed, Buddhism and Islam will remain religions. If it turns out that any of religious leaders did not exist, their religion will continue to function. However, if suddenly it turns out that Christ never existed or that He was not resurrected, Christianity will disappear from the face of the earth. Because Christianity is built on the living, resurrected Jesus Christ. It is not a religion, not a book nor a set of rules. This is a living person. And faith is a relationship with a living and resurrected Savior.

That is why the apostle Paul makes such a challenge. We must know that He is risen. When we know this, we feel like a new creation, our sins are forgiven. The resurrection was the guarantee of the forgiveness of sins. The old life will never return.

...That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9).

That's the secret of salvation — to believe with your heart that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. True faith is based on the resurrection, on the living, risen Lord. Therefore, we do not believe in vain!



she did not even pay attention to them. Then Mary Magdalene saw Jesus and did not recognize Him, thinking that it was a gardener. The Lord began to speak to her. Mary says: *Where is He? I want to take Him.* She could not rest until she saw the resurrected Jesus Christ.

It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that guarantees the forgiveness of our sins, our salvation. We have become free from the bondage of sin and its consequences. We can live in freedom — when our conscience is clear, when our heart is pure, there is no guilt and condemnation. This is a great blessing. And this is evidence, since only the living Lord could save us from this nightmare.

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:1).

4. We are resurrected with Christ and seated in Heaven

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:4).

When God looks at a believer, how does He see him? He sees us in Christ. He sees us dead with Jesus on the cross and resurrected with Him to new life. God has already raised us up, He has already seated us in Heaven, we are already in Christ.

I once heard a story. One pastor told how he got to Heaven and an angel led him and showed him houses, monasteries for people who would come there. The angel said: This is your house. And next to it was a huge, beautiful house. He says:

And this is the house of Natasha the dancer.

The man was surprised:
That Natasha, who works in the club and who is called a "dancer"?

*Yes, don't be surprised.
But she's not a believer.*

Don't worry, soon she will recognize God and lead the whole village to salvation. And not only this one, but also several neighboring settlements — she will lead everyone to Jesus.

Therefore, when God looks, He has no past, present, or future. For Him, everything is in the present.

If the house for Natasha is already ready, then yours is all the more ready. You are

Because Jesus Christ conquered death. Death is defeated. We have nothing more to fear. And the believer carries eternal life within himself. It has already been given to us. Instead of fear, God gives us His love. And His desire is for every cell of our being to be overflowing with His love. And we have an amazing, happy, interesting life. Because when the love of God overflows us, we have no fear. It is written that perfect love casts out all fear. That is why we were given commandments in which it is written about the love as a key word. Because when we begin to love God and live by Him, the fear of death no longer affects us.

Today there are many people who are subject to the fear of death. Coronavirus seems to have imprisoned the entire globe. But I am sure that if you are not afraid of death, then you are not afraid of the coronavirus either. Because death is death, and illness is a little different. When infected with a virus that is so much talked about today, ninety-five percent of those who get sick recover, that is, it is not quite death. There is, of course, a certain group of people who take risks. But look at the horror this brought the whole universe into.

Recently, I was talking to a pastor from another country, and he said that three people in their country died from the coronavirus, and 1500 committed suicide. Many people have been quarantined, they couldn't leave the house. Some guys went outside to play tennis, and the police drove up to them and each of them was fined one thousand euros... Everyone is so scared of this virus! Three people died from the virus, and fifteen hundred died of fear. That's why we need the Lord and a relationship with Him: to be filled with His love. Instead of fear, we are given love.

Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter". Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 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 (Romans 8:34–39).

...And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:19–20).

How immeasurable is the greatness of His power in us! Believers, you have this power. It is given to you. The power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is the Holy Spirit. Take care of this, do not grieve the Holy Spirit — and you will walk in the victory of Jesus Christ over Satan, over every manifestation of sin and evil, over every manifestation of temptation. Because only with this power we have victory. Because this power resurrected Christ.

7. The resurrection of Christ is a demonstration to the world that Jesus is the Son of God

When Jesus lived on earth, there was a lot of controversy: *Who is this? Carpenter's son?*

...Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:3–4).

If this is a demonstration to the world that Jesus is the Son of God, then we are dealing with God in the person of Jesus Christ. This means that His resurrection from the dead tells us the following: every word that He spoke is the truth, it will come true (*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away*). This means that we need to look at His words differently. Some of them He said about His second coming. He said that He would return a second time, not to redeem the world from sin, but He would appear as a judge to judge the living and the dead. Because God has appointed a day on which He will judge the universe righteously through Jesus Christ, and He has given everyone a certificate by raising Him from the dead.

...Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

Therefore, we no longer have any opportunity to fight or doubt that He will return and judge the earth. If He's God, and if He says so, then so be it.

You will say: *What is the joy that He will come and judge the living and the dead?* The joy lies in the fact that he who believes in Him does not come to judgment. That's the miracle — that you will escape judgment!

But we must preach the gospel and proclaim to the people about the resurrection of the Lord and His subsequent coming. Now is the time when people are asking questions: *What is happening to our earth? What's next for us?* They need to preach the gospel. Now is the time to say that God commands repentance, there is no other way. It's time to repent, turn to God, leave all your bad, evil deeds, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart and live by His Word. To believe in Jesus is to live by His Word. Our eternal life is in Christ and His Word. For people to feed on His Word and not fear from the news or false teachings.

We have only one hope — the resurrected Jesus Christ, who loves us all and expects us to follow His path.

Vyacheslav GONCHARENKO,
<https://newlife.by>



Throughout my life I have had an opportunity to be in touch with the people who gave their lives to Jesus in jail. I have asked myself, many times, a question: Do people, who gave their lives to the Lord in prison, remain loyal to Him after having been released? Unfortunately, having regained freedom they find themselves enticed and overpowered by entertainment and sin. Very few are attending churches and ministries and serve in the prison world.

Why do a lot of people, having lost their freedom, start attending prison church gatherings and having been released, forsake their newly found faith? Why do they do that? What are the underlying motives? The parable of the sower, that was preached by Jesus Christ is the answer: **“Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: ‘Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a**

hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’” (Matthew 13:3–9, NKJV).

When the disciples of Jesus inquired about the meaning of the parable He answered: **“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty”** (Matthew 13:18–23, NKJV).

Coming to the conclusion from the above mentioned verse, people who got their release from prison and lost their faith can be compared to the seeds that fell among the thorns that the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches led those people away from God. The apostle Peter describes such people in one of his epistles: **“For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according**

to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit’, and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire’” (2 Peter 2:21–22, NKJV).

The sad thing is that when the person is left without God, the person succumbs to his/her sinful nature. Unfortunately, the person finds himself or herself in the hands of the evil one who brings him to a place from whence he or she came from i.e. “a dog returns to his own vomit”, and, “a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire”. These words make me shudder when I think about them.

Nowadays, there are a lot of people who do not know God or love this present world, having regained their freedom, lose their freedom again.

Precious time of life lost that can never be recovered again. Is this all worth it?

Rest assured, no one who has ever had prison experience wants to go back there again. In reality, a person needs God who will keep him or her from going back to jail again if that person remains faithful to the Savior to the end.

There are, of course, some people whom the Lord wants to go through imprisonment experience but it is more likely an exception to the rule. Most of the time, it happens to the most faithful servants of the Lord whom the Lord is using to bring lost souls to salvation. The Lord keeps his sons and daughters from the corrupting influence of sin if they remain faithful to the Lord.

I believe that the task of utmost importance for the ones who gave their lives to Jesus while being in prison is get themselves ready for the lifelong service to the Lord. The Lord does not forsake his faithful ones if they set such

goals for themselves. For God sees a heart of each brother and sister and knows our true motives.

It is obvious that while in prison people use faith and the Lord for their own selfish ends.

The apostle Peter describes such people wonderfully: **“A dog returns to his own vomit’, and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire’”**.

It seems to me that there is nothing worse for the person after having been washed is to go back to wallow in the mire from whence it is hard to get out. No doubt that imprisonment is definitely not romantic. Imprisonment carries no reward with it. An empty human soul can never find peace and joy unless God fills his or her soul with His Holy light.

The Lord is calling us all through His holy word to salvation for He is the only one who gave His life for our salvation. Isaiah the prophet predicted the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I want everyone who came to the Lord while being in jail to remember this prophecy.

“Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked — But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:1–12, NKJV).

Jesus Christ intercedes for all of us! Are we worthy of this? What good can we do for His Glory? Are you ready to follow the Lord faithfully to the very end?

I. GORIK.

Mississippi Church Accepts Bitcoin, Ethereum and other forms of Crypto

Back Bay Church in St. Martin, Mississippi, became the first Southern Baptist church in history that accepts donations in Cryptocurrency, Baptist Press reported.

Pastor Adam Bennett, a native of Mississippi who has been full time minister since 2005, accepts donations in Crypto. Other traditional forms of donations are accepted as well.

“This is very uncommon in churches today, but in the near future it might become a significantly popular way of donating, as more and more people become accustomed to Cryptocurrency”, Bennett said.

In addition to Bitcoin (BTC), he accepts donations in Ethereum (ETH), as well as Bitcoin Cash (BCH), DAI, Dogecoin (DOGE), Litecoin (LTC) and USD Coin (USDC).

“I talked to a couple other church members who are into Cryptocurrency, and they were thrilled to learn about it”, Bennett told Baptist Press.

“Sometime later I did a little research on my own and found out that the Salvation Army accepts cryptocurrency. I looked into their platform and ended up using a different one for us”, he encouraged others to do their own extensive research before accepting Crypto.

“This is an asset. So, if someone wants to donate Crypto to our church, as if they are donating a plot of land, they can now do so. Once received, we can sell this asset and use this money for mission work.

There are already non-profit organizations that use Crypto to transfer money from one country to another”, he said and he added that “transactions in some third world countries cannot be done quickly and cheaply”.



Bennett noted that these non-profit organizations are using Cryptocurrencies to efficiently raise funding for projects such as well construction.

“Our missionaries serve in other countries. Thanks to Cryptocurrency, we can quickly transfer money to them (within minutes or even seconds) for a very small fee, perhaps a hundredth of a cent. They in turn exchange Crypto to a local currency”, Bennett concluded.

<https://www.block-chain24.com>

‘Nothing Short of a Miracle’: Pastor Dies but Comes Back to Life After Global Prayer Chain Kicks In

Reverend Chris Wickland was found lifeless after passing out in a trampoline park he visited in Southampton with his children. After having went through that, he talks about the power of prayer and divine providence that brought him back to life.

Forty-seven-year-old Christopher Wickland, pastor of Living Word Pentecostal Church in Fareham, Hampshire, was playing with his three youngest children in a trampoline park and all of sudden lost his consciousness. He wasn’t breathing for fifteen minutes. Park employees fibrillated his heart 4 times, and soon after he was taken to the intensive care unit of St. Mary’s Hospital.

Tracy was informed that her husband Christopher had very low chances of survival. He went into cardiac arrest and was dead within fifteen minutes. They also warned her that there could be brain and heart damage if he survived at all.

Tracy immediately informed her social media friends about the state her husband was in and asked everyone to pray.

“I posted this on Facebook and hundreds of people from all over the world told me that they were praying for Chris”, and she added that park staff



and doctors have done a great job of trying to keep her husband alive.

Christopher Wickland spent nearly forty-eight hours in an induced coma. He woke up on a Sunday morning when his church was holding a morning service.

The congregation was thrilled to find out that their pastor regained consciousness and thunderous applause and tears of relief followed thereafter.

“This miracle could not have happened without God’s intervention and people who helped along the way”, said the pastor. “My church and other Christians around the world have been praying for me. All this power was harnessed to keep me alive. I’m not lucky, I’m blessed”.

He added that his wife prayed for him in the following way: “I will not become a grieving widow, I will stand on the Word of God, just proclaim the Holy Scriptures and believe that God will heal him”.

Speaking about his recovery, Wickland said, “I’ve been checked out by the doctors several times now and there’s absolutely nothing wrong with me. They can’t believe that I died for so long and there’s no permanent damage. My strength is back. I can work and jog again and besides, my brain thinks faster”.

Based on CBN News and Premier Christian News.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THIS

The first case of drunkenness, described in the Bible, happened to Noah after the Flood, when he began to cultivate a vineyard. After harvesting and making a wine drink, Noah consumed it and as a result experienced a strange state. Alcohol made Noah tired, and he fell asleep in his tent in the middle of the day, not even noticing how his clothes rolled up and exposed his body. His youngest son Ham saw this and laughed at his father. From that time on, disrespectful attitude towards the elderly, and especially towards one's parents, began to be called rudeness — on behalf of Ham, who showed disrespect to his father.

Why didn't Noah know about the intoxicating properties of wine? Perhaps there were no fermenting bacteria before the Flood, and the fruit of the vine did not have such intoxicating properties. Or, in his 600 years of life, Noah had never tasted wine before and did not know its properties? This looks highly unlikely.

It should be noted that everything was called wine in biblical times: the grape itself, grape juice, grape essence and alcoholic wine. Here are examples where grapes and grape juice flowing from a winepress are called wine:

Jer. 40:12 — ...they all came back to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, from all the countries where they had been scattered. And they harvested an abundance of wine and summer fruit.

Rev. 19:15 — ...He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

Even then, methods of long-term storage of unfermented grape juice were known. One of them is when grape juice was evaporated, turning into a thick concentrate like honey, and when necessary, diluted with water and served on the table. This is exactly what these texts say:

Prov. 9:2 — ...has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table...

Prov. 9:5 — ...come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed...

Alcoholic wine was also diluted with water in the proportion of one part of wine and three or four parts of water. And undiluted wine was called whole wine, and this is mentioned in **Rev. 14:10**.

The Bible also indicates another strong alcoholic drink — a fermented drink, which was made from the fruits of fruit trees and grain cereals.

Just like today, so always there were people who were addicted to alcoholic beverages. The Bible mentions many sad and even tragic stories related to the use of alcohol (**Gen. 19:31–38; 1 Sam. 25:36–39; 2 Sam. 13:28; 1 Kings 16:9–10; Dan. 5 :2; Judith 13:2**).

PROHIBITION FOR PRIESTS TO DRINK WINE DURING SERVICE IN THE TEMPLE

In the book of Leviticus, in the 10th chapter, an event is described when the two sons of Aaron, the priests, served in the tabernacle, being apparently under the influence of alcohol, and did not follow exactly the instructions of God, for which fire came from the Lord and burned them. And immediately after them getting slayed, the Lord commands Aaron that all the priests who are in service should never drink strong drinks.

Lev. 10:8–11 — Then the Lord said to Aaron, "You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the tent of meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, so that you can distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, and so you

can teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses".

Ezek. 44:21 — No priest is to drink wine when he enters the inner court.

For kings and nobles, being in a state of alcoholic intoxication in front of the people was humiliating, and also exposed them to the risk of making mistakes in justice and in the conduct of public affairs.

CHRISTIANITY AND ALCOHOL

ABOUT THE USE OF ALCOHOL BY CHRISTIANS

Prov. 31:4–5 — It is not for kings, Lemuel — it is not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.

Is. 28:7 — And these also stagger from wine and reel from beer: priests and prophets stagger from beer and are befuddled with wine; they reel from beer, they stagger when seeing visions, they stumble when rendering decisions.

New Testament Christians are equated with the royal and priestly lineage. We are a temple of the Holy Spirit living in us and belong to God! And serving God in this temple of our body should never stop. We must be sober to distinguish good from evil.

Rev. 1:5–6 — ...and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

SONS OF REKAB (JER. 35:1–19)

The Bible contains the story of a father — Jehonadab, son of Rekab, who personally discovered the harm of drinking alcohol. He not only himself refused to use them, but also ordered his descendants to never drink alcohol. The Law of Moses, by which they were governed at that time, did not require this. But the most remarkable thing in this story is that God noticed the faithfulness of the children to the word of their father and set this as an example for all the Israelites.

Jer. 35:13–14 — This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, "Will you not learn a lesson and obey my words?" declares the Lord. "Jehonadab son of Rekab ordered his descendants not to drink wine and this command has been kept. To this day they do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather's command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me".

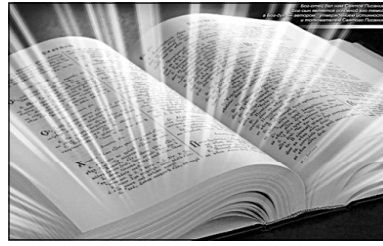
THE NAZIRITE

In Israel, there was also a Nazirite vow, a special dedication of one's life to God for a certain number of years. So, the obligatory condition of the Nazirite was not to touch the dead and not to drink alcoholic beverages. Even the future mother of Samson was told in advance that she should not have strong drinks during her pregnancy, so as not to interfere with the fulfillment of God's plan: her son was to become a deliverer from the Philistine yoke.

Num. 6:1–4 — The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of dedication to the Lord as a Nazirite, they must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or other fermented drink...'"

Jud. 13:1–5 — A certain man of Zorah, named Manoah, from the

PASTOR'S WORD



STATISTICS

In Russia, 50,435 people died from alcohol-related causes in 2020, according to Rosstat data. In 2019, alcohol was the cause of death for 47,427 people. These figures do not include deaths from drunk driving, homicides under the influence of alcohol, and accidents. If these indicators are considered, then the total damage from alcohol would be about 90,000 people (according to Rosstat).

of a person is paralyzed. And through the will, a person protects himself from low carnal instincts and goes to higher standards of morality. Alcohol and drugs contribute to the loss of already acquired moral positions. Even King Solomon observed this. Here is what he said about this:

Prov. 23:29–33 — Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights, and your mind will imagine confusing things...

ALCOHOLIC POSSESSION

With the systematic use of alcoholic beverages, the so-called alcohol dependence, or the possession of the spirit of drunkenness, is formed, when a person experiences such an attraction to drinking alcohol that he can no longer live without it.

Prov. 23:34–35 — ...You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. "They hit me", you will say, "but I'm not hurt! They beat me, but I don't feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?"

ALCOHOL FOR STRESS RELIEVE

Some people justify the use of alcohol or drugs by saying it's for stress relief and the raising of the mood. But is it justified to drink alcohol to cheer up? Of course not! The source of a Christian's joy is purity of heart and being filled with the Holy Spirit, and all happiness outside the Lord is worldly happiness that leads to sin.

TEMPTATION

Among other things, those who drink wine can serve as a temptation to others, and they will have to answer for this, because Christ said:

Mt. 18:6–7 — ...If anyone causes one of these little ones — those who believe in me — to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come!

Rom. 14:21 — It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother or sister to fall.

CONCLUSION

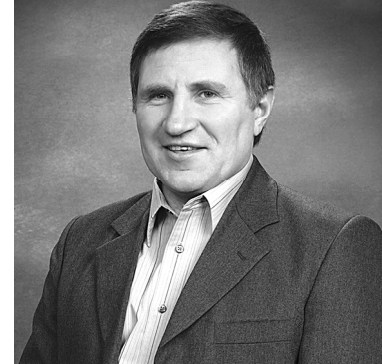
Of course, there are a number of medications (heart drops, rubs) that contain alcohol in their composition for better penetration into the blood. We are not unsettled by the use of alcohol in microscopic portions in medicine, since we understand the true motive for this. Also, in some situations, it is possible to use painkillers prescribed by a doctor and containing narcotic elements in their composition to relieve physical pain and suffering. We were not talking about such circumstances, but about the voluntary, conscious use of alcohol for pleasure and entertainment purposes.

Summing up this topic, I want to mention a verse from the Bible, which says that drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Cor. 6:10 — ...nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

And if there is such a huge risk of not entering the kingdom of God because of the use of alcohol, then is it even worth taking the risk and experimenting with it?

Aleksandr BORISENKO.



Deaths from alcohol abuse in the United States in 2014 (from poisoning, cirrhosis of the liver and the like) was 30,700 Americans — more than from an overdose of medications and drugs (28,600 people), according to federal statistics. How many children were left orphans, and wives lost their husbands, how many human destinies were destroyed and broken because of alcohol!

Why is it forbidden to consume alcoholic beverages and drugs at work, when operating machinery, heavy equipment and while driving

Alcohol has a negative effect on the brain, precisely on those functions that control decision-making, and paralyzes them. This is expressed in a slow reaction, loss of skills and limits the mental abilities of a person.

ALCOHOL IN THE LIFE OF CHRISTIANS

But back to our topic of the use of alcohol by Christians. Human souls are created by God in His likeness for eternal existence. And only a small segment of this existence is to be spent on earth (in the physical world) — to prepare for eternity and determine our future. The Bible says:

2 Cor. 5:10 — ...For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

If the main goal of life on earth is our moral preparation, transformation into the image of Christ and the fulfillment of His will, alcohol affects a person in just the opposite order. God created man with a mechanism that lets man know on an intuitive level whether his actions are good or bad. When a person helps someone or does something useful for society, he feels a pleasant feeling of inner approval. And vice versa, with bad deeds, — discomfort, anxiety, dissatisfaction and emptiness appear in a person's heart and deep in the subconscious. The peace at heart disappears, the conscience judges...

Rom. 2:9 — There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil...

Through the use of alcohol and drugs, the action of this valuable internal mechanism is dulled, and it goes out of order. Alcohol contributes to the distortion of the very understanding of good and evil and negatively affects the conscience and the mechanism of self-control. Under the influence of alcohol, a person allows himself what he would never allow himself in a sober state. At the same time, the boundaries of modesty are lowered, and the will

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

CHANGE WITHOUT THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IMPOSSIBLE

I was born in the city of Khmelnytskyi, I come from a flourishing family. My parents to this day are still role models for me in family relationships. Despite all this, I was very drawn to the streets, to which I devoted all my time. At the age of thirteen, I started smoking weed. A friend had a house in the city center with a garden where we grew hemp. We orchestrated the sales, acquired money and began to party in nightclubs and discos. Then we wanted something new and switched to amphetamines.

After school, I entered the University at the Faculty of Humanities and Education. During my freshman year, I became addicted to heroin. A few months later, when the drug suddenly disappeared from my city, I switched to opium. I understood that I had become a drug addict, but I did not want to live like this all my life. Hospitals, Chinese medicine, whisperers, fortune-tellers — was to no avail.

At twenty-one, my health was destroyed. I was wanted by the police for fraud, all my



friends turned me away, even my parents were at the end of their rope. Then I grasped another opportunity: I went to Belarus, to a social rehabilitation center, where I was treated with the help of occupational therapy according to some Polish program. A year later, I returned seemingly as a different person, my parents were happy. I was very afraid of backsliding. But life seemed gray and boring. Two years

later I tried the drug again and in six months I practically destroyed myself — the dose was too huge. I left home so that my relatives would not see my torment.

One day I got a call from a guy with whom I originally started using drugs. All this time he was pricking and had sunk into a pit. Imagine, at twenty-four he has two teeth in his mouth, a lot of

problems, his parents turned away, he owes everyone, everyone is looking for him. He was served a sentence, but he managed to escape from the courtroom. For some time, he disappeared and all of the sudden he called. He didn't even testify about God, we just talked about life, but through this conversation, I saw God at work. I felt that there is life in his words, he is truly happy! And I told him that I didn't care where he was staying: at an organization, a sect or a

church. I realized that I want to live like him. I wanted to feel alive!

That's how I ended up in a Christian rehabilitation center, where I was assigned to a men's "hospital" in the village of Pochuyky. During prayer, I knelt down and said just a few words: "Lord, forgive me because I am a sinner". At that very moment, I felt that I became clean and free, I had a fresh slate. God filled me with His peace. It is impossible to change like this without the power of the Holy Spirit.

After a course of rehabilitation, I myself became a minister of a rehabilitation center, graduated from the university and became a missionary. God gave me a wonderful wife, Oksana, and entrusted me with serving in the church. Today, I am the pastor of the Voice of Hope Church in the city of Bakhchisarai. I thank the Lord for everything!

Konstantin MAMCHUR,
Ukraine,

<https://skinia.com.ua>



My name is Aleksandr. I was born into a prosperous family; I was extremely fond of sports. Early in my childhood, I was introduced to the street lifestyle. At the age of thirteen, I was fascinated by discos, alcohol, drugs, smoking, and theft. Drugs demanded money and I got them through acts of iniquity (crime). Only by the grace of God did I not end up in prison.

I understood that something very bad was happening in my life, but was reassuring myself that when I would go to the army, I would pull myself together. Until I left for the army, I knew that I had to try everything.

Going into tenth grade, I got directly involved in the drug business and became obsessed with gambling. At the age of seventeen, I injected myself for the first time, since smoking weed no longer satisfied. I went to the army with severe drug and alcohol addictions. Of course,

HE CHANGED MY DESTINY



the ranks of the armed forces could not change my sinful nature or actions.

After the army, I gave my life of lawlessness another go. I tried different types of drugs, which led to mental disorders and constant depression. The many times I tried to quit on my own it would end with no success.

Now, I understand that God inexplicably protected me. I survived several accidents — two cars and a motorcycle were beyond repair, but I survived. People said that I was born in a shirt, meaning that I was always lucky, and that's what I always thought too. I thought that it was just luck. Although sometimes I did turn to God, as my grandmother taught in childhood, it was rarely to thank Him, rather to complain and blame God for my problems.

The path of iniquity led me to a breaking point: my family gave me the right to choose — a psychiatric hospital, a prison or a rehabilitation center. None of the offers suited me, so I made a promise to quit on my own. My human will and self-control lasted only seven months. After falling back into sin, I realized that everything is on the line. I packed my things and was on my way to the rehab center.

On the way to Bucha, my friends advised me to stop by Karerna Street, where I stayed for a while. From there, I was "enslaved" by the village of Pochuyki, where God gave me freedom, gave birth again, baptizing me with the Holy Spirit.

I went into rehab and started helping in the ministry and a year later went as a missionary to Bakhchisarai. A completely different life began. I became a minister in a bible school, helped the pastor of the newly formed church, was responsible for rehabilitation and youth ministry. When I returned to Kyiv, something amazing was waiting for me in my home church. The Lord had prepared for me a wonderful life partner. Julia did not have anything that I experienced, but she sincerely loved the Lord and served in the church as an interpreter for brothers and sisters from abroad and helped in the children's ministry.

I am very grateful to the Lord and see His great blessings and powerful changes in my life. I believe that soon God will give me ordain a way for me to serve in the church and further bless our family.

Aleksandr GERMASH, Ukraine, <http://skinia.org.ua>

I Could Not Run Away from Myself Even in Italy

I was born and raised in Lviv. At the age of fifteen, I decided to leave home for an apartment and live on my own as I thought it would be better without parental care. At that time, I already had something to be proud of — I was the silver medalist of the championship in freestyle and classical wrestling. I saw before me a beautiful future full of victories and awards. However, people from the criminal world soon started to notice me. I was hired as a driver by a crime boss and became friends with him and shortly after, I joined his team. When the chief got hooked on drugs, I followed his example. That led to my addiction that lasted for a long and terrible twelve years.

After my parents found out about my problem, many times they persuaded me to go to the

hospital, but IVs and medical cleanings did not help me. One day my mother said to me, "You need to break up with bad friends by changing your place of residence. Come to Italy". My mother had worked in Italy for seven years, so I agreed. I arrived in a foreign country, in an unfamiliar city, and there after twenty minutes they offered me a dose.

I couldn't run away from myself. I returned home even more dependent on the drugs. The time came when all my loved ones became hopeless.

My boss was shot, the money ran out, and my parents stopped letting me into the house, since I would steal from them and sell everything. It was winter and in the cold, I ended up in an attic, all alone, feeling neglected and unwanted by everyone. I realized that everything was

finished there — there was no further motivation to continue. I don't remember how long I was sitting in a daze, when I suddenly remembered a recent call from an old acquaintance, a drug addict like me, Slava Kogut. He said that God had freed him from addiction and invited me to a rehabilitation center in Kyiv. This call turned out to be the straw I tried to grasp at. The last chance for my freedom. And so, I went. Now it's been five years since I've been healed. God blessed me with my beloved wife Alena, who also managed to appreciate how precious the taste of freedom from drugs is. We now have two wonderful daughters — Renata and Elina. Thank God!

Maryan MIKHAILISHIN,
Ukraine,

<https://skinia.com.ua>

FIRST TRIED DRUGS AT THIRTEEN

Everything bad in my life started so early on. My mother was engaged in bartering, my father drank, and they did not have time to raise children. My brother Valery and I were raised out on the streets, where at the age of thirteen I first tried drugs.

A year later, I made my first suicide attempt, and at the age of sixteen I realized that my life was soon coming to an end. I used the psychotropic drug meth. Experienced drug addicts who have served time in prisons said: "Young girl, stop, otherwise you will either die or go crazy". At this point there was no way of stopping.

Despite all this, I believed that there is a God. My mother told me about Jesus and said that when we die, we will all go to heaven (of course, this was not true, because after death all sinners go to hell for eternal torment). "And where will you go, Alena, a juvenile



drug addict?" I asked myself this question after I first began to communicate with Christians.

When I could no longer bend my arms from injections and blows, I called the church minister Demyan Nazarenko, but three times something prevented us from meeting. Shortly after, I had an overdose and felt that I was dying. I asked my mother to call the pastor and brothers of

the church to our home to pray for me. After their prayer, I fell asleep, and the next day I myself came to church for the service. There I sincerely repented of my sins and firmly decided to change my life and this opportunity was given to me by God. Glory to Him!

Alena MIKHAILISHINA
(wife of Maryan), Ukraine,
<https://skinia.com.ua>

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

HOW MY CHRISTIAN JOURNEY BEGAN

I was born in 1972 in Krasnoyarsk, back in the USSR. I had good parents: my mother graduated from school with a gold medal, my father is an athlete; grandfather is a war veteran, grandmother is an honored worker at a plant. Nothing foreshadowed trouble. But sin came, and the family fell apart. Mom and dad divorced for reasons unknown to me. I stayed with my grandparents. Then more troubles came: in 1982, my mother was killed, and in 1983, my grandfather was killed. I was left an orphan and went to study at a boarding school.

Boarding school was not something you simple live through, it was something you survive through. It can be said that the boarding school of the Soviet era was a very good at being a high-quality forge for the creation of criminals. And all of us went this way, which basically ended in prison. Grandmother also could not influence me. The street raised me.

First term. Second term. Third term. I lived quietly in prison. Everything was as usual: cards, football and so on. This is how years pass in prison, sometimes drinking, sometimes drugs. Here you need to understand that I was not just a person who once committed a crime and went to prison, I was over thirty years old, I was an accomplished criminal who thought criminally, acted criminally, spoke criminally. My very essence was criminal. I was saturated with crime.

Like every criminal, I was superstitious. Therefore, there was an idol on my nightstand.

But one day my friend said to me: *Let's go to the room to pray.* At that time, I was in prison for the third time, but I didn't even know that there was a prayer room in there. I could find drugs, vodka — anything, but not a prayer room! I thought: *Let's go out of curiosity.* When we got there, ministers came, and we started talking to them. Then for the first time in my life I heard about Jesus Christ in general. For the first time I heard that there was Jesus Christ, that He died for the sins of people and resurrected. I was interested in this person, and I wanted to understand better who this Jesus is, about whom everyone knows but I do not know. After two or three days I realized that I needed a Bible because none of the people could really tell me anything. I went around half the prison and found a Bible, oddly enough it was from one of the criminal leaders. He gave it to me and I started reading. First, I read the Gospel of John, and then I just read everything. I read up to the seventh chapter of Romans. There were interesting words there: *For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.* And at the end of the chapter, Paul exclaims: *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death.*

Then those words hit me! I realized that it was about me because, while reading the Bible, I analyzed my life. I

realized that I was a completely worthless, sin-soaked person. These words hit me so hard that I didn't see a way out. So on the second day, I read on to the eighth chapter and this is where I began to understand more... I clearly began to understand that I am a sinner and that salvation is only in Christ. I felt so bitter, so ashamed and sick of myself that I knelt on the bed, covered myself with a blanket before lights out and began to repent, pray, cry. The Holy Spirit took ahold of my heart with a tight grip. This was a state when you want to say something, but you can't. I just cried. Those around me were shocked. Then I fell asleep.

After repentance, I had relief, an understanding of my forgiveness and my life turned around. The very next day, the things that I aspired to that I was even proud of, became disgusting to me. I lost all desire for them. I even began to point out to others that this was wrong. Thus began my Christian journey. Of course, there were still many things that needed to be cut off: smoking, foul language, and the like. But God continued to work wonderfully on me.

Already a believer, I traveled through five different prisons (I don't know why this happened, but almost every year I was sent to a new prison), and in each prison there was a prayer room, where thank God, ministers always came. While in all these prisons, I interacted with the pastors. I became uninterested in the rest of the flow of life in prison, which I lived for almost twenty years. God made it so that in every prison where



I was, there were vocational schools or classrooms, so I began to study. I went to all educational institutions. As a result, I graduated from several schools, graduated from one with an electrical installer certificate, and another school for vegetable growing. It so happened that I spent the whole day studying, and in the evening went to the prayer room. It was a graceful time when I knew myself and the Scriptures and being cut off from all sorts of sinful habits.

When I was released early, I was met by relatives. But this time when the pastor met me, he did one interesting thing. I had old shoes and the pastor went to the store, bought new shoes, put me in the car, took off my old shoes with his own hands and put on new ones. He has six children. Maybe for him this is a common thing, but for me it was a very symbolic and a serious act, which has once again turned my heart toward Christianity, Christ and ministry. So my life was

divided into two parts: life before Christ — all in prison, life after Christ — in church.

Then I went to my city, there the pastor baptized me and sent me to college. I studied in college for two years, received an initial theological education and began to serve in the church, preach, travel to villages, go to hospitals. After college, I got fired up with theology and preaching, I realized that I needed to study further, that I was not up to par, that I need to deepen my knowledge and know God more. I decided to go to the Novosibirsk Biblical Theological Seminary. By the grace of God, I did. I would like to personally thank each teacher for their hard work and patience in our training.

After studying at the seminary, I went to my church in Krasnoyarsk and started serving in youth ministry with the knowledge I gained, and skills God gave me. All glory to Him!

Dmitry OVSYANNIKOV,
Russia, <http://nbbs.ru>

Claud JACKSON: "I WAS THE HAPPIEST DRUG DEALER IN THE WORLD"

I was born and raised in the south of London in a 'troubled' family. Domestic violence in our home somehow joined with the religiosity of our father, although it also manifested itself only from time to time.

Once every few months, he took out a Bible and demanded that we all sit down at the dinner table while he read the Psalms. One day he announced that we were all going to the Pentecostal service in Birmingham. So we got in the car and drove for three hours, but that was only once.

When my older brother left home, he became a drug dealer. Whenever he appeared, he told stories of wealth and adventure. He always had the latest Nike Air sneakers and I certainly wanted to be like him when I grew up. I was only six years old when he showed up home with a gun. He let me hold it — I remember that well.

When I turned eight, my brother was already behind bars. We came to visit him and it was like seeing your superhero in a cage. When I left, I had to turn my back so that he would not see my tears and think that I was weak. When we went out into the corridor, my mother covered her face and began to cry too.

As a teenager, he did not care about studies and started selling cigarettes to schoolchildren. From the age of 15 I was selling marijuana, then cocaine, and by the age of 25 heroin. I had a lot of money and a lot of cars.

By the time I was 20, I was so passionate about this lifestyle that I

didn't give a damn about other people. I was sure that the world around me is filled with predators — I was surrounded by terrible, inhuman things. I knew rapists and rape victims, murderers and their victims. And this did not bother me, I was going to earn the maximum amount of money by any available means.

I myself have never used drugs because I saw the harm they did to the people who used them.

After a few years, I realized that a cover would be good for my "way of making money", so I started volunteering to mentor juvenile delinquents.

My volunteer supervisor was the most balanced and humble person. My jeans alone were worth more than his entire wardrobe. I remember how we gathered in one place to teach teamwork — I arrived in a convertible, and he on a bicycle.

This meeting began with the so-called "icebreaker", at which it was necessary to say something about yourself that no one else knew.

I thought this manager might say, "I play Dungeons and Dragons in the evenings". And he took a small box out of his pocket, opened it, and inside

was a crucifix. And he said, "What you don't know about me is that I am a Christian and Jesus changed my life".

I was shocked. I did a lot in my life — I shot, participated in knife fights, all my life I taught myself not to be afraid. And this guy stood up in his cheap trousers, walked out in front of a hundred people and showed the cross. I don't know if he was scared, but it looked very cool when he declared his faith in Jesus. It was much more than I could ever do.

And I wondered what motivates this person. So then I pestered him with questions, and he offered me to take the Alpha course.

I will never forget the first time I came to the Alpha course meeting. So that you understand, in my world people did not greet a stranger and, moreover, did not look into his eyes. And these guys were so friendly!

At the second meeting, I entered, held out my hand to one lady to shake her hand, and she hugged me. I was shocked. I remember thinking: I never seem to have been hugged.

At that meeting we watched a video together and they said, "If you want

to invite Jesus into your life, you can do it right now".

I prayed, saying, "Come into my life, Jesus, and do what these people say You can do". And at that moment I felt how a kind of hospitable presence enveloped me.

The next day I woke up in an incredible mood. I have not been so happy and joyful for many years. People around me immediately noticed a change in me. Looks like I was the happiest drug dealer in the world!

I went to my usual business of weighing drugs. And for the first time in many years, I stared at this package and thought: is this my contribution to society? This is crazy! I poison people! Now I understand that at that moment the Holy Spirit began to transform me.

By the end of the Alpha course, God had done such a great job in my heart that I went and confessed everything to the priest. He listened to me and said, "Okay, Claud, you have to stop this and find a job, right?" That's all. I turned off my phones and have not turned them on since.

When I became a Christian, my older brother, whom I adored, thought I was crazy. We don't communicate with him anymore, it breaks my heart, but it's for the best.

God is amazing. He has really done an incredible job in my life. Now I serve in the church, and therefore, if God permits, I will become a priest in the Church of England.

<https://citychurch.ee>



GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK JONAH

1. Reading the book.
2. Definition of the plot and characters.
3. Answers to questions about the content of the book.

I. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF JONAH

- Chapter 1: Jonah flees from God.
Chapter 2: Jonah flees to God.
Chapter 3: Jonah works with God.
Chapter 4: Jonah runs ahead of God.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Prophet Jonah

The prophet Jonah lived in the Galilean city of Gaffer (6 km north of Nazareth) during the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel (793–753 BC): **4 Samuel 14:25**. Jeroboam II was one of the most powerful kings of northern Israel since the reign of King David and Solomon.

2. Ninevia

Assyria (a country) located 750 km east of Israel has always been a constant danger to Jews. In addition, it should be noted that Jonah's contemporaries, the prophets Hosea and Amos, testified to the people that Jehovah would turn Assyria into an instrument of punishment for His disobedient and depraved people (**Hosea 11:5; Amos 5:27**). Any Jewish patriot dreamed of the fall of Assyria.

Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. It was surrounded by a huge suburb, the total population of which in those days was about 600,000 people. Nineveh was a walled city surrounded by a stone wall 14 km long and 33 meters high. The width of this wall was such that three chariots could easily move along it in a row. In addition, the walls contained 1500 towers with a height of 70 meters.

III. QUESTIONS FROM SKEPTICS

1. Is the Jonah story fiction?
 2. What kind of fish was there that could swallow Jonah whole?
 3. What was it: a fish or a whale?
 4. How could Jonah survive in the stomach of a fish?
- Below are answers to these and other questions...

IV. TEN SPIRITUAL LESSONS

1. Is the Jonah story fiction?

Often because of the events described in the Book of Jonah (namely the fact that Jonah was swallowed by a huge fish), people conclude that the whole story is fiction. However, Jesus Christ Himself referred to this book as part of world history (**Matthew 12:39–41** — *He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here"*). Thus, we can be sure that the events described in the Book of Jonah are not fiction.

2. How could Jonah survive in the stomach of a fish?

Of course, this fact is a miracle. However, what happened to Jonah at sea is not a unique event.

In modern history, there are several similar cases that have been recorded by eyewitnesses. Here's one of them: *At the beginning of the twentieth century, a fisherman was swallowed by a huge whale (we are talking about a sperm whale — a whale shark) near the Falkland Islands. Three days later, he was caught and pulled out of the whale in an unconscious state, but alive, although with some damage to the skin* (A. J. Wilson, Princeton Theological Review, XXV, 1927, p. 636).

man, but God who controls the destinies of people and nations. The Lord has complete authority over states, manages their destinies as He sees fit, and judges them according to His standards and standards.

Proverbs 14:34 — *Righteousness exalts the people, and iniquity is the dishonor of nations.*

Those who think that countries and states appear and disappear depending on the strength of their army and political influence are simply mistaken, not understanding the biblical principles.

And this means that they believed Jonah, whom God sent to them, that they believed the words of God spoken by Jonah. And this faith saved them from death and God's wrath. And if the Ninevites had rejected Jonah and his warning of destruction, they would reject God Himself and His word!

This brings to mind the words of Jesus recorded in **Matthew 10:40** (...who receives Me, receives Him who sent Me...), in **Luke 10:16** (...he who rejects me rejects him who has sent me) and in **John 12:44**

Hezekiah after repentance.

4 Samuel 20:1–6 — *In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, "This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover". Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, "Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes". And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him: "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, "This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David"*.

V. JONAH IS THE PROTOTYPE OF JESUS CHRIST

Jonah's story is the prototype of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Himself testifies of Himself in **Matthew 12:39–40**: *He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth"*.

Jesus draws a parallel between the three days Jonah spent in the belly of a whale and between his death and resurrection on the third day.

Furthermore, in **Matthew 12:41**, Jesus draws a parallel between the attitude of the people to Jonah's preaching and the attitude of the people to His preaching: *The Ninevites will rise up in judgment with this race and condemn it, for they have repented of Jonah's preaching; and behold, here is more than Jonah. The key word in this verse is the verb **repent**.*

A condition that could ward off God's wrath and punishment from the Ninevites was their sincere repentance. The same condition remains in force today.

1. A Call to Repentance

John the Baptist: Matthew 3:1–2 — *In those days John the Baptist came and preached in the wilderness of Judah and said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"*.

Jesus Christ: Matthew 4:17 — *From that time on Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"*.

2. Belief that Jesus is God

John 8:24–25 — *"I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins". "Who are you?" they asked. "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning", Jesus replied.*

Today, the Word of God calls each of us to repentance, warning us that if we do not repent and accept Jesus Christ by faith as our God and Savior, we will perish: **Luke 13:3** — *...if you don't repent, you'll still perish. What is your reaction to this warning: Do you accept it or reject it?*

The material for the newspaper "Prisoner" was kindly provided by Bible Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada <http://www.cogmtl.net/Articles/018.htm>

TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

BOOK OF JONAH



3. Fish or whale?

Some critics who read the Bible find fault with the words *fish* and *whale*. The original Book of Jonah (**Jonah 1:17**) says that Jonah was swallowed by a huge fish, and in the New Testament by a whale (**Matthew 12:40**). You and I know from school that a whale is an animal, and a fish is a fish; they belong to two different groups of living beings. And so, we want to know who exactly was it swallowed by: a fish or a whale?

The answer is this: the Hebrew word *dag*, used in the Book of Jonah, and the Greek word *ketos*, used in the New Testament, are general terms that describe any sea creature. Thus, there is no difference.

4. The Book of Jonah Demonstrates the Greatness and Power of God

We see God using His creation to fulfill His plan. The Lord controls the weather (**Jonah 1:4, 11, 13, 15; 4:8**). He uses a whale, grows a plant, and sends a worm to erode it (**Jonah 1:17; 4:6–7**).

5. The book of Jonah reveals the mercy and love of God

Although the Lord revealed and manifested Himself and His will through the Jewish nation through which the promised messiah was sent (**Genesis 22:18** — *...and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in thy seed*), His mercy extends to all the people of the earth. And the fact that He sent Jonah as a missionary to the Assyrian Gentiles once again confirms this fact.

Key verse: Jonah 4:2 — *I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.*

6. The Book of Jonah Demonstrates God's Authority over All Nations

This story once again confirms the fact that it is not

Psalms 21:28–29 — *All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the tribes of the Gentiles will bow before You, for the Lord is the kingdom, and He is the Lord over the nations.*

Daniel 2:20–21 — *...He has wisdom and strength; He changes times and summers, deposes kings and delivers kings...*

Daniel 4:17 — *The Almighty has dominion over the kingdom of man, and gives it to whomever He wants, and delivers over it the humiliated among men.*

Nineveh was given 40 days to repent, and the Ninevites took this chance, causing the destruction of Nineveh to be delayed by as much as 150 years. However, later, when Assyria began to degrade again in the eyes of God, it was destroyed. The prophet Nahum writes about this in his book. Nineveh was conquered by Babylon in 612 BC.

7. The book of Jonah demonstrates that although the people of Nineveh did not enter into a covenant with God (as Jews), they were still accountable to God and His law

God saw that people were corrupt (**Jonah 1:2**). And because sin is an iniquity, that is, a violation of God's law (**1 John 3:4; Romans 4:15**), then the Ninevites broke God's law with their sins. This truth about sin contradicts today's popular belief that God's law applies only to those who go to church.

8. This story shows us the power of God's word

When the kernel of God's truth falls on good ground — an open, searching, sincere heart (**Luke 8:15**) bears worthy fruit. Jonah's message was very brief (just a few words), but it had the desired effect in the hearts of the people of Nineveh.

Notice the first part of **Jonah 3:5**: *And the Ninevites believed God. It is not written: And the Ninevites believed Jonah, but it says that they believed God!*

(...he who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in him who has sent Me). The basic idea of these words of Jesus is the same: he who does not accept Jesus Christ rejects God Himself! And this is fraught with negative consequences.

9. The Book of Jonah Demonstrates the Importance of Repentance

Jesus testified in **Matthew 12:41** that the people of Nineveh repented of Jonah's preaching. The Book of Jonah itself says that God saw that the people of Nineveh turned away from their evil ways (**Jonah 3:10**). This suggests that repentance is not just regret and tears, but a conscious rejection of sin and evil deeds. In addition, this story confirms the fact that that repentance is a necessary condition for salvation (**Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30** — *So, leaving the times of ignorance, God now commands people everywhere to repent*).

10. The Book of Jonah Demonstrates That Prophecy Can Be Conditional

The prophet Jonah predicts the destruction of the city in 40 days. However, Nineveh was destroyed only 150 years later. Some may say that the prophecy did not come true. Nevertheless, it must be understood that this prophecy was based on a certain condition. That condition was repentance. By repenting, the people of Nineveh turned away the wrath of God and the destruction of the city.

This same principle of the conditionality of prophecy has been repeatedly confirmed in the history of Israel. For example, God promised to give Canaan to Israel. But this promise was based on a certain condition of faithfulness to God (**Joshua 22:4–5; 23:1**), and at one point Israel lost some land to the Palestinians.

Another similar story is God's forgiveness of King

Why does it matter if dinosaurs lived at the same time as humans or not? Huge reason! Because their coexistence in the past confirms God's historical supernatural creation of animals and plants on earth and certifies the truth of the biblical story.

We live on a planet where we are surrounded by hundreds of thousands of different species: dolphins, flowers, fish, elephants, pine trees, butterflies, lizards, hummingbirds, and so on. At the same time, neither our earth nor the sun is eternal. (The sun, for example, constantly burns its fuel.) It is obvious that everything on earth had a beginning.

Where, then, did species historically originate? Only two options are possible here: the species evolved or were created by the Creator supernaturally. In other words, either they all originated in a naturalistic way from one another (that is, they are related by common ancestors), or they were created supernaturally. The third option simply does not exist. This is the reality that shows us that if living forms did not evolve, then they must have been created by God.

Facts of the coexistence of humans and dinosaurs in the past:

1. Debunks evolution.

Evolutionist Philip Kitcher has acknowledged that evidence of the coexistence of dinosaurs and humans... would shake the foundations of evolutionary theory, since dinosaurs are believed to have died out long

Dinosaurs lived at the same time as humans: why is that important?



before humans entered the historical scene.

Evolution teaches that historically there was a certain sequence of origin of species (from simple to complex): fish evolved into amphibians, amphibians into reptiles (which include dinosaurs), and mammals, including humans, have already evolved from reptiles. According to this theory, there was no way that man could have lived at the same time as the dinosaurs, since he had not yet evolved, but appeared sixty million years

after the extinction of the dinosaurs.

If evolution is true, then man had no way of seeing and describing living dinosaurs. Thus, the fact of their coexistence in the past clearly shows that the supposed sequence of evolution, and therefore evolution itself, never happened.

2. Dispels the myth of millions of years.

Louis Jacob, former president of the Society for Vertebrate Paleontology, noted: *...the existence of humans at the same*

time as the dinosaurs. It would destroy the idea of the vast age of the Earth... Evolution would be refuted. Indeed, there would simply be no time for the evolution of species!

3. Invalidates the geological column, demonstrating that its epochs and periods are imaginary.

It also refutes the evolutionary interpretation of layers and fossils, which in most cases is based on the assumption that the absence of fossils in layers means supposedly that this species did not live when the

layers in question were deposited.

4. Affirms the creation of species by God.

In the scientific program *Darwin, God and Dinosaurs*, the evolutionist writers noted: *...dinosaur footprints side by side with human footprints. Their discovery will disprove the theory of human evolution tens of millions of years after the dinosaurs became extinct, and support... the assertion that all species, including humans, were created at the same time.*

5. Confirms the truth of the biblical story.

The Bible teaches that all land animals and man were created by God supernaturally and simultaneously on the sixth day of creation week less than ten thousand years ago. From this follows a logical conclusion that in the past, humans and dinosaurs lived simultaneously on earth before their mass extinction in the catastrophe of the global Flood. The Bible also teaches that the dinosaurs that survived the Flood (**Genesis 6:19–20**) coexisted side by side with the ancient people. If the Bible and the story of Genesis are true, then historical information and evidence about these creatures and their encounters with people must be preserved.

And there are a lot of such testimonials! There are so many of them that the coexistence of dinosaurs and humans in the past can be firmly considered an established historical fact!

Dmitry KUROVSKY,
<http://www.origins.org.ua>

Supermodel Kathy Ireland talks about her faith

Kathy confessed, after years of choosing only certain aspects of Christianity that she wanted to follow, at the age of fifty-eight, she "finally submits to Jesus".

Kathy first became interested in God at the age of eighteen. At that time, she was an aspiring model and lived in France.

In 1981, one night, while going through her suitcase, she found a Bible in her bag, which her mother had put there.

"I didn't even know how to read it", Ireland admitted. "I have never read it before. I opened the book of Matthew. And then, reading in the middle of the night, I realized that I held the truth in my hands. There was no one in the room to say, 'You must be in this denomination or another'. It was more like 'I want to follow Jesus Christ'. And He wasn't at all what I thought".

"There were a lot of very superficial people in my industry at the time", she continued. "I was drawn to how powerful Jesus was. How He loved and respected women! It gave me such pleasure. And so, He became my Lord and Savior. This experience changed my life forever.

Nevertheless, Ireland continued her career and became a successful supermodel. However, at the same time, she found that it was difficult for her to study the Bible.

"Some places I could read and easily accept the truth. But there were places after reading which I said to myself:

'Oh, this is perhaps a typo. There must be another interpretation or it's just a matter of culture. It certainly has nothing to do with me'. I read, choosing what I liked and neglecting the other.

I tried to shape God the way I wanted Him to be, instead of just giving up and letting Him make me the person He made me to be. And He was so patient. I was forty-four years old when I finally read



the entire Bible. I continue to study it and learn every day", shared the supermodel.

Ireland is now married with three children and a successful business. As for her, she said that the main theme during the Bible reading was always that God asked to put Him first. And this eventually helped her understand those spiritual truths that changed her life for the better.

"The message that touched my heart was: 'Put Me in the first place and I will give you more time, I will give you better time with your children'. So, I started setting my alarm fifteen minutes

early each day for a quick prayer. Those ten minutes of prayer turned into hours and more. This is not a duty. This is joy. This is my daily bread and water. And on days when I don't, it's always a bad idea. Because then by eight in the morning I have to start apologizing for some of my words", said the supermodel.

Ireland founded Kathy Ireland Worldwide in 1993 and has since been listed by Forbes as one of America's most successful women who has made a fortune of \$420 million.

As part of her humanitarian work, the supermodel supports many non-profit organizations, including YWCA Greater Los Angeles as an ambassador, as well as the Dream Foundation, Providence Educational Foundation, 911 for Kids/AEF and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Ireland is also International Youth Chair of the National Pediatric Cancer Foundation, as well as an Ambassador for the American Cancer Society and an Ambassador for the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation.

<https://sobor.com.ua>



Missouri pastor gave his kidney to one of the members of the church

Jack Coultas, pastor of Park Grove Christian Church in Deepwater, Missouri, learned that 36-year-old Jeremy Whitman, a member of his church, urgently needed a kidney transplant due to diabetes. Ever since the thirty-five-year-old pastor heard about this, he couldn't stop thinking about how to help this man. He knew he had to do more than just pray for Whitman.

"One passage from the Holy Scriptures, which is recorded in the First Epistle of John (3:16–17), constantly came to my mind: 'We know love in this, that He laid down His life for us: and we must lay down our lives for the brothers. But whoever has wealth in the world, but seeing his brother in need, closes his heart to him — how does the love of God abide in him?' As I pondered these verses, I thought that Christ gave His life for us, so I must do something for my neighbor. I passed the test to find out if I can become a donor. And when the results were positive, I realized that this is exactly what God wants from me", says the pastor.

Doctors gave Whitman a kidney transplant. The operation was successful. The kidney immediately began to function. Before the operation, Whitman was on dialysis for two years and did not even leave the house. Pastor Coultas seemed to give him a second life, just like Jesus did for us. In sharing his testimony, the young pastor encouraged Christians to love people as Christ loved us and help those in need.

"Jesus left us an example of love that was not easy, it was not comfortable, but on the contrary, put His life in danger", he added.

<https://gchelp.org>

The ability to forgive is good for our health

In the Bible, the Greek word *forgive* is sometimes used in the sense of *letting go*, as if a person does not demand payment of a debt. According to the Bible, true forgiveness is based on selfless love, because love *does not count grievances*. If you can't forgive, you can't love. If you don't tend to forgive others, you may not be a Christian.

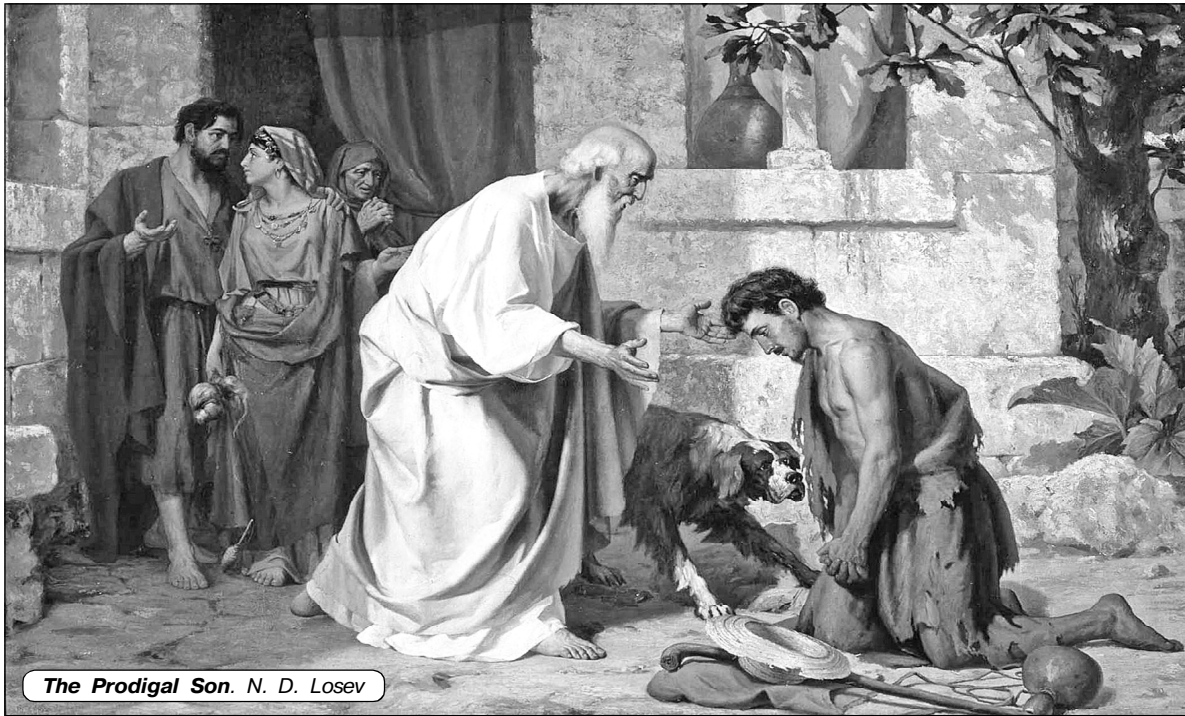
In order to forgive a person, you must let go of your anger and negative thoughts deep within you. Forgiveness is not just a formality, it is a state of mind that can lift you above many hardships or, conversely, lower you into the abyss mentally and physically. Forgiveness changes a person intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and even physically.

KEEPS YOUR HEART HEALTHY

Forgiveness is very good for the heart, literally. People who hold grudges tend to have more problems and heart disease than those who are forgiving.

REDUCES PAIN

The ability to forgive with your heart, reduces emotional and physical pain. According to one study, out of 61 patients who suffered from physical back pain, those who sincerely forgave, reported lower levels of pain. Hence, there is possibly



The Prodigal Son. N. D. Losev

a good link between forgiveness and constant physical pain.

LOWERS BLOOD PRESSURE

By letting go of anger, a person can lower their blood pressure. Forgiveness is associated with a lower level of pressure.

Psychologist Fred Luskin in *Forgive for Good: A Proven Prescription for Health and Happiness* writes: *Rigorous scientific research has shown that forgiveness reduces depression, increases optimism, reduces anger, improves emotional connections, and increases emotional confidence.*

Studies have shown that people who are more forgiving, have fewer problems with both physical and mental health and are better able to handle stress.

But the fixation on anger and resentment, a life of constant stress destroys not only the soul, but also the heart. Indeed, research results suggest

that the inability to forgive may be a risk factor for cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure, and other ailments associated with chronic stress. Research also suggests that focusing on anger and resentment leads to anxiety, depression and insomnia, increases the likelihood of hypertension, stomach ulcers, migraines, back pain, heart attacks, and even cancer. The opposite is also true: sincere forgiveness can have a beneficial effect on the course of many diseases.

BE ABLE TO FORGIVE, BECAUSE SOMEDAY YOU WILL NEED FORGIVENESS!

The parable of the prodigal son figuratively shows the meaning of forgiveness and the action of God's love.

God reminds everyone of the obligation to forgive their debtors (Mt. 6:12-14; Mk. 11:25; Lk. 6:37; Lk. 11:4; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13), and also strictly warns them against stubbornness.

If you stop being angry and let go of your grievances, you will be able to stay calm, feel better, and be happier. But more importantly, if you forgive others, God will also forgive you your sins (Mt. 6:14-15).

<https://bible-facts.org>

Freedom of Adulthood

Once I was telling a man about the meaning of Christmas and heard a puzzled question: *And why all this?* Why did God become a man, live an earthly life, die on the cross, rise from the dead, and command all nations to repent and believe? Why doesn't almighty God just forgive a sinful person like a father forgives a child? Especially since the Bible often uses this analogy: God is compared to the Father, and people are compared to children.

But any analogy in some respects reflects reality, and in some respects it does not. It works in the sense that the child does not know and does not understand many things, so it must rely on adults. Why can't he eat as much candy as he wants? Why can't you play until morning? Why do you have to dress as you're told in winter? Why can't you play around the clock on the computer, but instead do physical education and lessons? Because my dad and mom said so. Whether the child understands the reasons for their prohibitions and commands or not — he must obey. Parents care about the welfare of the child and know much better what is best for him. This logic also works in the sense that parents should be treated with deep respect.

But there is an attitude in which the analogy does not work. Unlike small children in the family, we are free. The child simply won't get as many candies as they want, they will be kicked off the computer, forced to learn lessons, even

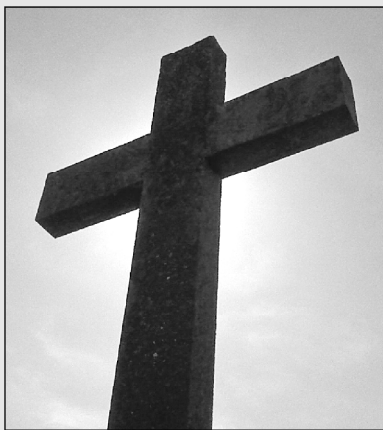
if they don't like it. Adults simply by force prevent the child from doing anything that will harm them.

God's relationship with man is rather that of a grown-up son. As in the parable of the prodigal son: the father does not prevent the young man from leaving home, even gives him a part of the estate. This son is at least a teenager, since a small child would just be spanked and put in a corner and so God lets us go. God gives a person real freedom with which comes responsibility. But real choices involve real consequences. Unlike a small child, we are free to go where we want and do what we think is right, and no one will stop us.

But there are consequences to this: we will really get where we decided to go. And these consequences cannot simply be declared nonexistent. This would mean declaring human freedom itself nonexistent, i.e. fictitious.

That is why God chooses this way of salvation: He becomes a Human Being and takes on the consequences of human choice. Because sin is not a child's prank. This is a catastrophe and a betrayal of the universal scale, committed not by small children, but by adults, free, responsible, endowed with real power in the universe of sentient beings. It is very important for us to understand the reality of our freedom and that we have severely abused it and will continue to abuse it. The Incarnation and the Cross must constantly remind us of this.

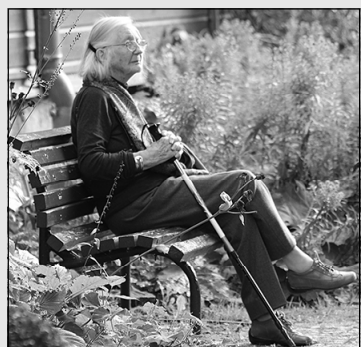
Sergey KHUDIEV, <https://kbogu.ru>



PROVERBS

Feminism

"Grandma, you said yesterday that you were disgusted with feminism. What's wrong with gender equality?"



"Women who want to compete with men turn into rough, shapeless creatures. They lose their feminine beauty. Feminists do not gain masculine power, but they lose their own grace and subtlety of soul."

"But why?"
"Because God created a woman to be a woman".

Harvest

One well-to-do peasant had many fields with good land. He worked hard, but the land didn't grow as well as it did in the field of the poor peasant next to his field. The rich peasant marveled at this

and asked his poor neighbor what he was doing to make everything grow so well on his sandy land, and how he cultivated the land. The poor peasant replied:

"My dear neighbor, the only difference is that you sow differently than I do."

"How do you do it?"
"With a prayer", said the devout peasant. "In my barn, I kneel down and pray that God, the Creator of the entire universe, will multiply my crops many times over. Therefore, the land fertilized with prayer is the best".

<https://pritchi.ru>

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

HE TURNED TO GOD AND REPENTED

I repented in prison, being in a special security cell in a tuberculosis hospital for prisoners. Around us, people were dying every day from this terrible disease. I began to think about the meaning of life and did not find it, but I did not want to accept that I would have to disappear without a trace at the age of thirty, after I had lived a very short life without meaning. One evening I asked God to forgive me for my sins. I asked Him to guide me through this life, because I didn't want to live in the old way anymore, and I didn't know how to live in the new way. From that moment on, my life changed dramatically. I began to read the Bible and attend meetings of young believers. I received from the Lord a healing from smoking, drunkenness, and tuberculosis. Two and a half years later, I was released early for good behavior. I have been living for the sixth year as a good citizen of my country and a member of the Church of Christ in the city of



Minusinsk, Krasnoyarsk region. I have a family: a wife and three children.

I am a prison minister, a member of the church council, I preach the Word of God from the pulpit. I am on probation for ordination as a deacon, and I participate in the organization of a Bible school in our city.

After graduating from Bible school, I wanted to continue my education. Our pastor offered to attend the Novosibirsk Bible Theological Seminary. In seminary, I was taught to read the Scriptures on my own. This is very important for me as a preacher and a minister of the Bible school. I want to take a real part in the life of the church, receive knowledge from the Lord and give it to other members of the church. I want to draw closer to my God, Jesus Christ, by changing my life through a deep knowledge of His will. Studying at the seminary changed my character, my thinking, and my life for the better.

We created a local Bible school. I teach some of its subjects and intend to further develop this ministry. I also have a desire to organize methodical Bible courses for prisoners in prisons.

Dmitry ZHELTOV, Russia, <http://nbbs.ru>

I. COMMON QUESTIONS

1. To be baptized or not to be baptized? — that's the question

The Bible calls us to: *...repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...* (Acts 2:38). Thus, the question of whether one should be baptized (accept water baptism) or not, can be considered settled.

2. When to be baptized?

☉ The Philippian prison guard and his entire family were baptized within an hour of believing (Acts 16:30-33).

☉ The Ethiopian (eunuch) was baptized as soon as he believed (Acts 8:35-37).

☉ Apostle Paul as well (Acts 9:17-18).

3. Who should baptize a new convert?

According to Scripture, believers have this privilege. Not necessarily clergy or church leaders. However, if any of you are considering water baptism, the first thing you should do is contact your pastor, because perhaps he himself wants to be awarded this high honor — to teach you water baptism. By your baptism, you first of all testify to those people among whom you believed.

II. IS WATER BAPTISM NECESSARY FOR SALVATION?

Some churches and denominations teach that without baptism, salvation is impossible and that thus water baptism is a necessary condition for salvation. However, Biblical teaching openly declares that water baptism does not save. It is the command of Christ, and therefore we receive water baptism as a token of obedience to our Lord.

1. Salvation by Grace, not by works

Acts 2:38 contains a command to repent and be baptized. However, if we think that salvation is achieved by water baptism or a similar act, then we thereby contradict the truth about salvation by grace, transforming it into the error of salvation by works. Although many scriptures emphasize the importance and necessity of water baptism, we must remember that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is the only thing that can give us complete salvation.

Biblical Teaching is Salvation by Grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9 — *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Water baptism is a step of obedience to the Lord. Baptism is the next step after repentance and confession of sins. Water baptism, prayer, Bible reading, good deeds, fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ, witnessing of Jesus to unbelievers, and the like are all the result of our obedience to God and faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is not the result of our actions and behavior; salvation is a relationship with the Lord God that we gain through faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, salvation is not something we do, but **Who we have in our hearts.**

1 John 5:12 — *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

2. What about the passage of Mark 16:16?

Mark 16:16 — *He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*

Does this verse mean that salvation is achieved by water baptism? Of course not. The context of the verse clearly indicates that salvation is obtained by faith. Note that the second part of this verse says: *...but*

TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

WATER BAPTISM



whoever does not believe will be condemned. It is not written here: whoever is not baptized will be condemned.

3. The main condition for salvation is our faith in Jesus Christ

This is confirmed by the following places in Scriptures: Ephesians 2:8-9 (*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*) and Acts 16:30-31 (*So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household"*).

Note also that the command to be baptized is often accompanied by the words faith and repentance, which are key concepts in the discussion of salvation.

4. The purpose and symbolism of water baptism

Water baptism is a witness to others that the person receiving baptism confesses Jesus Christ as their Lord. This is referred to as baptism of repentance.

1 Peter 3:21 — *There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

One of the symbols of water baptism is baptism with suffering, torment, death.

Luke 12:50 — *But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!*

Romans 6:3-5 — *Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection...*

Colossians 2:12 — *...buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.*

III. THE WATER BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Himself received water baptism from John the Baptist. In doing so, He showed humility and obedience to

Heavenly Father and showed us an example of obedience.

At first, John the Baptist refused to baptize Jesus because he did not understand why Jesus needed baptism of repentance. But Christ said: *...permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15)*. Thus, Jesus voluntarily humbled himself (descended) to the level of a sinner (just as he voluntarily came down to Earth and took the blame for our sins upon Himself). In this way it was necessary for Him to fulfill all righteousness.

IV. HOW SHOULD WE BE BAPTIZED?

The Great Commission of Christ (Matthew 28:19-20) indicates the need (This is the command of Christ!) of water baptism. It does not describe the procedure for baptism, it only says that it is necessary to baptize *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

1. The meaning of the word baptismo

The word *baptismo* derived from the Greek *baptiso*. Many believe, that *baptiso* has only one meaning — *immersion*. However, this is not entirely true. The word *baptiso* has two meanings: **1) plunge into something, dip/dunk** and **2) pour over, to water, pour on**. Thus, we see that the very meaning of the word *baptismo* does not give a reason to baptize either only by immersion in water, or by pouring/sprinkling, as many claim.

2. Use of the word baptismo in the New and Old Testaments

This word in both testaments was used in the following meanings: washing, cleaning through immersion in water or pouring/watering (as a ritual). The following verses use the Greek word *baptiso*.

Hebrews 9:10 — washings.

Mark 7:3-4 uses the same Greek word *baptiso* to describe the practice of washing that the Pharisees had: *For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash (baptiso). And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing (baptismos) of*

cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Here we are not talking about the usual washing of hands, but about a symbolic, ritual washing.

Luke 11:38 — *When the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that He had not first washed (baptiso) before dinner.* The Pharisees did not like that Jesus ignored the washing ritual. Here, as we can see, we are not talking about complete immersion in water, but only about hands.

3. How can we be baptized: by immersion or sprinkling?

John 3:23 — *Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.*

As we can see, John baptized where there was a lot of water. This may serve as evidence that baptism was carried out by complete immersion in water.

Acts 8:38 — *So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.*

This shows us that both people were in the water at the time of the baptism.

Since water baptism symbolizes death and resurrection (Romans 6:4-5 and Colossians 2:12), then baptism by immersion in water reflects this idea more than baptism by sprinkling or pouring.

V. DANGER OF EXAGGERATION

There are people, churches, denominations that have raised water baptism to the level of a cult or devalued its value to zero.

1. They teach that baptism is an integral part of salvation, that without water baptism a person cannot be saved, that is, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is not enough for our salvation.

2. They teach that water baptism means nothing. Since water baptism does not affect our salvation, it is not necessary at all.

3. They teach about their baptism. This teaching is that this or that church claims that you will be saved only if you are baptized in their church. They do not recognize baptisms in other churches.

4. They teach different forms of baptism. A. Some churches baptize by sprinkling or pouring/watering. Such a baptism does not fully reflect the meaning that is invested in it (a symbol of death and burial). However, in a situation where it is impossible to baptize in another way (illness, being near death, and so on), such baptism is acceptable, since it does not contradict the meaning of the word *baptismo*.

B. Others baptize small children. Such water baptism does not reflect the meaning and purpose of the baptism of John the Baptist, since the child does not understand the meaning of baptism and cannot make a conscious promise to God of a good conscience.

CONCLUSIONS/SUMMARY

1. Water baptism does not save anyone. To be saved, you must repent of your sins and by faith accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

2. Water baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is a command of Jesus Christ.

3. By accepting water baptism, a person obeys the command of the Lord and testifies to others about his desire to follow Christ and live in a good conscience.

The material for the newspaper "Prisoner" was kindly provided by Bible Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada <http://www.cogmtl.net/Articles/025.htm>

Once upon a time, there lived a girl in a village. According to the ancient Slavic custom, after the wedding she came to live in her husband's house. But it was very uncomfortable for the young daughter-in-law to be around her mother-in-law. The mother would constantly lecture and reproach her for everything.

One morning the young woman went to an old healer who lived on the outskirts of the forest.

"What brings you to me, beautiful? Is it to charm a man?" the old healer asked.

"I don't need anyone, I love my

POISON HEART

husband, but it's unbearable to live with his mother".

"What do you want from me?" "Please, help me. Give me poison so I can poison her".

"Will you build your happiness on this, young lady? But ok. I do pity you. I'll give you a tea potion. Every morning you will brew it and give this tea for your husband's mother. But, I have some advice for you".

"What advice? Speak, I will do anything, if only to get rid of this snake as soon as possible".



"Rumors quickly spread in the village. They will suspect you. So, to prevent this from happening, change your attitude towards your mother-in-law. Be affectionate,

friendly, smile. You won't have to suffer for long".

That is exactly what the young woman did. As soon as the rooster crowed, she would get up, knead the bread, heat the oven, cook porridge, and brew her mother-in-law's poisonous tea. And so, the young woman affectionately invites her mother-in-law to taste the miracle tea. The young women refers to her as "mom", obeys her in everything. The husband is overjoyed at how his mother and wife have become so close. The mother-in-law loves

her daughter-in-law with all her heart. And that love, yes sincere, is reciprocated. The girl hurries again to the healer, throws herself at his feet, with tears she says:

"Sir, I beg you. You can do everything, give me the antidote. I made too much tea for my mother-in-law; she will die. But she has become a caring mother to me".

He answers, "My dear, calm down. I gave you fragrant herbs, from which you brewed delicious and healthy tea for your mother-in-law. The poison was in your heart, but with God's help you got rid of it".

<https://pritchi.ru>

I was eighteen years old. One evening, after work, I was returning home and saw some familiar faces standing around. I greeted them, and one of them said to me:

"Why are you giving me only one hand? I want you to give me a second hand too".

Some pride surfaced within me, and I answered:

"Who are you that I should give you a second hand?"

To this he said:

"Come here, let's talk".

As a result, we had a fight, but were quickly separated.

That evening, I decided to take a walk before bed. It was late. I saw that group again and decided that I needed to approach and make peace with them: after all, we live in the same area and see each other often. I came up and said:

"Friends, let's not quarrel but make peace instead".

They said:

"Well, sit down then".

I sat down and we started talking. The guy I fought said: "I'll be right back", and stepped aside.

Suddenly, I hear someone running towards us. It was very dark. I asked:

"Who's running? Where did he go?"

And then, the guys abruptly turned a flashlight at my eyes and that guy, who was running, kicked me in the face with all his might. It sent me flying. Of course, I tried to get up to defend myself, but they all started kicking me on the head and all over my body, and then they ran away.

I only remember crawling to my house (about fifty meters away). Covered in blood, I barely opened the door and lost consciousness. I came to my senses two days later — my teeth were broken, my head hurt and my eyes were swollen. My first thought was to take

revenge, to do everything possible so that the same thing happens to that person, as it happened to me.

My parents wanted to immediately go to the police with a statement, but I refused and told them that we should

I would do this. I really hated those people.

More than a month passed and the day finally came when I was to carry out my plan. Before doing anything, for some reason, I thought: *Why not open the Word of God? I*

like this. But when I read the words of Jesus, I felt like a hypocrite, because since I was ten years old, I have been going to church and always thought that I could forgive the wrong done to me. Only now I understood what it

but my Teacher is Jesus Christ, who also suffered from people just like I did. But He asked forgiveness for them from His Father.

I fell to my knees. I prayed with all my might because I couldn't forgive them. I spoke honestly:

"I hate them. I want to do the same to them".

All night long I spoke these things to Jesus. At the end, I didn't even realize how I fell asleep.

I woke up with freedom in my heart! I forgave! I felt so free — so easy to breathe, easy to live. I went to my friends and told them that I was sorry, but we would not do anything. Of course, they were outraged:

"Are you alright? What do you mean, you forgive? Well, let's at least talk, at least punish them a little".

"Friends, I forgive them". I replied.

If you forgive, you can no longer have anything against the offender. After all this, I saw those guys again. I realized that Jesus had, as if, taken the sickness that was inside of me and ripped it out. We greeted each other, and they were surprised that I looked at them without any hatred. They started treating me with such respect! And out of my friends, two came to believe in Jesus Christ.

Friends, if someone offended you and you find it difficult to forgive, read **Matthew 5:44** in the Bible, and pray to Jesus Christ so He helps you forgive. Tell Him everything. And I am sure that if God helped me to forgive that crime, He will help you as well. Jesus loves you. And He also loves those we hate.

Anatoly GOLOVIZIN
<https://proekt7d.ru>

REVENGE NO MORE



take care of it ourselves. To report the incident to the police would mean that I would not be able to personally avenge myself. My parents were trying to persuade me, but, since my mother believed in God, I began to pressure her:

"Mom, but Christ teaches us to forgive, let's forgive!"

My mom was very surprised and happy to hear that.

I couldn't sleep, as I was thinking and planning how to get my revenge. I was slowly recovering, gathering strength, and gathering guys with whom

opened the Bible and read: *You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy".*

This made me happy. But then I read the words of Christ in the following text: *But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you... (Matthew 5:43-44).*

Friends, if it were not Christ, but someone else giving me this advice, I would have replied: *You were never treated*

means to hate the enemy. I understood what it means to not forgive. I began to pray. It seemed like Jesus was saying to me: *They did the same to me, and they persecuted me, and beat me.* I remembered that Jesus Christ, while on the cross, asked His Heavenly Father: *...forgive them, for they do not know what they do (Luke 23:34).*

The realization came to me: the people who did this to me, did it because they don't know that it's wrong to behave this way. Nobody taught them this,

Three changes that happen in the life of a person upon meeting Jesus

Sometimes it seems to us that we are in a hopeless state and nothing can change our life for the better. However, God has the power to make a difference, both in our own lives and in the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Consider the three radical transformations that took place, during a personal meeting with Jesus, in the New Testament story of a possessed man in whom was found a whole legion of demons, (a roman legion being around 6,000 warriors).

Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me". For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!" ... Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid (Mark 5:1-8, 15).



FROM CHAOS TO TRANQUILITY

First: he sits quietly at the feet of Jesus. Before meeting Jesus, this man did not know peace, neither day nor night. It is terrible to imagine what was going on inside of him, how merciless demons tormented him, and

this man lived in tomb caves, like a living corpse. The nakedness, that we are all ashamed of, is a constant reminder of that life with God, that man had lost in the Garden of Eden.

However, Jesus came to reconcile man with God and give us a new life in obedience and union with Him. That act of covering the nudity of the possessed man tells us that Jesus freed him from demonic power, and gave him a chance to live a completely different life.

FROM MADNESS TO SANITY

Third: he regained his sanity. A healed life, and inner peace. So that all this would not go to waste, a person needs to renew his understanding of life. Who knows what brought this poor fellow to such a sad fate? It is quite possible that the evil forces were able to gain such power over him because he acted foolishly. A sound mind is the ability to distinguish good from evil, which will undoubtedly help us avoid irreparable mistakes in life.

It is worth adding that Jesus made another change in the life of this man. The Lord gave him the honor of becoming the first missionary, who went to his native land and told people who knew him about the wonderful changes God had made in his life.

If there is a state that can be called rock bottom, then this possessed man is the perfect example of that. But for Jesus, there are no hopeless situations. All you need is to meet Him and have faith in the power of God to do the impossible.

FROM POSSESSION TO FREEDOM

Second: Jesus gave him clothes. Before meeting Jesus, this man did not wear any clothes. This detail reminds us of how Adam and Eve saw themselves naked, the moment they experienced spiritual death. By the way,

PARABLE

Once, a young man, of large build and with a face that expressed ill intentions, entered the temple during a service. He went ahead of everyone, sat down on a bench and lounging, began to eat seeds and swear loudly. A sermon

A hooligan in the temple

was in progress, and a priest was standing behind the pulpit. The guy kept interrupting him, sneered at his words, and threw seed husks in his direction. Then he laughed out loud at the choir when they sang hymns. Nobody said anything to him. The service went on as usual, and when the service ended, an old woman with a broom came up to him and said:

"Allow me, my son, I'll sweep around you".

After these words, the guy suddenly burst into tears and ran out. The next day, he returned to the church and repented.

<https://pritchi.ru>



Yury DENISOV, <https://proekt7d.ru>

What does it mean *to renounce God*? In what case can we assume that the soul can no longer be saved?

To renounce God is to refuse to believe in God, to disagree with His Word (the Bible) and not to obey His teachings as set forth in the Bible, not to believe that God came to earth in human form to pay for your sins by his death on the cross and be resurrected for your justification and give you eternal life in paradise.

Not accepting God is when you have heard the above facts but have consciously rejected them and refused to believe it.

Not be reconciled with God. Man is in a state of enmity with his Creator from birth. The Bible describes it this way: *But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins turn His face away from you, lest they hear (Isaiah 59:2).*

To be reconciled to God, one must **recognize oneself as a sinner** who is worthy of hell and to whom the Lord God offers mercy (amnesty) on the condition that he faithfully admits that God died on the cross for his sins. If a person believes in this and with a heart full of repentance turns to God with a request for forgiveness, then God forgives his sin, grants him peace and calls him God's child: **John 1:12-13** — *And to those who have received Him, who believe in His name, have been given the authority to be children of God, who are neither by blood, nor by the desire of the flesh, nor by the will of a husband, but by God were born.*

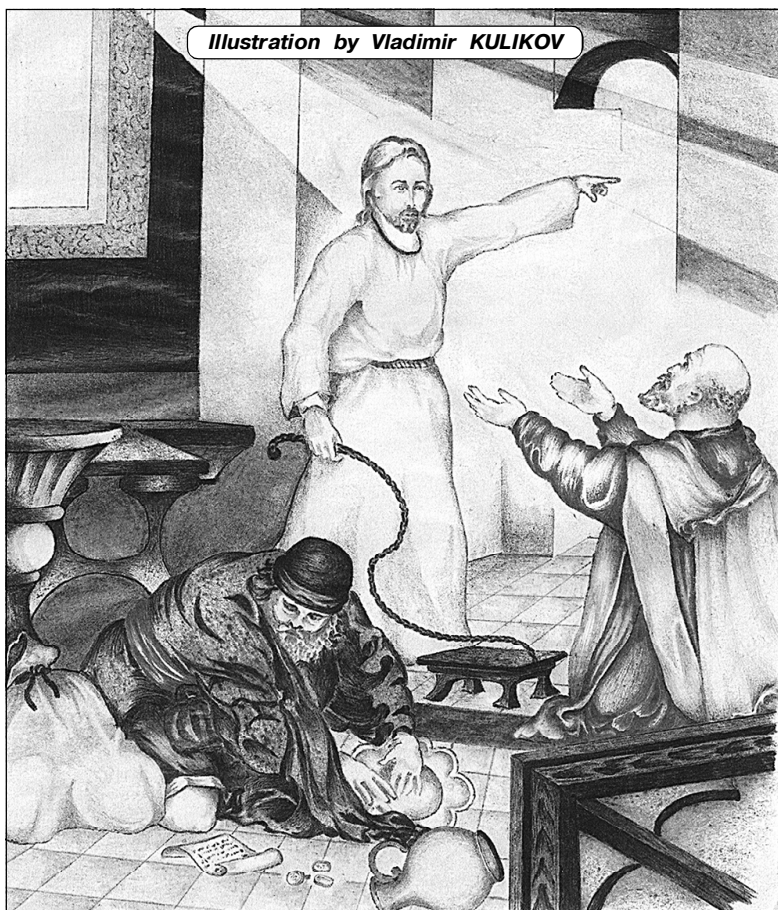


Illustration by Vladimir KULIKOV

A person who is reconciled to God finds inexplicable inner peace and tranquility: **Philippians 4:7** — *...and the peace of God, which is beyond all mind, will keep your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus;* **2 Thessalonians 3:16** — *May the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in all things.* This peace, which the Lord gives in the heart of a forgiven sinner, is a testimony to peace with God.

And in conclusion, the answer to the question **In what case can we assume that the soul can no longer be saved?**

A soul cannot be saved if it consciously refuses to accept God's gift of salvation and rejects Jesus Christ as God and Savior. But while the soul is alive, there is hope that a person will change his mind and ask for forgiveness to his great and merciful Creator.

Are vulgar thoughts a sin?

What is vulgarity? The dictionary gives the following definition: *Vulgarity is morally low, tastelessly rude.* Vulgarity is associated with debauchery, violation of etiquette, crime of moral norms, norms of decency, as well as with insulting feelings and immoral thoughts.

Jesus, revealing the deep meaning of the Law of God and the Ten Commandments, declared: **Matthew 5:21-22** — *You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment". But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, "Raca", is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, "You fool!" will be in danger of the fire of hell;* **Matthew 5:27-28** — *You have heard what the ancients said, Thou shalt not commit adultery. And I tell you that whoever looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

From these words of Jesus, it is clear, that in the eyes of God, some of our thoughts are sin. Which thoughts does God consider to be sin and which ones he doesn't? Any thought that opposes the morality of God's Law is a sin.

Galatians 5:19-23 — *The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Compare the works of the flesh with the fruits of the Spirit, and you will notice that the list of works of the flesh is not limited to actions alone. It turns out that the works of the flesh are fundamentally sinful thoughts: impure and obscene thoughts, hostile attitude, envy, anger, temptations, heretical teaching, hatred, and the like. These include vulgar thoughts.

In addition, the Word of God teaches that everything that does not happen by faith, and everything that is not based on faith, is a sin: **Romans 14:23** — *...anything that is not by faith is sin.* At the heart of vulgar thoughts is not and cannot be faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who sacrificed His life for our sins.

And the very word *vulgarity* already testifies to itself because everything vulgar is associated with low morality or no morality at all. If we compare man and the Lord God, then in comparison with God's holiness and with God's Word, all our thoughts are vulgar and immoral. That is why the Lord calls us not to live according to the model that we see in a sinful world, but be transformed by the renewal of the mind in the image and example given to us in the Bible: **Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing, and perfect will (Romans 12:2).**

Is sex a sin?

Many people mistakenly believe that sex is an original sin. But it's not. The first chapter of Genesis describes the story of the creation of man. It tells the following: *So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:27-28).*

Notice that the Lord told people to be fruitful and multiply as they fill the earth. It was not just the Lord's command, but His blessing. So, sex is God's gift to man, or rather to the family. Sex between spouses is not a sin. However, the Lord called sex outside of marriage adultery, which is a sin and a violation of the seventh commandment of the Law of God.

<http://www.cogmtl.net/Qa>

QUESTION AND ANSWER



Dear readers of "Prisoner"!

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

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

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



PRISONER

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