



# PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

«And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free»  
(John 8:32)

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My young friend, who told you that you were cool? And why do you think that you already know everything in this life and can do everything? In what is your understanding rooted in and how do you confirm your knowledge? Today you may show off to your friends and with all your appearance you proclaim that you are not afraid of anything and that the law is not written for you. You're not afraid of jail; you think it is romance because of your ignorance. You do evil to your friends and tempt fate believing this life to be endless. But you do all this until the moment when you really do end up in the pretrial detention cell. Here is the end, your euphoria of «no consequence» and the start of lots of tears. You will no longer look like the «hero» which you thought yourself as until



## «He who considers himself to be something, being nothing, deceives himself» (Galatians 6:3)

recently. The feeling of fear does not give you peace, and you are virtually ready to do anything as long as you are not put into prison and given a sentence. Why only in such circumstances do you begin to think and realize that in fact you are nothing at all and not cool.

I want to ask you: is it necessary to let your life down to such low; first to do bunch of evil, and then to shake in fear of imprisonment?!

My young friend, if you are reading this article and in many ways you recognize your self in here, then surely the time has come for you to change your life once and for all. Don't wait until others have done it for you. Perhaps you want to ask: who are these «others»? I'll tell you: it is exactly the same arrogant people like you who did not want to change in earlier. They are now serving sentences in institutions executing punishments, that is, in jails and prisons. In order for prison not to seem unrealistically glamorous, and its inhabitants — cool guys and noble knights, I will tell you a little about it.

Young friend, prison is not the end of life, but it's a threshold after which it is very easy to crumble and turn into someone you start to hate. Prison is the place where your rights are so minuscule, that in comparison with the obligations that you have to perform, are not noticeable. Prison is a place with lies and hypocrisy; cowardice, villainy and cruelty; dirt, stench and humiliation, especially when you are in transit... Prison is a stigma and a dirty mark and on your life.

Believe me, my young friend, every romance very quickly ends up behind the threshold of the prison. You cease to belong to yourself, for you are being governed by law and system. Whether you like or do not like the schedule the regime prescribed for your stay, nobody cares. Your «I» will no longer be first, unlike what you are used to.

Your menu of meals will also change dramatically, especially if you are from the middle class. In general, from the very moment you step over the threshold of prison, your life will begin a completely different count-down. The chances of staying a normal person with a normal mentality, will get less and less. Perhaps you may not know, but a very large percentage of people who have ever been in jail come back to prison more than once. These people return back not because they have a desire for it but because many of these people do not know another life. So, answer to yourself this question: Do you need such prospect?!

In this day, you my friend and many of those like you, is given a real chance — to change your lives before you cross the threshold of the prison. Thank God, the centers of juvenile probation have already started their work, and those who have come to these centers can be called lucky. Do not miss your chance. Make the right choice. You will not have a second chance. Today, everything depends on you.

My young friend, today through the publication «Prisoner,» the Lord Jesus Christ Himself addresses you, he who was crucified on the cross of Calvary and on the third day rose from the dead for your salvation. If you have never heard of Him, then now is the time you can get acquainted with Him by reading about Him in letters and testimonies which are published in this publication. All these people, whose letters and testimonies are published in «Prisoner» have also considered themselves to be cool and just listened to their selfish nature. Many of them passed through the real fire of the earthly hell, being drug addicts, alcoholics, thieves and murderers. Many of them were on the verge of death. However, faith in Jesus Christ and personal communication (through prayer) with the living God fully changed their lives.

Today they are new people with a new worldview and a desire to serve their neighbor.

Therefore, my young friend, I recommend that you read the stories from the lives of these people. After all, many of them were exactly the same age as you are now. Their testimonies have no lies. They are written from the heart for people like you. And if you now my friend do not accept a unique solution, the life of horror and nightmare described in the many testimonies and letters will not just walk by you. You're accustomed to hearing just yourself and doing whatever you please. You're used to being treated well, but how you treat others — was not important at all for you. But in real life, a game of one goal can not continue for long. Therefore, listen to the words that were left for all of us for edification by the Lord: **«So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets»** (Matthew 7:12).

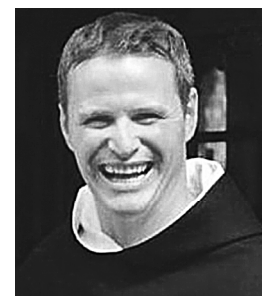
Once listening to the biblical truths many people radically changed their lives. God not only made them new creations, but also called them His children. It has been said by God: **«I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land...»** (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing new on earth, for everything has already happened. There is no other truth except the truth of God. It is not for nothing that scriptures say: **«...and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free»** (John 8:32).

I. GORIK.

### CHRISTIAN NEWS

#### Ex-footballer «Manchester United» Became a priest



Ex-footballer «Manchester United» Philip Mulraine took the rank of priest of the Roman Catholic Church. He joined the Dominican Order in Dublin.

Mulraine also took a vow of poverty. When he was a football player, his salary was more than 700 thousand dollars.

Archpriest Joseph Augustine De Noya, who came from Rome for the ceremony, dedicated the priesthood to Malraire. In October last year, the former football player was ordained a deacon.

The debut of Malraire in «Manchester United» was held in 1997 after the success in the junior team. Two years later he moved to the «Norwich City,» but his career there was overcome with numerous injuries.

A native of Belfast, 27 times on the field as part of the Northern Ireland team, and completed his football career in 2009. He started the path to ordination in the diocesan seminary of St. Malachy in Belfast.

The former football player studied philosophy for two years at the Royal University of Belfast and the Maryvale Institute. Then for a year he studied theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

In 2012, he entered the house of the novices in Cork, Ireland.

www.bbc.com

Jack Roland Murphy or «Murph the Surf» who was born in 1938, is a surfing champion, musician, author of the book «Jewels for the Journey», artist, and convicted murderer became famous in 1964 for robbing the National Museum of the United States (stealing the most expensive diamonds and sapphires from the collection of Morgan). For this and other crimes, he spent 21 years of time in prisons in New York and Florida. Court sentenced him to life imprisonment twice and once to 20 years of federal prison. In 1986, he was released on parole. In 2000, he was fully rehabilitated from parole.

From 1986 to the present day, Jack Murphy is an ordained minister, a legendary missionary and motivational speaker. In total, he visited over 2000

penitentiary institutions in many countries including America, England, Ukraine, Russia, Mexico, Guatemala, Barbados, Honduras, Brazil, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Virgin Islands, Peru, South Africa and others.

Jack Murphy was the keynote speaker in Jerusalem at the 1st World Conference on Crime Prevention and Relapse through Religion. He regularly works on Christian radio and television. For 22 years, Jack was the speaker and international director of the organization Bill Glass Champions for Life Prison Ministry, based in Dallas, Texas.

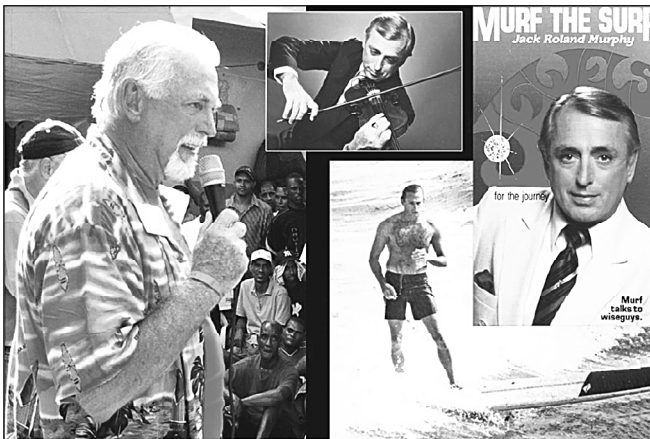
Jack and his wife Kitten live in Crystal River, Florida. Their ministry Sunshine Adventures, founded in 1987, works with the church to train and develop prison, biker and youth ministry. More

than 30 years of experience gave Jack a unique opportunity to create ministries and represent the gospel of Jesus Christ to prisoners, students, bikers, athletes and just a crowd of ill-bred youth. Today, Jack is the executive director of the Inmate Encounter Prison and Jail Ministry and School of Evangelism.

This year, in June, brother Jack visited Ukraine. He visited several Ukrainian prisons and met directly with the editor of the newspaper «Prisoner». After the article about the meeting with Jack Murphy got published, the newspaper began to receive letters from its readers with questions. To answer them, we specifically interviewed brother Jack from the USA where he lives.

FROM EDITORIAL.

## «We do not do anything unusual, but we are God's witnesses»



**Brother Jack, after you visited Ukrainian prisons, the editorial office of the newspaper «Prisoner» began to receive lots of letters with questions about you. Readers are interested in how you manage to be so energetic and in good health at eighty years old? After such a long time spent in custody, aren't you tired of visiting prisons for so many years?**

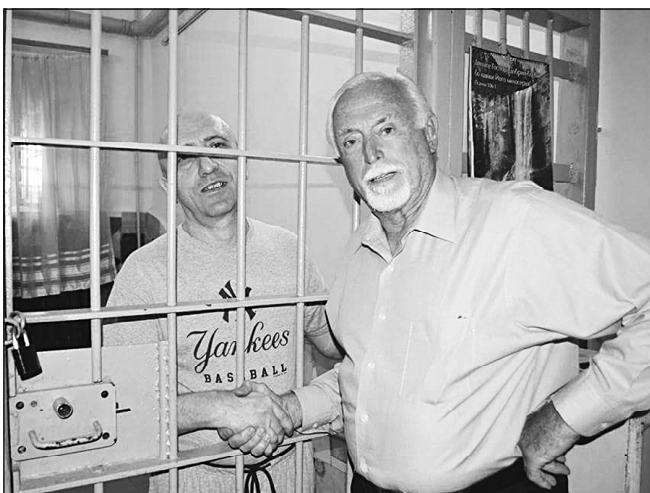
«I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me» (Phil. 4:13). Of course, at the age of 80 years it is not easy, but when you are trying to present God to people, He strengthens, uses and blesses you. We do not do anything unusual, but we are God's witnesses.

**One of the incarcerated in his letter asked: «How many prisoners did you meet while visiting the prisons of Ukraine and what impression did you have of Ukrainian prisons?»**

During this trip in June, we visited five prisons. In some of them, we were given the opportunity to meet with prisoners in special rooms for ministries. In one of the prisons of strict regime, we preached to prisoners who were in walking yards, through a lattice in the ceiling. In several cases, we drove 5-6 hours on the road to meet only one prisoner with whom we had maintained contacts before. In comparison with the prisons that I visited in South America, the Caribbean and Africa, Ukrainian prisons are old and worn out, but they are kept in order and clean.

**In their letters, prisoners ask, do many prisoners in the United States have a chance to be released on parole or pardon?**

More than 85% of prisoners in the US are released after serving a full term and also conditionally however only a few can be pardoned. About a million prisoners are released in America every year, but unfortunately about 300,000 of them return to prisons during the first 30 days at large. And there is only one way out of this tragic situation: when prisoners receive Christ and after they leave prison they join the church.



UIN-19, Lvov

**How does the US perceive missionaries in prisons?**

The ministry of Christians in prisons has its origins since the formation of American prisons. The word «penitentiary» was introduced into use by American Quakers (the so-called representatives of the Religious Society of Friends. — Ed.). It comes from the word «penitent», which means a humble person who repents of his sins or crimes. Just as Christ

served the robber who was crucified on a nearby cross beside Him, since then salvation has been preached in prisons around the world. Usually prisoners are mostly open to the perception of the truth about Christ, which contains hope and encouragement.

**Have you had to meet with those people who, through you, repented in prison and accepted Jesus Christ in your heart?**

God blessed me for meeting and working all over the world with former prisoners who once said to Christ «yes». Many of these men and women are leaders of well-known Christian organizations, many of them chaplains, missionaries, teachers, evangelists, etc.

**Do you have such acquaintances who, after the liberation of working together with you are now visiting prisons?**

As I said earlier, I work with an entire army of former prisoners released by Christ. Even in foreign countries, I work with successful and highly respected former prisoners who have enormous influence in their ministry.

**How many US prisons did you visit?**

For some time I tried to count how many prisons I visited. There were more than 1800 of them and I visited many of



UIN-1, Vinnitsa

them many times. This is apart from 200 prisons abroad.

**Do you consider it appropriate to have pardon for life-term prisoners?**

Absolutely. Many countries have a conditional early release system or pardon for life-term prisoners. In some states of America, there are mandatory terms of serving a sentence for certain types of crimes, for example 25 years for murder, 10 years for armed attack or drugs, etc. When you serve such a period, the parole board may decide to release you or not.

**How can you assess the Christian newspaper «Prisoner»?**

The newspaper «Prisoner» has a huge influence, wherever it spreads. Personal testimonies of God's love, power and influence on life bear hope. That is why the «Prisoner» is necessary for the inhabitants of many countries, and not only for the prisoners. People need to have hope.

**Have you ever seen such a newspaper before?**

Chuck Colson, who once was an advisor to President Nixon, after his release from prison, organized the international ministry «Prison Communication». This organization has its own magazine like the «Prisoner» for many years. This magazine is the most inspiring and readable in prisons around the world. «Prisoner», like the magazine, is able to bear life and hope where people can not convey. That is why it is important to support the regal messenger, the newspaper «Prisoner».

**Are not you surprised that the editor of this newspaper is in prison himself?**

«It's very unusual that someone, being a prisoner himself, could carry the Good News from the prison walls». In general, the newspaper «Prisoner» is a blessing, as it reaches many, and so far. Only God's hand made this possible. I'm sure that the more people read it, the more the newspaper will grow and inspire readers to become part of God's anointed ministry.

**Do you have any plans that you would like to implement yet?**

I am currently working with a Hollywood film studio to create the movie «Diamonds» in order to cover the whole



story of how the Lord saved me from the darkness and blessed me to bring His Light to the prisons and the far corners of the world. Please support this project in prayers so that the history of redemption through Jesus Christ can touch and change many more hearts.

**What would you like to wish the readers of the newspaper «Prisoner»?**

In our world of chaos and confusion, I wish peace, protection, and joy in Jesus Christ to all the readers of the newspaper «Prisoner». My prayer and prayers of many former and real prisoners with whom I work, is so that the testimonies published in the newspaper «Prisoner» bring hope, inspiration and blessings to all those who said to Jesus «yes». Here are some promises and directions, how to start this important journey.

It is necessary to accept the gift of eternal life, forgiveness, peace, love, and Jesus Christ as a personal Savior. Then follow the biblical promise: if I turn my back on my path, invite Christ into my heart and follow Him, He will forgive my sins and make me a new person. This is the beginning of the right relationship with Christ.

Now you should pray that your name be written in the book of life:

«Heavenly Father, thanks to You for Your Son Jesus. I am a sinner and I cannot save myself. I need a Savior. Christ, I believe that You died for my sins and rose from the dead. Forgive my sins, enter into my heart, fill me with Your Holy Spirit, make me what You want me to be. Thank You, Lord. Amen».

If you sincerely prayed this prayer, then you joined the family of God. You have now become a Christian. Now read the Gospel of John in the Bible. John was with Christ from the beginning of His mission to ascension to heaven. He narrates what Christ said and did. When John was in prison, God revealed to him what would happen in the future. This part of the Bible is called Revelation. And what is written there, comes to pass now.

Enjoy the fellowship with Christ, for He is alive and wants to have fellowship with you.

«However, as it is written: «What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived»[a] — the things God has prepared for those who love him» (1 Corinthians 2:9).

This interview was taken by Irina DOLGUSHINA.



IK-55, Zaporozhye region

# PRISON MINISTER

I am immensely grateful to God that I have in the present day so many friends from different countries. Every person that the Lord has sent into my life, is first and foremost a unique individual. I learned much from these people and am very pleased that such prominent examples as they are have had and continue to have a place in my life. I am saddened that I cannot write about all the brothers and sisters whom the Lord has sent into my life. But I am sure that with time I will write about many of them. In the meantime, I'll tell you about a brother in Christ Viktor Ivanovich Mural-Sikorsky.

The name of this brother is known to many who are engaged in prison ministry, and those who are in prison. However, not everyone knows with what unusual fate this brother has serviced more than twenty years of prison ministry. Today I just want to introduce him to the readers of «Prisoner,» those who do not yet know of this person.

Viktor Ivanovich was born September 28, 1953 in the city of Drohobych, Lvov region. He was found as an infant in a garbage can with an uncut umbilical cord. He was named Viktor because in Latin the name means «conqueror,» and as still quite a newborn baby, he conquered death and survived in such appalling conditions. The last name Mural-Sikorsky he got from the doctors who nursed him in intensive care. Viktor did not know a happy childhood as he was brought up in children's homes and boarding schools. Over time, already in advanced age, he became a master of judo, but left the sport after undergoing a serious injury. He graduated from the Philosophy Faculty of Kiev State University named after T. G. Shevchenko. He

taught social studies and coached children in judo. However, with unordinary thinking and abilities, in 1980 he became a counterfeiter. His abilities were envied by many professionals. In 1985, he was arrested and sentenced to death by the Supreme Court of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. During Gorbachev's reformation however, the sentenced shooting was replaced by fourteen years imprisonment. He spent ten years in prison where he sincerely repented and came to know God. From prison he was released in 1995 and since then has been actively serving Jesus Christ among prisoners in Ukraine and abroad.

Today Viktor has a degree in Theology, and is the bishop of the Christian mission «Renaissance of Ukraine», the coordinator of the prison ministry in Ukraine, and pastor of the church «People of God.» He participated in the organization of eight churches, visited some 500 prisons around the world. He is also married, has a grown daughter and grandchildren and is the author of two wonderful books of poetry.

Some time ago, Viktor Ivanovich decided to end his prison ministry for health reasons, but at yet another passing conference for inmates he realized this was not a step



he could take this soon. On the same day an all-Ukrainian inter-confessional conference for prison ministers was held. Prison ministers from all regions of Ukraine were invited. Viktor stood in the lobby and met all visiting guests. Many of the arrivals he knew by name and even the nickname by which they were called in the prisons. But today there were also completely different people, deacons, pastors, and evangelists. Brother Viktor greeted everyone and invited them to register, to drink some coffee or tea with sandwiches until the conference started.

Suddenly among the newcomers appeared a woman with a child, by the name of Tatiana, who unexpectedly came up to brother Viktor and proclaimed «Greetings Sikorsky! How long I have waited to meet you!» and hugged him. Brother Viktor was a bit surprised, but gave no such

appearance, and courteously invited her and child to sit in the hall. Later it turned out that Tatiana was formerly a habitual offender with three convictions. While in prison on her last sentence she considered ending her own life as she was tired of living in her prison and she knew no one was waiting for her outside. Nonetheless, everything was resolved by a circumstance. On that day when Tatiana was about to settle with ending life, Christians came to the prison among whom was the brother Viktor Sikorsky. Tatiana decided to finally go to the assembly hall where all were gathered together and listen to the believers. During the service there were sermons, songs and prayers. And during brother Viktor Sikorsky's sermon Tatiana's heart opened in repentance to God. On this day, this woman came to the conference to praise God and thank brother Viktor and to witness about all that God has done in her life. Standing before them was no longer a repeat offender, but a Christian married woman, mother of three children, who were born of her in her new life. She testified before everyone of her rebirth, and Viktor Ivanovich, with tears in his eyes, suddenly felt how God

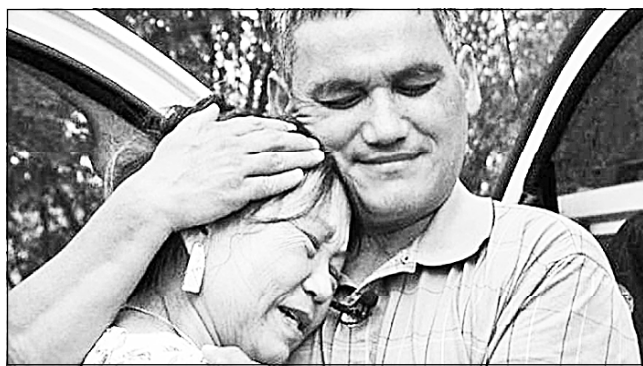
clearly spoke to him, «And you have decided to leave this important and necessary ministry?»

After sister Tatiana finished her testimony, Viktor Ivanovich rose and before the entire room asked the audience for forgiveness for his cowardice that he allowed the thought to end his prison ministry into his mind and for his plan to announce the end of his ministry due to health and many other concerns at the end of the conference. But everything changed in an instant at the conference. The Lord, through the testimony of Tatiana showed not only to all those present, but also to brother Viktor, what the result of the ministry is and how important it is for our society.

In today's day brother Viktor, as was before, continues to engage in prison ministry and sees this as a great work for God's glory. He still writes beautiful poetry and keeps the pastoral ministry in the church «People of God» and, in general, really considers himself a happy man. We can only wish brother Viktor very good health, so that through him God would create more than one more miracle. As stated in the parable of the lost son: «...*thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found*» (Luke 15:32.).

This is how to the present day brother Viktor continues to bring life to lost souls. I am happy and pleased that Viktor Ivanovich is one of those brothers whom the Lord has sent into my life.

I. GORIK.



## Mother begged God for a meeting with her son, who she had not seen for 48 years

Kirk Kellerhals was just two years old when he was adopted from an orphanage in Vietnam. Now 47, the Virginia Beach resident never imagined he would ever meet his biological mother. «I've grown up since I've known I was adopted with the knowledge, whether real or perceived, that my parents perished in the Vietnam war», Kellerhals said in an exclusive interview with CBN News.

CBN News was there Tuesday when Kellerhals and his birth mother, Thuy-Nga Thi Nibblett, of Vietnamese decent, were reunited in an emotional meeting in Virginia Beach.

Nibblett and her husband drove all the way from San Antonio Texas for the miraculous mother and son reunion. Kellerhals nervously paced the sidewalk in front of his home awaiting the moment of his mother's arrival. When she pulled up in his driveway, there were tears. Lots of them! «Thank you God for bringing my son to me», said a tearful Nibblett as she jumped into her son's awaiting arms. «Thank you for finding me», cried Kellerhals, as the two embraced for the first time.

The reunion happened just weeks after Kellerhals received an email from a woman who asked him to call her after he submitted information in an online DNA database. It was a call that changed his life.

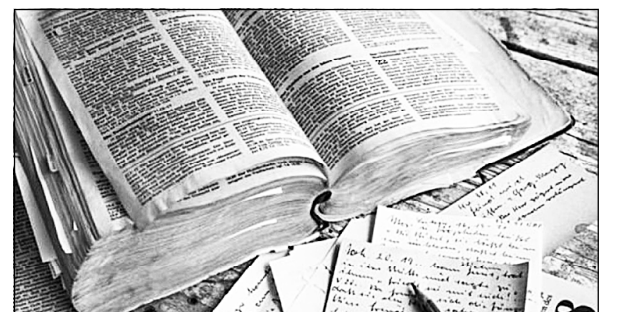
## CHRISTIAN NEWS

«The very first thing she said was yes, I think you're my son». Nibblett was just 17 when she became pregnant with her son during the Vietnam War. She said her father frowned upon her pregnancy because she was not married and the baby's father was an American serviceman. «When you have kid half-American, half-Vietnamese, people look down on you, especially your family», she explained. When her son was born she said her father immediately took him away. «He just took it right after I had him», she said. Her son's father, she said, was transferred to another military base and never knew about her pregnancy. The two eventually lost contact with one another.

Nibblett, who now lives in Texas, said she never stopped praying that she would one day find her son. Two years ago she turned to the website Family Tree DNA to aide in her search. Kellerhals on the other hand had always wanted to know more about his birth family but was reluctant to conduct an online search. But last month, at the urging of his wife, he decided to take the risk and just days after doing so he was notified about a possible match. «I got the email from Family Tree DNA that the results were back and they had a match», he explained. «It said parent-child match. I just kind of shook my head and said that's a mistake. That's impossible».

That impossibility was an answer to his mother's unwavering prayers. «I knew that God would answer if I just keep faith and keep believing,» said Nibblett. «God sent my son to me». «I remember in the Bible it said knock and it shall be opened, ask and you shall receive. I wouldn't let go», she said. While it took nearly 48 years for her prayers to be answered, Nibblett said God's timing is perfect. «Forty-eight years for us, but for God it's not», she said.

Meanwhile, Kellerhals, his wife and kids along with Nibblett and her husband are spending time getting to know one another. He says meeting his mom has strengthened his faith, calling the entire experience surreal. «To see her pulling up, I don't want to say out of body experience, but pretty darn close».



## Contest winner memories 840 Bible verses and wins \$ 100,000

In June of this year, the final stage of the ninth annual biblical contest, first conducted in 2009 by the Shelby Kennedy Foundation. Contestants memorized 840 verses from the Bible in just 90 days. According to the publication CBN News, the Bible Bee contest was organized by Christian actor and producer Kirk Cameron.

Cameron explained why he likes to be part of the competition: «Since the «National Bible Bee» started in 2009, I've been a fan and supporter, The National Bible Bee Game Show' stirs up fun, excitement and a lot of «intended consequences» in homes worldwide». Three young participants competed in the final round of the competition, one of them won and took home \$100,000.

Over 12 million people watched the contest on Facebook Live.

«There is something special that happens when young people commit the Bible to memory», says Steve Green, Chairman of Museum of the Bible and sponsor of the show. «These kids are having fun and we are excited to be a part of its ground-breaking run on Facebook Live».

Contestants are also taught other methods of memorization of Scripture and told about the tools of Bible study.

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# ONE LOVE STORY

My name is Larisa Melnichenko, I am a Christian and a volunteer of the International Charitable Fund «Embassy of Life». I am a lawyer by occupation. The initial focus of our foundation was children, but over time we began to help the elderly, crisis families and hospice.

One day, while reading the Bible, I discovered a scripture, where the following is written: «For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me» (Matthew 25: 35-36).

I do not know why, but after reading the scripture I decided to find a person in prison, preferably an orphan, whom no one cares about and start helping him. I thought about it but it only remained a thought. I continued to engage in charity, but this thought nagged me throughout my day-to-day life.

One day a man imprisoned for life turned to us for help. In his letter he described his case in detail; he asked for help. His letter touched me so much I asked him to send me a copy of his sentence. Making sure that he did not deceive me, I decided to help him within my knowledge and abilities.

We started to communicate with him, and during the course of our communication soon enough I realized that I was interested in this person.



Works of Georgy Suvorin

After a while I felt in my heart that I had toward him more than just friendly feelings, which I shared with him. He like me was a believer, and together we started to pray and ask God's guidance for our relationship. After a while he proposed to me. From this moment our way to family happiness began, despite the fact that we were separated by lots of doors, fences and gates.

As it turned out my future husband at that time did not even have any documents proving his identity. Due to the fact that at that time

there was no one at liberty who could deal with this issue, I myself began to work on the restoration of his documents. To make a passport a birth certificate is needed which unfortunately he did not have. Praying and trusting God, I went to the registrar of the city of Lvov. I was not yet the wife of Aleksandr, and therefore I was told that it is simply impossible to restore his certificate since only his relatives can do it. However, I did not give up but on the contrary I told our story and asked them not to deny my request.

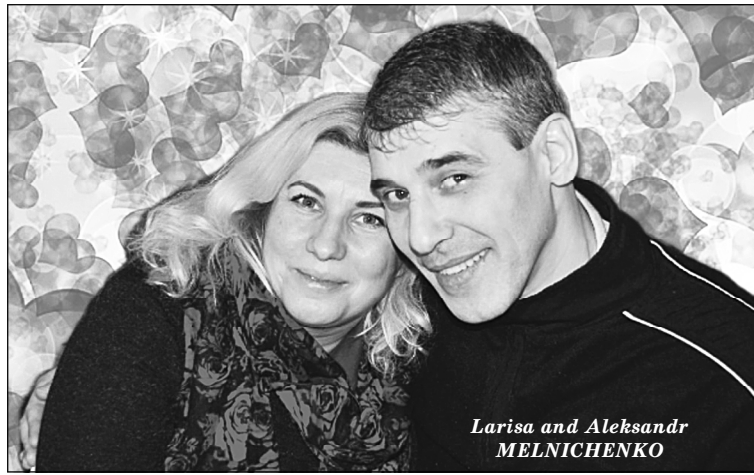
I will not go into details of what I had to do to convince them to give him papers, but I can say with full confidence that for God nothing is impossible when you believe in Him and completely trust Him. Despite all the obstacles in my way, that same day, I was holding Aleksandr's birth certificate.

Also in the shortest possible time with God's help, the question was resolved with the passport itself. Having overcome these obstacles, Aleksandr and I as Christians decided to announce our engagement. This was another difficulty that we had to overcome because in the law there is no such thing as an engagement; there is only a wedding and a court marriage.

This was 2013, when the law was very strict for those convicted to life sentence and did not provide for any lengthy visits. Short-term visits were given only once every three months, but these short-term visits were held only behind a gate and glass. Here again was God's miracle! In spite of everything, we were nevertheless allowed to hold our engagement event in a separate room. I want to express special gratitude to Pastor Oleg Usatyuk (from the church «God's Glory») for the fact that he blessed our engagement and the wedding.

On April 2014, my relationship with Aleksandr was finally legalized; we became husband and wife. The greatest miracle for us and a gift from God was the law, which in 2014 enabled prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment to visit long visits. In August of the same year, my husband and I went on our first long date.

When I am asked the question, «Why did you need all these problems and stress, dealing with the situation in



Larisa and Aleksandr MELNICHENKO

which your husband is in?» I respond that I married not a convicted person, but a person whom I consider my husband. Yes, I need it and it is necessary for Jesus to enter the places of confinement. For He Himself said: «...I was in prison, and you came to Me».

I also met a woman from America who, like me, married a man sentenced to life imprisonment. On September 2014 she was on her way to Kiev and I invited her to a meeting at our organization. At this meeting we heard her amazing love story. She also showed us her husband's hand stitched pictures. They were beautiful! Since my husband Alexander was also able to create things by hand, we suggested that our husbands become partners of the foundation and serve with their talents. They agreed. Later, they were joined by other prisoners, who were in other prisons. All these people are sentenced to life imprisonment.

In 2015, a charity fair was organized in Kiev, within the framework of which a charity auction was held displaying works made by inmates. All the proceeds from the auction were donated to Ukrainian missionaries in Africa («Assistance Mission»), who devoted their lives to the children of Africa.

Also in 2015, in cooperation with the PO «The Union «The Golden Age of Ukraine», an

all-Ukrainian creative competitive «Art-Reconciliation» was organized and held for those sentenced to life imprisonment. It was attended by about a hundred convicts. Our team visited 15 prisons in Ukraine (maximum control sector), where the convicts of



Works of Aleksandr Melnichenko

the above category are located.

The purpose of the «Art-Reconciliation» event was to show the prison a human face, to inform the public that prisons have the same people, and to show prisoners that they are important and to help them discover their talents and thereby benefit society with them. The fund's volunteers informed every convict of the message of reconciliation: to reconcile with God, with himself and with society.

In January 2016 an exhibition of works of those sentenced to life imprisonment was held. Creative works were divided into three categories: «Literary genre: poetry and prose», «Artistic genre: paintings, drawings and embroidery», and hand-made goods. Representatives of civil society institutions,

employees of the penitentiary system of Ukraine and other state authorities, as well as deputies and pop stars were invited to the exhibition. During the exhibition, mini-lectures were held with well-known human rights activists, public figures, politicians on topics related to the psychology of crime and ways of preventing it, the types and conditions of serving punishment and the resocialization of convicts.

Now the team of the foundation, in cooperation with other religious and charitable organizations, visits and serves many prisoners, as well as women prisons (Kachanovskaya IK-54), and the Prilutskaya prison for minors. All these people are needed by our society. They cannot be written off as a person only because they are in prison. Very many of them have not lost their human qualities. Now prisoners from many prisons are volunteers «in absentia» of the foundation, and they all have

dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ. All their works are gifted to the orphanage «My Family».

Finally, I want to say to everyone, do not be afraid to take a step towards God. Sometimes even the smallest act which seems insane for people can grow into a huge ministry. We all have our own path. Often we choose the easiest route which subsequently leads to death. The path that God wants to lead us on oftentimes seems rather complicated, but if we trust Him completely He will help us walk this narrow path to the end and come out as a winner.

Believe God and you will see His great glory! Let's do good together!

Larisa MELNICHENKO,  
Kiev, Ukraine.



Orphanage «My Family»



## TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

## REPENTANCE AND REHABILITATION HAVE CHANGED MY LIFE

My name is Anton. I was born and raised in the city of Bratsk in a simple family. It was a second marriage for my parents, and each of them had grown up children from previous marriages. My parents had two more children together: my older brother Yuri and I. We lived a normal life. But by age twelve, I was not interested in children strategic games, I preferred to sit in the basements, smoke, and communicate with older boys. You can understand what kind of life I was living.

Tragedy happened in our family when I was thirteen years old. My mother suffered a heart attack from which she died. The blame for her death of course laid on the three of us. After my mother's death, everything went downhill from there. My father began to drink heavily and did not bother to discipline Yuri and me.

As a result, at the age of fourteen was the first time I injected a needle into my body. It was an easy task to find drugs in Bratsk, since the level of drug abuse is very high there. Accordingly, where the dose was found there was a need of significant amount money which made me steal. I was soon taken into jail.

In prison I recovered from drugs and decided to start a new life with all of my strength. When I was released from prison I decided to live a good life. Soon after I met a good girl and we decided to start a family. Started living together. We had a wonderful son together. I followed my father's footsteps: joined a housing supply department as a plumber, where I quickly gained experience. I got an apartment instead of a small room rental in the dormitory, purchased a car and good technology for the house. Everything seemed to be fine and it seemed that the past life with drugs was forgotten. But no such luck. And, as usual it all started with something small. I started drinking again and when that was not of satisfactory I began grass smoking. I tried to hide my bad habits from my wife, of course that was nearly impossible. A needle from a syringe, among other things, was hard to hide. I returned to my old sins. I used eye drops hoping to hide everything, but one day Zhenya (my wife) still saw the shots in my arm. My family began to have serious problems. Then an unfounded jealousy that was all in my head added to worsen the situation. I remember these terrible scandals that I started with my wife at home. But I did absolutely nothing to keep the family together; I continued to do drugs. Zhenya screamed and threatened that she will find another man if I will not stop. From these words my jealousy became stronger. We loved each other, but I had serious problems. There was nothing I could do about it. In the end, everything went through a meat grinder: work, family, car, and apartment. Zhenya and my son had gone to another man where she felt safe and relaxed. I understood her because she was left homeless with three-year-old son in her care. There was no support from me.

The time of wandering begun including

incessant banditry and theft. In order to get money, a drug addict is capable of unprecedented evilness and deceit; he becomes a subtle psychologist who knows how to press on the necessary people's «soul points». My brother Yuri walked the same road as I did, although there was a time when he beat me for my drug addiction, but then the time came when we were injecting drugs together. In a short time, sin dragged me into such a swamp, where to get out I did not have the strength. My own father wished me death. Seeking the cause of my failure life, I blamed my father for not giving me the proper education at the right moment of my life and did not stop me at the very beginning.

But in the end I came to the conclusion that it was not he who was to blame, but myself. How I hated myself! I blamed myself for my ruined life, for the ruined life of Zhenya, and my son who calls another man «papa», for the grief that I caused my father and people from whom I stole, whom I lied to. Deep in my soul I just wanted to die, not to interfere with other lives, not to suffer myself, not to see all this around myself, not to feel my rotten heart full of pain and disappointment.

Behind all this there was another Member of my life that saw everything. He was not seen by me, and I did not know Him at all, but He knew me more than I did myself. And He patiently waited for the moment when my pride and stupid self-confidence would be broken. And at the right time He revealed Himself to me, a sinner of sinners, to do a miracle. It was God who created me, who had a wonderful plan for my life and who wanted to make this plan into reality at all costs. God paid dearly for my life by giving Himself to the cross and dying for my sins. More than 2000 years ago everything was completed and was just waiting for its hour.

Prior to all these events, I heard that there were rehabilitation centers for drug addicts and alcoholics, which were organized by Christians, and that there were a lot of people who received the freedom from addiction. I also knew that in these rehabilitation centers not only can you not drink, but you can't even smoke or swear; that there is a strict discipline. There you had to work, read the Bible and pray. For me it seemed something insane. One day I went to one of these centers in Bratsk, but I didn't last for more than three days. Yes, I repented and turned to God but I could not withstand the order established in the center, because I didn't understand why all this was really necessary. It wasn't until I got so deep into sin that I started realizing how deep of a

hole I was in. I remember a week before the 2009 New Years, I wanted to start all over again that New Year! Apparently, I thought it will not work. In despair, I cried out to God on the street and prayed: «God, if You are here, change my life!» There was a serious choice before me: either end my life in a loop or go to a rehabilitation center. But finally hope and the desire to live and change took over, and on the morning of January 1, 2009 I woke up with a firm decision to go to the center. I got up, packed my things and headed for the rehabilitation center I dialed earlier.

According to the Holy will of God, I ended up in the rehab center. So much has happened to me at the rehabilitation center, that it is hard to describe in words. Now I understand what was said to me by other ex-addicts, where God changes the person, leaving only the body and the rest — the old run-down rotten sin is ejected from within, from the heart, from the soul, and is replaced with an absolutely new being.

I was changing not by days but by hours. I'm so grateful to my attendants who have helped me in this serious and stressful but joyful process of change. There were moments when I was trying to give up everything, but literally at the door of the rehab center I would stop and think: «What am I doing? Where should I go?» Strict rules and discipline (yes, discipline, I am not afraid to use that word) had to be tolerated because I was so used to living my way of life and my pride made it hard to accept. But I'm now broken, I broke down before God, before the attendants of the rehab center, saying, «Do what you want with me: humble me, discipline me, and teach me, just don't let me leave to that world where I lived». This was one of the most correct decisions that I have made in my life.

I went until the end. Living in the center I understood a lot for myself, a lot of things God revealed through ministers, through preaching, through the Bible when I read it. It was there in the center I made real friends who did not need anything from me who just genuinely loved me and accepted me for who I was. I learned to pray. I have learned to listen to God hearing His voice in my heart. I understood who He is for me and how He loves me. I experienced His forgiveness and acceptance when no one needed me. I realized that I am really free, not only from the dependencies I was in, but also from many other sinful things. Life with Christ is a different life, painted in different colors and built on a new foundation. In God I have found freedom, not as an external appearance, which is called permissiveness, but the one

freedom that God gives — internal freedom. Since then, I am constantly filled with joy and sincere gratitude to God for everything that He has done for me. It is a miracle to live, to know Him and to move in harmony with Him.

During my rehabilitation I reconciled with my father and our relationship was restored. Another miracle was that I had one opened case with the police and when I turned to them, it turned out that somehow this case had disappeared. The case was never found.

After completing the rehabilitation program, I left the center with the blessings of the pastor of the church and the ministers. On March 19, I was baptized with the holy baptism forever giving myself to God. Now I was faced with the choice of how to live. I rented a room, and diligently started looking for a job. A month of running around did not get me a job. I thought to myself, «What's the matter?» Soon after I received an answer in my heart: «You need to serve people». How to serve people and what to devote myself to, I did not know. And then, a brother called me from church and said that there was an opportunity to travel to Buryatia and start work there on the establishment and development of a rehabilitation center. I was struck like with an electric current. I realized, «Here's what I need, where God is calling me!»

So a month later, on March 25, 2010, I came to Buryatia with a clear goal to serve people who had the same problem as I had before. Now I understand that I stand in my place and doing what is right and pleasing to God. My future, giving me the opportunity to create a new family, but on God's commandments. In front of me are open opportunities where I could serve. I took Buryatia as my second home. Recently I traveled to Bratsk to visit, and when coming back to Buryatia, it felt like I was returning to my home church, to my family and to people that became dear to me. All this that I now see and what I experience, could not even have been a dream back in the days.

Dear friends, I did not tell you this just to pour out my heart or savor the soul with memories. I did it so that you could be wise. A foolish man learns from his mistakes, and a wise man learns from others' mistakes. Today I am free, cleansed by God and forgiven for all my wrongdoings, I have a new life ahead of me, filled with bright events and most importantly the unfading God's light. What is happening to you today? Maybe you think that all this is a complete nonsense, or maybe something made you think and believe in the possibility of changes that have occurred to me. May God give you grace so that you may find a way to that new life in Christ, which I once only dreamed of. I will pray for this.

Anton VASILIEV,  
Ulan-Ude, Russia.

In the Bible it is written that «ye shall receive power», and you will be witnesses of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). I am grateful to the Lord that I received this strength and am a witness of His love and mercy.

I was born into an educated and intelligent family. In our house there were no arguments, yelling, and no use of alcoholic drinks. We were properly taught and educated. But in our family nothing was said about God — neither good nor bad. My parents were busy with work and career, but they did not have time for me at all. All this reflected in my life. At the age of sixteen, I had a court case opened. While locked up, I once thought: «What is the meaning of life? Perhaps, there is no point, people just use these words as a cover!» At that time I did not understand that God was knocking at my heart.

I tried drugs while I was in prison. By the time I was released, I was a strong addict. Upon returning home, I went to college and started to work in a music school with my parents. Externally, I was successful, but no one could have guessed that I had a different life where drugs were involved. But soon enough it was discovered about my drug addiction and gradually everyone, except my mother, abandoned me. I had to leave the institute and my work.

Mom took me to the doctors and psychics; we paid a lot of money for treatments but nothing changed. I was treated in a psychiatric hospital, but that also did not give any results. At the hospital they cleaned my blood, but internally I did not change.

We tried a lot of things, but all in vain. One

## «A dress was bought for me that I was supposed to wear in my coffin...»

day a woman came to our house and said that we have problems because we do not know God. I then thought that, in fact, we have not yet contacted a church for help. We visited the Orthodox church. Minister of the church baptized me together with my mother. We hoped that these rituals would somehow help me get rid of my drug addiction. Nothing helped. Immediately, after I came home, I injected another dose of drugs. Then, I became angry with God even though I really didn't know Him. My last hope died. I realized that for me there was no way out.

Soon another simple woman came to our house. The Holy Spirit dwelt in this woman's heart. She told us about the love of God, but I did not listen to her because I was angry with God. But my mother listened to her attentively and began to pray for me.

My condition worsened, I often went to the hospital. My leg was diagnosed with gas gangrene. I was laying awaiting an operation

to amputate my leg. At this time, I was visited by that same Christian woman that visited our house earlier. She persuaded me to personally



call out to God in prayer. I do not remember what I was praying about, but I well remember that I prayed. In the morning the doctor came

in and said that they will not operate on me just yet because of the lack of necessary medications.

When this faithful woman came to visit me again and saw that I had two legs, she could not restrain her joy. I did not understand what she was so happy about, so I rudely told her to leave. Medications had not arrived even after ten days, but my leg came back alive and the dead spots disappeared. I left the hospital on my own two legs, but did not understand that it was God who did it. Only years later I learned that the woman with her family prayed and fasted for me that God send His grace on me. I am still very grateful to this miraculous woman.

Then I was put in the hospital again and was scheduled to have my other leg amputated. My mother prayed, and the doctor for some reason did not do it. Instead of amputation the doctor put in an artificial vein. It was a very expensive operation, and I believe that the Lord Himself blessed the doctor's hands. After the operation, he said that I could not walk the next two years. When two months later I entered his office on my own two feet, he was very surprised and said that he did not understand what was happening to me. I also did not understand.

(Continued on page 8)

## TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

## MY SPIRIT IS HEALTHY

I was born into a big Christian family in the village of Pokrovka located in Russia's Astrakhan region. I was a rebel from early childhood. After serving in the army, I moved far away from home to avoid punishment for acts of hooliganism. Yet, I continued to lead the lifestyle of a thief, full of lies and extortion.

Over time, I moved to Latvia. I had the desire to start a new life. I got a job at a construction site and stayed there for a year. On January 6th, 1978, an accident occurred at work: a ZIL-130's crane arm fell on me. I had a compression fracture of the spine (1, 4, 5, 12 vertebrae) which also affected my bladder. Only a great miracle kept me alive because God had in His plan to save my soul. I went through a complex surgery on my spinal cord — bilateral bypass of my deep veins. I went from hospital to hospital for 7 years. Yet, God did not leave me behind, a sinner even then, with his great love. He did not let me die so that after when I would come to believe in Him, I would be able to live a new and purpose-driven life. However, when I left the hospital then, my soul did not feel God's hand and I continued to live my past life. I was disabled for the rest of my life.

God started to intervene in my sleep. Once in my sleep I found myself in a strange place: a dark, gloomy compartment with many souls packed in large shells. They were making terrifying noises — horrific yells and moans. From my understanding they were tormented for playing cards on earth. I did that too! I was terrified but an unseen force dragged me further into a different compartment. There I saw a three meter demon who said that here I would receive all the evil that I gave people on earth. I tried to justify myself, «I am disabled. Have mercy on me!» Yet, this was pointless. All of my sins (lies, theft, violence) appeared before my conscious as if on a film strip. For every committed sin, demons would begin to torture me. They attacked me and violently tore my flesh apart. I yelled, pled for mercy, but there was no mercy there and I heard a voice state, «You are going to court». There I understood that all the souls were waiting to be taken to court. So I found myself in the third compartment full of alcohol and drugs. The horror persisted even there. At the end, I saw myself before an elder who was in white, shining as if in diamond clothing. I realized how dark I was in comparison; I was helpless; I was full of sin; I was poor. I realized what awaited me. I firmly stated, «I won't do this anymore!! I won't do this anymore!» It was all so real. When I woke up, my entire body was in sweat and the fear would not leave me.

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I was still sick and was unable to get up from bed for days. I got thrombophlebitis in both hands and was starting to lose my hearing and sight. When I would literally crawl outside, I resembled a monster more than a human. Passersby would spit at me. Everyone hated me and I responded with mutual hatred. The doctor told me that all of my inner organs were failing me. I did not have a single functioning organ. The long list of my symptoms finally pointed toward the cause; I had the most dreaded diagnose — an HIV infection. I began to understand that this was the end, the days of my life were numbered. Mom and I came home from the hospital and started preparing for my funeral. We bought a dress in which I was supposed to be placed in the casket.

My most frightening life phase began. This was a time where there was no hope, no dreams, or plans for the future. As I would head to sleep, I would think that I would not wake in the morning. Spring was flourishing outside my window and I was realizing that this was the last spring I was going to witness in my life. However, Christian believers did not stop praying for me.

Mom once started telling me eagerly about a rehab center in Bucha. I was not listening to her because I did not believe that anyone or anything would be able to help me. Then I heard that the center was offering help to people at no charge. I became interested because we always paid for everything and so I agreed to go there. I was on drugs and drunk when I came to my first Sunday church service in Bucha.

The moment I stepped inside the house of prayer, I felt something within that I could not understand. I felt that someone was watching me. I looked around but nobody paid attention to me. This is where I heard a sermon for the first time in my life. I did not understand it but I found it interesting. Afterwards, all those present began to pray. Something broke within me. I saw that they were genuinely happy. They had something that I never had. Right away, I took out my pack of cigarettes and gave them to my mom. She threw them out because I decided that I would never smoke them again. I also told her to pour out the drugs

Many years have passed since that dream but I still remember that dream in all its details. Deep in my soul I firmly knew: hell is a reality; and I understood that I do not want to sin. I now had a fear before sin. I even tried to fight sin. I even tried to stop consuming alcohol. However, at that time I did not have the strength to oppose sin.

After some time I was admitted into the hospital with knee pain. There I heard about God from a lady who was telling someone about God. This was the first time I became interested in this type of discussion. This lady gave me a Bible and invited me to visit a church which she also attended. I started to attend this church but when I left past its gates, I would restart my old deeds. I would play, lie and live a «sweet life».

Although I had a decent life, I was lonely. The devil would torture me and often send me to the cemetery at night. I physically felt the strength that was pushing me toward the cemetery. I heard how the demons were laughing but I could not put an end to it. At times I would even sleep at the cemetery. I would fulfill the will of the demons and go wherever they would send me and do whatever they ordered me to do. In return, they would laugh at me, «So now what, you thought you were so cool but you do what we tell you to do!» Hearing their voices and seeing them I was almost demon-possessed. In spite of that, God gave me the opportunity to meet a young Christian — believer who told me about the living God and the power of the blood of Jesus. After some time, a demon returned to me and began choking me again; I called out to the blood of Jesus. The demon left and since that moment I was helpless. But, I did not feel God's calling and returned to my sinful life; but God continued to work with me. In 1996, after another «demolition» my spine was broken. The second surgery was far more complex and the

third surgery in 2001 even more complex involving vertebrae transplants. It was a miracle that I went through this surgery because it was mighty expensive and I obviously did not have the money to pay for it. I did not even have a way to get a hold of that large sum. Nonetheless, God had everything done in His way: the doctors operated pro bono. At that time, it all seemed like a coincidence and only now do I realize that God Himself decided to be my sponsor!

A day before my surgery, Christian believers came to the hospital to visit and I repented. I confessed and denied all connections with Satan. I never thought that I would survive this third surgery. This was the hardest surgery. In order to work with my spine, the doctors first cut open my chest and took out all of my inner organs — lungs, liver, etc. The doctors were conducting an experiment. Their experiment was a success. I lived.

After the surgery, the pain was so unbearable that I turned into an addiction of drugs and gaming devices but the fear of hell did not leave me for a single day. I started to think about God more often. I started to think of salvation. God was leading me as I started to attend various churches. However I was not finding peace. I was not finding God. Until one day, God spoke to me, «I am inside you». God started to open up to me through His word.

But the devil attracted me with life's superficial surfaces of pleasure. I was found guilty on multiple charges for violence and hooliganism. I was sentenced to prison.

Suddenly, my life turned around. In 2006, they discovered gallbladder cancer and liver cirrhosis. Thinking that this was it, I turned to alcohol out of my misery. By that time I already knew Christians who were praying for me when I would turn to them for help but at that time I was not fully understanding everything.

This was the time I also started having seizures — the pain is impossible to describe with words. I was tired of living. Once at night, I called out to God in the middle of a seizure, «God, take me. But, if there is still a chance for You to have pity me and if it's in Your will for me to do something useful, heal me». At that time I promised Him, «Lord, I will visit prisons and will tell those sentenced of Your mercy; I will tell all people that You are real, You are living, and You are Almighty». That same moment, God's power came upon me — I was fully and wholly healed from cancer and cirrhosis! I only had documents from the hospital for memory's sake of my diagnoses.

I started to regularly attend a pentecostal church. I would repent at each service, hoping to receive freedom from alcoholism and smoking; but there was no liberation. Once, as I was returning from church, I was having a discussion with a brother. He told me strange words, «I believe that you will quit drinking and smoking». Two days after our talk, we met again and I realized that I was trying to quit on my own seeking glory for myself. Instead I needed to seek faith and strength in the Savior because only through Him can we receive the freedom from any addiction. Great Glory to Him for that! We prayed and that same night I had a dream. I saw the house where I was born. I realized that it was morning but the room was dark. I came up to the dark curtains on the windows. I pulled back the first, second, and third layer... and suddenly a light penetrated the entire room. When I woke up, I realized that I was fully free!

After a long search, my soul finally knew the living God. I loved Him who first loved me. Every day, every moment, I feel His great care and love — He is my friend. On August 28th, 2008, I stepped into a covenant with God. By God's mercy I am able to serve Him. I want to tell everyone about what God did for me, should at least one more find the Savior. I want to share how God called someone like me, dirty and proud, and cleansed me and led me to His wonderful light.

I was a hopelessly broken disabled man who could only expect to live the rest of his days in a hospice but the resurrected Lord resurrected my spirit, arose me and filled me with His life!

Yes, in flesh I am still disabled, but my spirit is healthy and well and I am grateful to God for that. No words or even my entire life can thank my favorite Jesus. Glory to the One who was crucified for me and the One Resurrected for me who forever justified me!

Viktor KONKOV, Jekabpils, Latvia.  
Prepared for Publication: Irina ANTONOVA.

## «A dress was bought for me that I was supposed to wear in my coffin...»



that I used because I would no longer be needing them. I looked around at those around me and I wanted to stay with them and become like them. At that time, I did not return home. I stayed at the rehab center.

At the end of day three, I was certain that people who lived there walked their talk. I was so used to living in a world of deceit and evil

but everything at the rehab center was genuine and right. I bowed my knees before a great God and I wept. Pain was gradually leaving my soul and in its place, freedom came. One day I lived got baptized by the Holy Spirit. God healed my soul and body. I had new thoughts and desires. Two weeks later, I told God that I would commit my life to serve Him.

I have been serving God over 10 years now and by His great mercy I am able to be faithful to Him. Not once did I regret my decision to follow the Lord. After 3 years, a brother-in-law proposed to me and we were allowed to marry. Then, I was diagnosed with infertility. I thought that I would never have children and I dealt with it but God had different arrangements and gave us four wonderful sons.

I prayed about ministry in prisons, soon the brothers started to take me along to their service for the sentenced prisoners.

After some time, we took in two children, a girl and a boy, who were born in prison. Later we opened a Sunday School in our home. We started serving children who came from broken homes. The kids were different — sick and exhausted. We looked after them and they stayed to live with us. Today we are raising 11 kids. Seven of them are adopted. God heals them by His mercy. They partake in ministry with our children and serve God. Most importantly, today I have hope that I have a future that God Himself guarantees. For what God promises, will surely come to be. This is what I live by and find comfort in.

I want to encourage mothers and fathers who are praying for their children who are not saved yet. If God came into my crippled life, healed me, and saved me, then it will surely happen in your families; just continue to pray. I also want to encourage the people who are serving and evangelizing — a simple sister came up to me and told me of God's love and that affected me. Do not think that that if you don't possess something special, nothing will work out for you. Contrary, you have God and Holy Spirit. This is the biggest value that we have. Go and serve God and you will experience something unusual. You will see people whom you served, evangelized to, and prayed for. You will see how they bow their knees in prayer next to you. There is no greater joy than this! I want to encourage those working with difficult children, do your work until the end because great is your reward from God. Whoever has not tried to serve God — give it a try and you will see God's extraordinary miracles. May God bless you all to be faithful to Him and make your way to the blessed end!

Lada SHMEL, Kiev, Ukraine.



## Does God Bless Unbelievers?

The Word of God gives the following answers to this question:  
1. Firstly, the Lord blesses everyone, because God loves His creation and because He is good to everyone: **Matthew 5:45** — *...He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

2. Secondly, the Lord blesses not only believers but also unbelievers in the hope that they will eventually appreciate His mercy and goodness toward them and will come to God, thanking Him for all His blessings and benefits. **Romans 2:4** — *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?*

However, as it is known, many perceive God's goodness as a matter of course, continuing to experience God's long-suffering: **Ecclesiastes 8:11** — *When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong.*

3. Thirdly, the Lord blesses those who do not believe in Him with a specific purpose — that they cannot reproach God for judging, saying He was not good to them and merciful: **Psalms 1:5** — *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment...*

The Word of God warns us that everyone who does not recognize the Creator and glorify Him in life will face a very lamentable end:

**Proverbs 14:12** — *There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*

**Psalms 73:27** — *For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry.*

The question whether God blesses the wicked has been on people's minds for a long time. This is the subject of the 21st chapter of the Book of Job and the 72nd chapter in the book of Psalms.

## What about the aborigines?

Many people ask themselves, *If Christians claim that the Divine truth is hidden only in the Bible and by reading it, a person can learn about the true God and the way of salvation that He has prepared for humanity, then what about those people who have never heard of the Bible in their lives? How can they learn about God's truth? And how does God intend to judge and punish them for something they did not know and could not know because of certain circumstances?*

That's a very serious question. We will try to show you that it is much deeper than it might seem at first glance. To do this, we will have to look at this problem entirely from the other side.

People always want to know how God will deal with other people, instead of starting to think about self and own fate. Why do they do this? Because it is easier to shift the focus from oneself and from personal responsibility before God to other people or to God Himself, rather than to understand yourself and your relationship with the Creator.

The Bible says, *For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?* (**Matthew 16:26**). You say that you are worried about the fate of the natives? In reality, this is not the case. Aborigine and his fate do not interest you at all. It's only an occasion for you to argue with God...

Those people who were really worried about the fate of the poor Aborigines became missionaries and went to the unexplored corners of the earth to bring them the truth about the Savior. How can you worry about the soul of other people when you have not taken care of your own?

However, let's return to our topic. What are you to the savage? Did you hear about God yourself? Get access to His Word? Do you know the Divine truth? Reconcile with the Heavenly Father with the blood of Jesus Christ? Did you receive the remission of sins? Or do you look at a native who has never seen a Bible, and think it will make you feel better?

If you now do not care about the savage, then when you die, you won't care about them either. The question on the agenda is, «Did the Word reach you, before me, before each of us and have you accepted it for the truth or rejected it?» When each of us will stand before God, then excuses like «He has never read the Bible?» or «What about him; he did not even suspect in the existence of the Bible?» will not fly. The knowledge or ignorance of the aboriginal about the Bible cannot save you and help you to justify yourself in court.

As for God Himself, He is the Righteous Judge. He knows how to judge whom, because He knows everything about each of us. In addition, each of us is in a certain relationship with the Creator. How do we know what kind of relationship the Lord has with the aborigine? Maybe this savage who knows nothing about the Bible and does not know how to read at all, the Lord is personally revealing the Divine truth Himself? The savage is the creation of God, and only the Lord knows what is going on in his soul. In addition, God gives each person a chance to accept or reject the truth, to recognize God as Lord and to have eternal life or not. And how He does it — God only knows. *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord* (**Isaiah 55:8**).

As for the Bible, there it is written in black and white:

**Romans 1:18-25** — *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

We have just read that the Lord showed people knowledge about Himself in the world around us. Only a blind man cannot

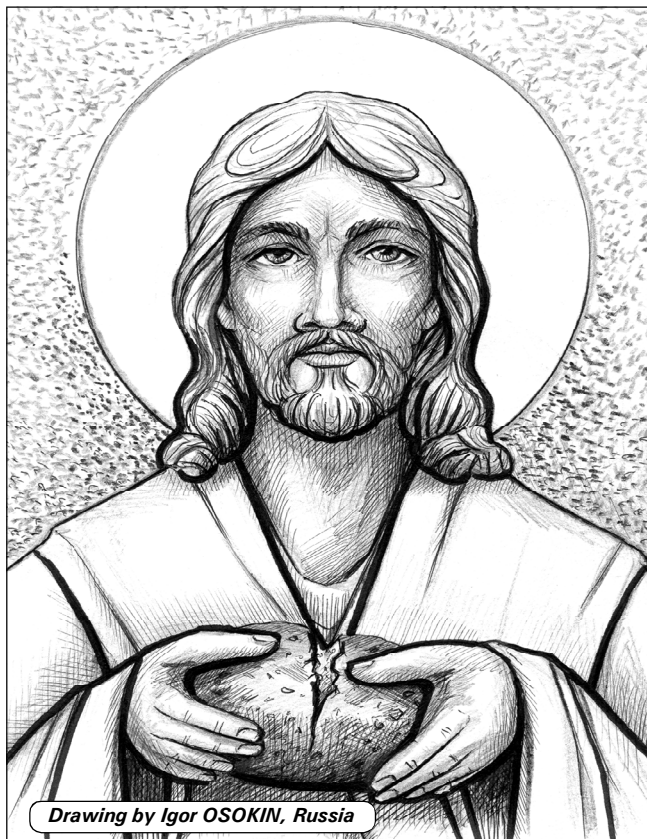
## QUESTION-ANSWER



not see it and not recognize the greatness and power of our Creator.

And of course, the Lord has one more principle, according to which He will judge us, from everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required, and to whom much is entrusted, they will be more exacted from that (**Luke 12:48**). If an aborigine has never seen or held a Bible in his hand, then He will be asked from him in accordance with this. As for us, to whom the Word of God came in hard copy... we will be asked differently, for we were more trusted than a savage.

Therefore, let us not look at people, but look to the Lord and reading the Word of God, think of our own soul... For what benefit does a man have if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?



## Does participation or non-participation in communion have an effect on our salvation?

The verse referred to in the question is **John 6:53**: *And Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you will not have life in you.*

To find out the meaning of this verse, it is necessary to turn to its nearest context, that is, to neighboring verses from the same chapter. The context of this verse is as follows: **John 6:48-55** — *I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, «How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?» Then Jesus said to them, «Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.*

What does Jesus Christ mean by the words «bread is My flesh» and «drink His blood»? Does Jesus refer to communion here? Not at all! He speaks of life and of salvation, the source of which is Himself.

If we participate in communion, that alone does not guarantee salvation, for we are saved by faith and not by works: *For by grace you are saved through faith, and this not from yourselves, God's gift: not from works, so that no one should boast* (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). If participation in communion could save someone, then it would be very easy and simple to receive salvation. It would not be necessary to repent and come to God asking for the forgiveness of sins. All that the sinner would need to do was to take part in communion in the nearest church. However, the Bible does not teach that participation in communion gives life and salvation.

The Lord Jesus Christ gives life, and His holy Word gives life, but not participation in a church sacrament or rite. The Bible teaches that the one who receives the Lord and His word, gains eternal life:

**John 3:36** — *He who believes in the Son has eternal life, and he who does not believe in the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides in him.*

**John 5:24** — *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and cometh not unto judgment, but passed from death into life.*

This truth is also confirmed by the words of Jesus Christ, preceding the passage from **John 6:53**, in **verse 47**: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*

He who accepts the Word of God so much that it becomes his

flesh and blood, he is a man who «eats the flesh of the Son of man.» Such a person, whose flesh and blood became God's Word, has salvation and eternal life.

Now let's return to the sacrament of bread. We have already said that participation in communion does not save. But if a person who calls himself a Christian deliberately refuses to take part in communion, then this is another matter. Here you need to think about the relationship of this person with the Lord and the Body of Christ — His church, that is, brothers and sisters by faith.

## Where Does it Say, «God, give me money»?

Today, some churches preach the so-called Gospel of Welfare. Referring to the words of Jesus Christ, *I came so that they might have life and have it abundantly* (**John 10:10**), they teach that material prosperity is evidence of a special affinity with God and part of the spiritual blessing from God.

But do not succumb to this sweet provocation! «Life is abundant», about which Jesus Christ speaks, is not materially arranged, but, first of all, spiritually enriched life. This refers to peace with God. This is a life filled with serving God and people. It is a life free from the power of sin and death. This is righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. *For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit* (**Romans 14:17**). That is why the Lord called on believers to look first for «the Kingdom of God and His glory», not material values and well-being, but enduring spiritual values. Everything else is vanity and vexation of the spirit (**Ecclesiastes 1:14**).

The Lord knows what each of us has a need for, and He provides and gives everything that is necessary for His children.

**Matthew 6:8** — *For your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.*

**Luke 12:29-32** — *Therefore, do not look for what you should eat or what to drink, and do not worry, because all this is what the people of this world are seeking; your Father knows that you need it; Above all seek the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you.*

**Philippians 4:6** — *Do not be anxious about anything, but always open your wishes to God in prayer and petition with thanksgiving.*

There is nothing shameful in asking our Heavenly Father to meet your financial needs. Just do not put these needs at first place, first priority in your life.

Take an example from the apostles who knew how to be content with what they have.

**Philippians 4:11-13** — *For I have learned to be content with what I have. I know how to live in poverty, I know how to live in abundance; learned everything and everything, saturate and suffer hunger, be abundant and in short supply. I can do everything in Christ who strengthens me.*

**1 Timothy 6:6-11** — *Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain[a] we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.*

*Strive to be godly and content. And do not believe that God's love is measured by the magnitude of a person's well-being.*

## Was Adam a Perfect Man?

If the Lord Himself, looking at His creation, said, «It is very good», so it was so. Adam was a perfect man. And this implies that he had free will, which he used to disobey God. Free will was one of the facets of perfection that Adam possessed.

Perfect does not mean «not capable of committing a sin». Perfect means «fully completed, without flaw, without shortage». Thus God created Adam in His image and likeness. Adam acquired defects and shortcomings by committing sin, disobeying God. Sin also deprived Adam of holiness and consequently, of the perfection that he possessed, being created in the image and likeness of God. Since then people began to be born not in the image of God, but in the image of Adam. Here is the genealogy of Adam: when God created man, in the likeness of God created him, male and female created them, and blessed them, and called them by name: man, in the day of their creation. Adam lived one hundred and thirty years and gave birth to a son in his image after his own image, and he called his name Seth (**Genesis 5:1-3**).

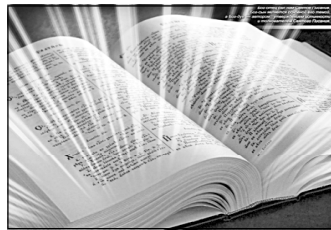
Satan was also a perfect angel at a time, until he became prideful. **Ezekiel 28:13-15** — *You were in Eden, in the garden of God; Your clothes were adorned with all manner of precious stones; ruby, topaz and diamond, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, carbuncle and emerald and gold, everything, skillfully seated in your nest and strung on you, was prepared on the day of your creation. You were the anointed cherub that overshadowed, and I set you up for it; you were on the holy mountain of God, walked among the flinty stones. You have been perfect in your ways since the day you were created, until iniquity was found in you.*

Jesus Christ was a perfect man, because he was God Himself in the flesh (**1 Timothy 3:16**). Nevertheless, He could sin if He wished, otherwise the devil would not try to tempt Him by pushing to sin (**Matthew 4:1-11**). Jesus did not yield to this temptation, whereas Adam, when tempted in the Garden of Eden, succumbed to temptation and fell into sin.

Today, the Lord Jesus Christ calls on each person to return to the previously lost man's perfection. **Matthew 5:48** — *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.* That is why every Christian strives to restore to himself a perfect image that can only be restored in Jesus Christ: *For by one offering he made perfect the sanctified forever* (**Hebrews 10:14**). The Lord Himself helps to achieve this perfection through His holy Word — the Bible. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** — *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

## PASTOR'S WORD

## CORRECT SELF-ESTEEM



It is common for every person to have his own point of view about certain things, and also to evaluate in his own way the actions and behavior of other people. Each of us, regardless of whether we are aware of this or not, has an assessment of himself. We can easily make mistakes in evaluating other people, but to have an inaccurate self-assessment is worse. There are people who are very mistaken and consider themselves to be Napoleon, Lomonosov, and sometimes even Christ. True, most of these people with incorrect self-esteem are held in psychiatric hospitals because of their inadequate behavior. These are examples of people with severe mental disorders. But what about minor deviations? Moreover, deviations from what? So, there is some generally accepted standard of behavior and self-esteem? By what standards do people need to evaluate themselves? Many works have been written on this subject by philosophers and psychologists, but we, as Bible readers, understand that everything should be judged according to the standards by which God will judge this world and every person. These moral requirements and standards are reflected in the Bible. On this occasion Christ said: **John 12:48** — *He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.*

Nevertheless, I have met people among believers and non-believers with both high and extremely low self-esteem. It's no secret that people with excessively low self-esteem and a sense of their own inferiority do not reach their potential and are deprived of many successes in life that they could have had with the right attitude toward themselves. Such people often fall under the influence of others and don't «live their own lives». People with low self-esteem experience many thought up of, unnecessary emotional worries. They often feel that they are being condemned, misunderstood. They tend to please people and their opinions.

On the other hand, people with high self-esteem cause very unpleasant feelings toward themselves from other people. When people think highly of themselves, when they are proud of whatever it is, without the least bit of modesty, they push others away from themselves. And not only people, but even God. It is said:

**James 4:6** — *God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

**Luke 14:11** — *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

Even people say: modesty adorns a person.

High self-esteem prevents further growth and improvement, and also prevents God's blessings and gifts from manifesting in their lives.

We started with two very familiar extremes: understated and inflated self-esteem. But a question arises: what is the correct self-esteem a Christian should have? How do God and the Bible view the question of a Christian's self-esteem? It is surprising that there are a lot of texts on the subject in the Holy Scriptures, which at first glance contradict each other. Some speak of a person as something of little significance, others speak of a person as a great value. Here, for example, is the first group of biblical texts:

**Job 25:6** — *How much less man, that maggot, and the son of man, that worm!*

**Isaiah 40:15** — *Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.*

**Isaiah 40:17** — *All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.*

**Galatians 6:3** — *For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

Even Jesus Christ taught his followers not to think highly of themselves:

**Luke 17:10** — *So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, «We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done».*

Another group of texts from the Holy Scriptures says differently:

**Isaiah 43:4** — *Since you are precious in My sight, since you are honored and I love you, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life.*

**1 Cor. 6:19-20** — *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit*

*who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*

**John 15:14-15** — *You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

How do we understand this? Is man a worm, a speck of dust, or is he of great value and friend of God?

If you look at the physical side, how much does the material that makes up the human body cost? Very little. All the chemical elements that make up the human body are present in regular soil in large quantities. The material is not valuable. If you say that position and influence are valuable, then I will say that even the powerful die, and the world continues to exist, excelling without them.

**The value of a person varies according to his position.**

Before they sinned, the first people in the garden of Eden had God's nature, which the Creator breathed into them when they were created. They had a peaceful heart, pure thinking and harmony with God and with themselves.

**Ecc. 3:11** — *He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart...*

**Ecc. 7:29** — *Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices.*

**Psalms 8:5-6** — *Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet...*

People were the crown of God's creation. Their creation completed the six-period process of the creation of our universe. Everything was created for man and everything obeyed him. The person's price and the role assigned to him were very great at that time.

Later, after the voluntary obedience of the first people to the devil, everything changed. The human spirit died when it came to direct communication with God, conscience degenerated... Mankind fell into direct dependence on the enemy of the souls of men and inherited from it the sinful selfish nature that began to manifest in all people from birth. In addition to his consciousness, man became capable of all evil, which the devil is capable of.

**Romans 6:16** — *Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves...*

**2 Peter 2:19** — *...for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.*

**After sin, God's likeness in a person was distorted beyond recognition, and its value was lost with that too.**

Let us explain this with an example. Every family faithfully keeps unique pictures from the past, which capture moments that involve our destiny or the fate of our ancestors. These family relics are dear to us and our children and grandchildren. But if they suddenly fall under water and the image is lost and we find that they cannot be restored, then, no matter how sorry we are, they will prove to be unusable and have lost all value. When a person loses the image of God, and with it the power to transform others, his value is lost too. That's why God said that He was ready to pity the most depraved cities of that era — Sodom and Gomorrah, if there were ten righteous in them. Do you see how highly God values the life of the righteous? Thousands of wicked inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, taken together, are not worth to God as much as ten righteous are.

**But every sinner, while he is alive, has the potential to become a righteous man, who will also be highly valued in the sight of God.**

When a man of the world comes to God with repentance, then God's nature revives in him, and the old nature, with its pride, greed and selfishness, comes into conflict with it. The born again human spirit

(manifestations of the spirit — conscience, intuition) desires to please God, and the sinful nature that operates in the flesh continues the war for the right to exist. And this inner confrontation is an inevitable and quite normal phenomenon, revealing our essence.

**Romans 7:18-19** — *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.*

**Only when the growing spiritual Christian becomes aware of his duplicity, he can form the proper self-esteem.**

On the one hand, the Christian begins to appreciate what is valuable to God in him, and on the other hand, to hate in himself what God hates. Is there anything in us that God hates? Yes, of course, plenty. It is our

leave a good example (**Phil. 2:4-10**).

**Matthew 20:26** — *It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant...*

**Luke 14:11; 18:14** — *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

But it should be noted that when we look at the Lord and feel His perfection and greatness, we automatically understand how worthless and imperfect we are, and this helps us humble ourselves.

Only those who are low in their eyes can be high in the sight of God. Here are a number of advantages that we will enjoy by humbling ourselves:

1. Humility keeps us from pride.
2. Humility is a powerful weapon in the fight against the prevailing decrepit nature.
3. Humility brings us closer to God: we

pray more, we read the Bible, we rely more on the Lord than on ourselves.

4. Humility encourages us to seek the guidance of God.

5. Humility stimulates walking in the Spirit because of the need to receive revelations from the Lord.

6. With humility in our lives, more gratitude is shown to God.

7. With the help of humility, we are freed from the internal pressure created from the awareness of «We must». We understand that we cannot do anything on our own, and all this awareness of internal pressure is transmitted to God. And as a result, there are more childlike trusting prayers and growing faith.

8. Humility gives the opportunity for God's power to manifest.

**Now let's talk about the values and benefits of a person saved by Christ.**

1. Man is the only creature on earth created in the image and likeness of God. The devil, unable to defeat God, struggles with His image and likeness in man.

2. A person is given the opportunity to display God on earth in himself and his children, in other words, «multiply» God.

3. Man is an important link in the writing of human history. He can positively influence its course in the universe.

4. A person is given the privilege to occupy a very high position in heaven — to be Christ's bride, His Body, and to reign with Him forever. This position is much higher than that which the devil occupied before his fall. Perhaps that's why he is so jealous and anxious for this to not happen.

5. A person has valuable gifts of God, such as the mind, creativity, free will, which can glorify his Creator.

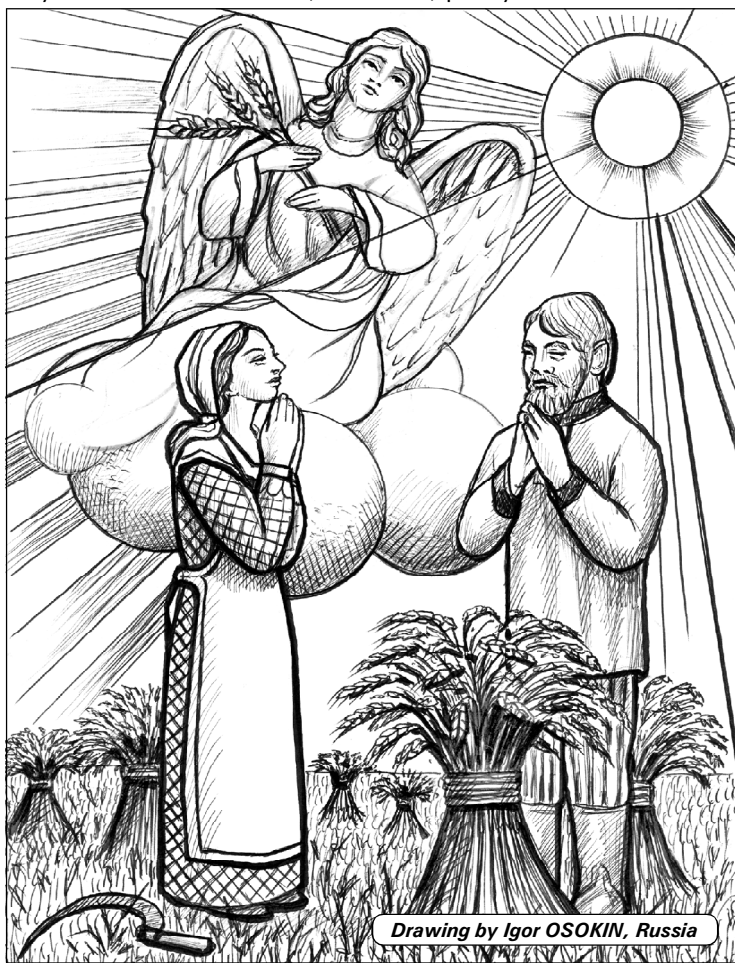
And finally, we bring God's appeal to two different communities, as described Revelation. In the first case, believers had low self-esteem, and God thought highly of them. In the second case, on the contrary, Christians thought highly of themselves, but God's assessment turned out to be the opposite.

**Rev. 2:9** — *I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

**Rev. 3:17-18** — *Because you say, «I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing», and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.*

Do you see how mistakes can be made? How human self-esteem can differ from God's? So, let's be careful not to exalt in yourself what is to be humiliated, and not to humiliate what should be exalted. We must exaltedly treat life and the privilege granted to us to serve people and glorify God by the opportunities and gifts He has given us!

**Phil. 4:13** — *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*



When I saw brother Gregory for the first time, it seemed to me that I knew him from somewhere a long time ago and every meeting we had together since the former only strengthened the feeling. I remember how his eyes were filled with kindness and holiness and after meeting with him the qualities would pass onto me and I wanted to be the same way. Every meeting with him was filled with positivity. He never complained about anything and instead filled his heart with the problems of people around him. It was impossible to see indifference in him, for he knew how to love everyone. Just two days before he passed away, I had the opportunity to talk with him by phone. He was hospitalized at that time, but by the tone of his voice, it seemed to me that he was vacationing somewhere. He lively and enthusiastically told me about his endeavors of preaching to the sick and medical staff around him about Jesus Christ: His death and resurrection. He also shared his plans with me about his future visits to the hospital to lead a service. He thanked God for everything he had, and I was very glad as well, for his health started improving. I couldn't wait to see him soon and like before, give him a brotherly hug. However, it wasn't destined to happen though. Just two days after our short talk, I got the news that brother Gregory Petrovich had left our world to spend an eternity with God. All the memories I had with him will forever remain with me. To the desk of the editorial «Prisoner» come many letters about brother Petrovich. Brother Gregory had been there for many whom have just come to Christ providing support and being a great example. Today, from the pages of «Prisoner» I want to reminisce about our blessed and dearly held brother, Gregory Petrovich, and publicize a few letters along with these reminiscences.

I.GORIK.

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Dear beloved ladies and gentlemen, colleagues of the magazine «Prisoner». I welcome all of you with the love of God; may He fill your hearts with peace and love.

In my beginning remarks, I would first like to thank all the hard-working men and women at «Prisoner» for your amazing, God-blessed efforts. Once I was only a witness for the project «Prisoner,» but now I see how from that small sapling has grown a beautiful tree which brings many fruits, softening peoples' hearts with the words from its pages. These hearts repent before God and become His new creation, for God's word has no boundaries!

To begin with, I want to mention a few things about our brother Gregory Mysyak who has helped many previously-bonded people reach a new life with God through his words of truth.

Brother Gregory treated everyone in a lovely, fatherly fashion; I saw this every time he attended our church gatherings. He would accommodate whoever needed accommodation. With the crying — he cried, with the rejoicing — he rejoiced. I felt his fatherly love when he expressed affection towards me, always interested in my life and my spiritual state. These qualities should be in every minister who is concerned about individual souls and the church as a whole. There was something unique in Gregory. It was his gift of fatherly love.

I have never had a father, but I felt his love towards myself which he expressed in his words, behavior and actions. Brother Gregory Petrovich is no longer with us; he

has left to spend an eternity with God. Whilst on his journey, he has left traces for us of his faith and love which now helps lead us into the heavenly abode. It may be that my reminiscence comes off being naive-like to some, but I have written this guided by my heart's feelings. I want to wish all of us to live our lives in a manner that leaves a mark on this planet after we die — a mark leading to everlasting life by which others can come to Christ.

I also want to express a huge thanks to Igor Trubitsin, who has

because it is written «...for I have made you a father of many nations» (Gen. 17.5). As we see, not just the people of Israel, but many, that is, the pagan people also. «For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God» (Rom. 2.28-29). Such is the trail of faith Abraham left after himself.

sisters and Gregory Petrovich himself, the foundation of our Church of Holy Trinity in the UIN-1 of the city of Vinnitsa was laid. Thanks to this blessed brother, many inmates were baptized right there in the institution. He always had Father's love for all the prisoners. Gregory Petrovich truly lived his life for the glory of God. He labored, living on earth, and left us an example so we do the same. Right now these two men of faith are in eternity with God, but they have left a mark and an example for me.

on earth, then, of course, we are experiencing loss and so want to turn back time to when this person was next to us and we could see and communicate with him.

Such a man was Gregory Petrovich Mysyak. He was a real Christian who did not seek his own, but did everything for the benefit of another person. When you are in prison for life, where the atmosphere itself is filled with the suffering of souls, with pain and hatred, to meet such a person who radiates the love of Christ is a miracle. This is the kind of mercy the Lord has shown in our lives in the life of Brother Gregory. He is one of the first who, with God's help, was able to reach out and connect with those incarcerated for life in Vinnitsa, Ukraine. Brother Gregory with other Christians from the Church of Holy Trinity were able to get permission to meet with those whom the society refused, defining them for life imprisonment. The Holy Scripture says: «Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good» (Rom. 12.21). It was by kindness and unfeigned love that Brother Gregory opened the doors of the hearts of those who were in prison not only prison but also evil. This to an ordinary person is impossible, but all things are possible to a believer in God. There are people who know how to speak beautifully, but God chooses others. Remember, for example, Moses: «Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth» (Num. 12.3). Yet God still acted through Moses and brought the people out of slavery. They gained freedom! The characteristic we see in Moses is what I saw in brother Gregory Petrovich. He lived as how he taught others to live. The actions and deeds of Brother Gregory spoke louder than words.

«Preach always, preach everywhere, preach to all and, if necessary, use words,» this expression Francis Assisi made very precisely expresses the life of Gregory Petrovich. The fact that a church was formed in the prison in Vinnitsa for those sentenced to life — is a victory! And this victory was accomplished by God through man. Who can take advantage of the power and might of the Lord? Only one who in his life

does not get tired of noticing the blessings of God. We have received mercy and blessings from the Lord many times while being in hardships! All of this is because among us was (and still remains living in our hearts) such a teacher as brother Gregory Petrovich Mysyak. We have something to thank God for and rejoice! For such a guardian as Brother Gregory was able to successfully plead to God, so that the roaring lion (Satan) could not absorb our souls. I believe that the growth of our church and its life is the grace of God, pleaded for by Brother Gregory. Verse VII in the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Jews I always associate with the Christian Gregory Petrovich, who became a mentor and

spiritual adviser not only for me, but also for many others whom had received baptism in the prison of the city of Vinnitsa. The maturity of a Christian is determined when he can help others grow in faith. Such a Christian and mentor in my life, was and is (for I want to imitate his faith) our brother Gregory.

«Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct» (Heb. 13.7).

With gratitude to God, brother  
Sergey ROMANOV,  
UIN-1, Vinnitsa, Ukraine.

## HE WAS GOD'S SERVANT

(Recorded memories of our dear brother in Christ, Gregory Petrovich Mysyak)



founded this amazing, needed, and requested magazine.

With your permission, I wish to convey from the pages of «Prisoner» greetings to our dear and beloved brother Yaroslav Mysyak. We are praying for you dear brother — you are always in our hearts. May you be blessed by God!

This verse I wrote in memory of Gregory Petrovich. If you can, publish it in remembrance of him.

### Servant

*Jesus's servant led service,  
Giving life meaning.  
Into peoples' hearts he  
brought light,  
So that we don't fall asleep.*

*Living, he took the narrow path,  
Being a model for us.  
Blessing, he gave love,  
Forgiving, he carried the cross.*

*Without exhausting,  
he brought, he arrived,  
To the heavenly abode  
of the creator.  
The doors open, he comes in  
To the throne of the Lord Jesus.*

*Where Christ Himself crowned  
Crowned a victorious  
grey-hair elder.  
The one who left all a trail,  
From earth leading  
to God's Kingdom.*

God's blessings to all of you and generous donations for «Prisoner»! May the Lord protect you!

Your brother in Christ  
Oleg KULIKOV,  
UIN-1, Vinnitsa, Ukraine.

\* \* \*

May peace be to you and multiply in your hearts from our Lord Jesus Christ. With Christ's love to you, volunteers of «Prisoner», your brother in Christ Vitaly!

It came to my heart to testify to you about men of faith and to reflect more upon this topic. Faith, if alive and furious, leaves a trace. We can see such signs of faith in scriptures: «And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness» (Gen. 15.6). You might say, but where is the result? The result of faith is us — Christians of the whole earth,

Today I want to tell you more about faith and about two men of faith and the «footprints» left behind them. The first man about which I want to talk about is Gashko Pavel Davidovich. When I walked into the cell (I was sentenced a lifetime term), I only had with me a small packet in which were a spoon, cup and a few plates; I had nothing else with me, not even bedding. Brother Pavel met me with friendliness and showed me hospitality. His conversations were in many respects different from the conversations of those prisoners whom I had met. I saw he had a Bible and I really wanted to read it. When I started reading it, Pavel asked me what I understood from what I had just read; I had not understood much. Then brother Pavel began to tell me that Jesus suffered for my sins on the cross and explained even more, much of which I did not know then. Our communications and the fact that we were roommates left a huge impact on my life. In 2011, I repented and chose to walk along the narrow, thorny path that our Lord Jesus chose for us to walk on.

The second man of faith, who left a great example for me, was Gregory Petrovich Mysyak. When, on a false charge, his son was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment, Gregory Petrovich, in fasting and prayer with brothers and sisters, appealed to the Lord that He might help in laying the foundation of the church. The Lord is faithful to His words, as it is written «Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you...» (Mat. 7.7). This is how, by the prayers of brothers and

May the Lord bless all the colleagues working for «Prisoner» and give you all the best! And may He multiply all your donations so that you could distribute the magazine «Prisoner» all over the face of the earth!

With Christ's love, brother  
Vitaly KLAS,  
UIN-1, Vinnitsa, Ukraine.



\* \* \*

Greetings to all the colleagues at «Prisoner»!

Firstly, I would like to give a shout out to our mentor and wonderful brother Gregory Petrovich Mysyak.

How do we determine the significance and influence that a person has on our lives? Of course this is only about man himself. There are people whose names we do not remember, there are those who you do not want to remember, and those whom you will forever remember. Almost every one of us has in our heart a memory of specific people whom we remember with warmth and love. If they are no longer living

Yes, in the Old Testament Jews believed in eternal life after death. This is confirmed by the following facts ...

As you know even before Jesus Christ came to earth in Israel, there were Pharisees and Sadducees — two religious groups with different beliefs. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, nor in angels or spirits. And the Pharisees believed in all this: **Acts 23:8** — *For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, no angel, no spirit; And the Pharisees recognize both.* Most Jews shared the beliefs of the Pharisees and believed in resurrection, angels, spirits and afterlife.

Another proof that the Jews of the Old Testament believed in life after death is Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus, described in **Luke 16:19-31**: *Some man was rich, dressed in purple and fine linen and every day feasted in luxury. There was also a certain beggar named Lazar, who was lying at his gate in scabs and wanted to be fed with crumbs falling from the rich man's table, and the dogs, coming in, licked his scabs. The beggar died and was carried by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. And in hell, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, saw Abraham and Lazarus far away in heaven, and cried out, and said: Father Abraham! Have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in the water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said: child! Remember that*

## QUESTIONS — ANSWERS

### The Belief of Life after Death in the Old Testament Times

*you have already received your good in your life, and Lazarus got evil; Now he is comforted here, and you are suffering; And above all else, a great gulf has been established between us and you, so that nobody can pass from here to you, and from there also they do not pass to us. Then he said, «I beg you, Father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers; Let him testify to them, so that they will not come to this place of torment.» Abraham said to him: they have Moses and the prophets; Let them listen to them. And he said, No, Father Abraham, but if anyone of the dead come to them, they will repent. Then Abraham said to him: If they didn't listen to Moses and the prophets, then if anyone has risen from the dead, they will not believe.*

When Jesus told this parable to the Jewish listeners, none of them was surprised that life would continue after death. None of them reproached Jesus for telling them something new and confusing. On the contrary, this parable was understood by everyone because the Jews knew about eternal life and about the resurrection.

Finally, the story of the resurrection of Lazarus, the brother

of Mary and Martha, testifies to the fact that the Jews believed in the resurrection and life after death. Jesus came to the village of Lazarus after Lazarus died. Notice the conversation between Jesus and Martha, the sister of Lazarus: **John 11:20-24** — *Martha, hearing that Jesus is coming, went to meet Him; Mary was at home. Then Martha said to Jesus: Lord! If You were here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that what You ask of God, God will give you. Jesus said unto her, Thy brother shall rise up. Martha said to Him: I know that He will rise on the resurrection, on the last day.*

Did Martha believe in the resurrection? Yes, this is what her words say: *...I know that I will rise on the resurrection, on the last day.* So, the Jews believed that on the last day — the Day of Judgment — there will be a resurrection of the dead. They also believed that everyone observing the Old Testament Law would be justified.

But Jesus on this day told Martha something new and in the understanding of the Jews completely revolutionary: *I am the resurrection and the life; He that believeth in me, though he was*

*dead, will live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die (John 11:25).* It was the teaching of the New Testament.

Today, most Jews continue to believe, like their Old Testament ancestors, in the fact that on the last day there will be a judgment and the resurrection of the dead. They continue to believe that they can justify themselves before God by the fulfillment of the Law. They still have to understand that it is impossible to justify the Law, *because by the works of the law no flesh will be justified before Him; For by the law sin is known (Romans 3:20).*

You can only be justified by faith in Jesus Christ who paid for our sins with His precious blood shed on the cross: *...having learned that a man is justified not by the works of the law, but only by faith in Jesus Christ, and we believed in Jesus Christ, to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law; For by the works of the law no flesh will be justified (Galatians 2:16).*

No one has ever been justified in the history of human existence and could not be justified by the deeds of the Law. Both in the New Testament era and in the Old Testament times, people justified themselves before God only by faith, and Abraham, the father of faith, is an example of this: **Genesis 15:6** — *Abram believed the Lord, and He imputed it to him for righteousness.*

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

## Dear readers of «Prisoner»!

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

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

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



## PRISONER

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#### Dear readers!

«Prisoner» is distributed free of charge in America (USA, Canada), Germany, Iceland, Czech Republic, Estonia, Moldova, Belorussia, Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. Publication of this newspaper depends on donations. Send your material and financially support the publication of this important newspaper for society.

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Our contacts: [redakciya.uznik@yahoo.com](mailto:redakciya.uznik@yahoo.com) tel.: +380645225707 +380661395801

#### Mailing address in U.S. for the newspaper «Prisoner»:

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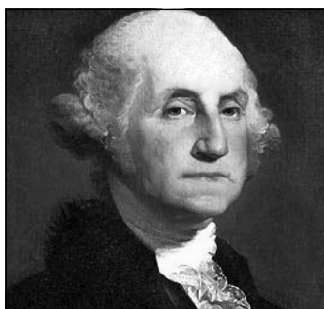
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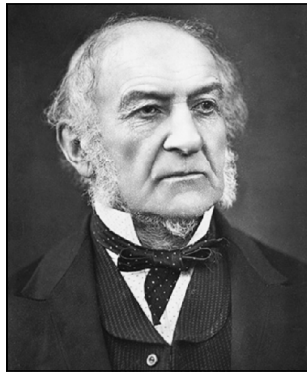
## QUOTES FROM FAMOUS PEOPLE ABOUT GOD AND THE BIBLE

#### George WASHINGTON, 1st US President



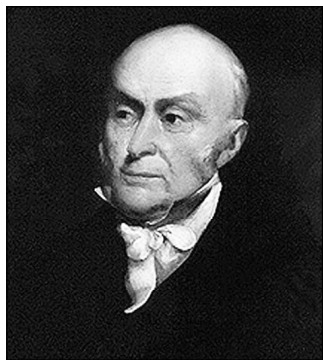
«It is impossible to correctly rule the world without God and the Bible».

#### William GLADSTONE, English statesman and writer



V.E. Gladstone once wrote: «At one time I knew ninety-five outstanding people in the world, and eighty-seven of them were followers of the Bible. The Bible stands out for its origin, and an immeasurable distance separates it from other books».

#### John Quincy ADAMS, the 6th US President, the eldest son of the second US president, John Adams



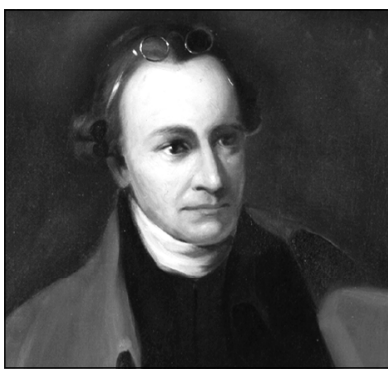
«So great is my respect for the Bible that the sooner my children start reading it, the more I will be faithful that they will become useful citizens of their country and respected members of society. For many years, I adhere to the custom of reading the Bible once a year».

#### NAPOLEON, French commander



«The Bible is an extraordinary book. Bible is the Living Being who conquers all that opposes her».

#### Patrick HENRY, American statesman



Patrick Henry, an active fighter for independence: «The Bible is more valuable than all books that have ever been printed».

#### Horace GRILLI, American journalist, politician, candidate from the Liberal-republican and the Democratic Party in the presidential elections of 1872



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

## ATTENTION!

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

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

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



Hope of Freedom

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

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For prison ministry  For the publication of this newsletter (Prisoner)

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Peter: (425) 346-4945, [petyawa@gmail.com](mailto:petyawa@gmail.com)  
Dasha: (206) 604-4594, [dasha1@uw.edu](mailto:dasha1@uw.edu)

You may also donate online through PayPal at our website [www.hopeoffreedom.org](http://www.hopeoffreedom.org)

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## TO READERS:

Dear brothers and sisters who keep correspondence with the prisoners, many convicted people turn to you through our editorial office with a request to publish their need for envelopes and stamps. Due to the shortage of the above many of them cannot always answer your letters. Please, in order to get an answer to your letter place into your envelope an additional empty envelope together with a stamp.

FROM EDITORS.