



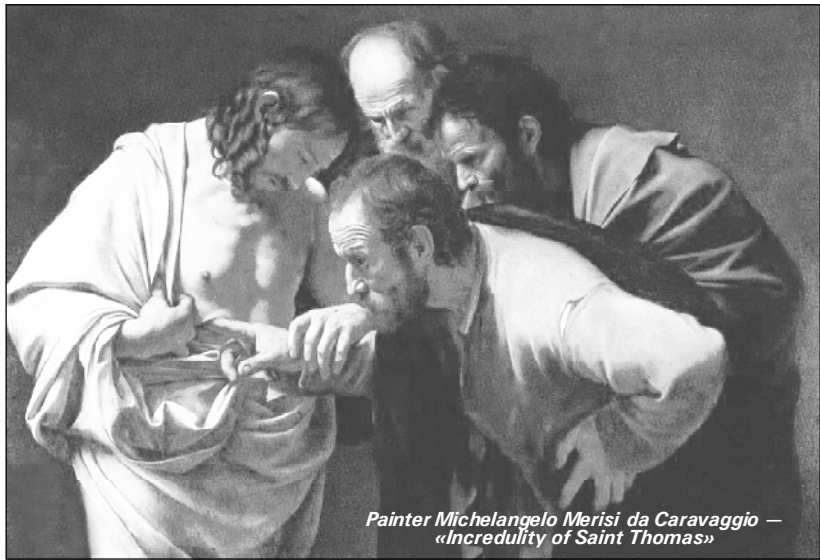
PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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

(John 8:32)

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Painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio — «Incredulity of Saint Thomas»

we do not see» (Hebrews 11:1).

Real joy in faith is in who accepted and opened their heart to the faith, Jesus said about: **«Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed»**. Lord does not call those people «Blessed» in vain. The Scriptures highly stress on the benefit of invisible rather the visible. These words involuntarily cause trembling in the soul, when you understand the deep meaning of them **«And this small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble. For we fix our attention not on things that are seen, but on things that are unseen. What can we see lasts only for a time, but what cannot be seen lasts forever»** (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Faith in the unseen lets us obtain

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed

«Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, «Peace be with you» When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, «Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you». And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, «Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained». Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, «We have seen the Lord». So he said to them, «Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe». And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, «Peace to you!» Then He said to Thomas, «Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing». And Thomas answered and said to Him, «My Lord and my God!» Jesus said to him, «Thomas because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed» (John 20:19-29).

Each time I read about Jesus's response to Thomas, I am thinking about same thing: «How could it be, all of them (apostles) saw the Lord and all the miracles He has done in their presence, but still had doubt in His resurrection. What then to say about today's world, in which most people live in complete faithlessness?»

Comparing to the times of Moses, apostles and today's time, I am more convinced that a person has very little changed in his faith. As then, so now people believe more in things they see, rather than what is temporarily beyond our sight. For example, remember the times of Moses, when people often saw glory of God and His mighty power, but very little time would pass, and people again would start complaining and would begin to worship many different kind of idols.

Life of Jesus Christ, seemed like it would change people's thinking completely and restore their faith, but even here, people's faith including the apostles grew only when they saw miracles and the mighty power from God Himself. Pretty soon people were ready to betray and even deny Him, Whom not long ago they called Son of God and Lord.

Today practically the same is happening among those who call themselves Christians. Most of them trust their spiritual leaders rather than the living invisible God. Most people's faith grows only on visible things, what they want to see or hear. The scriptures clearly describe the nature and meaning of faith: **«Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what**

great reward in eternity. The Scripture says «What no one ever saw or heard, what no one ever thought could happen, is the very thing God prepared for those who love him» (1 Corinthians 2:9).

To believe and come to love the unseen God, to feel His power — is great happiness. God reveals Himself to those who seek Him with all their heart. As is written **«It is by faith that we understand that the universe was created by God's word, so that what can be seen was made out of what cannot be seen... No one can please God without faith, for whoever comes to God must have faith that God exists and rewards those who seek him» (Hebrews 11:3, 6).**

As many times I read the Bible, my heart still rejoices again and again when I read the words of Jesus Christ **«Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed»**.

I wish, these words, being told by Jesus would bring joy not only in my heart, but in the hearts of many other people as well. For faith in unseen God, is not blind faith. For God is real, always living and present everywhere.

To those, who are reading the newspaper «Prisoner» for the first time, I want to say these words: Don't lose your opportunity to obtain real joy, Earthly years pass very quickly and an eternity is after that, and the only way to that eternal life is in Jesus Christ, Who says to us with love **«Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed»**.

I. GORIK.

YOUR LETTERS

Birth of newspaper «Prisoner»



Each time, when I take the newspaper «Prisoner» in my hands, I note, the number of people who read this newspaper and find it useful among many other newspapers. This newspaper is really good, especially for the people who have no freedom.

Today I have an opportunity to talk about sensitive subjects that touch me and express my joy

about people who repented after destroying themselves with sin. «Lord, I was dying, but You revived me and I have been born again!» Educated, and even uneducated people can express themselves in this newspaper «Prisoner».

Who knows how this newspaper began to exist? Perhaps, only a few knew about the idea of the newspapers project, which was in the thoughts of Igor Gorik — the chief editor of the newspaper, the person I know for already 13 years. He is not only educated, but a good person as well. However he, as many other people in the 90s experienced life reconstruction, which resulted in a big tragedy and totally changed his life. Praise the Lord, He has always reached out His hand and saved people, returning to Him from spiritual captivity those, who answered to His call. Igor was one of them, who responded to His call and was saved. Only praise to God, for the past 20 plus years, Igor was able to withstand all the difficulties prisoners experience.

Igor's goal was to help people find and get to know the real God, Who is able to lead any person out of a dead-end situation. Seven long years Igor Gorik nurtured the idea in his heart of establishing an international, independent, Christian newspaper «Prisoner». There have been many obstacles in getting a sample of the newspaper published. Only intensified everyday prayers and purposefulness reached positive results. Already the fourth year «Prisoner» successfully publishes ten thousand copies every edition. Each person can easily get onto the pages of this paper like into his own house. Praise the Lord, that He has heard all the prayers about an opportunity to publish the newspaper «Prisoner».

I would like to wish spiritual, moral and physical strength to the chief editor Igor Gorik and to all fellow workers of the newspaper «Prisoner» to work on God's cornfield with inspiration and joy in the name of the Lord for all people. May God also bless the hearts of all the Christian people for prayer and financial help of this important and necessary publication.

Tamara Vasilyevna SINKEVICH, Nikopol, Ukraine.

YOUR LETTERS

DEAR EDITORIAL OFFICE!

For the pages of newspaper «Prisoner» I would like to Thank Igor Gorik and all his co-workers for their useful, necessary, and blessed work, that they carry out for God and for all the people. I wish for our caring Heavenly Father to continue to give them all the necessary support for a stable and effective work of «Prisoner». Thank You very much for regular delivery of the newspaper individually to prisoners, and Thank you that it comes in sufficient amount enough for all our prison.

Taking the opportunity, through the newspaper «Prisoner» I would like to thank the pastor of prison ministry Sergey Pavlovsky, for ministering in the maximum security unit, where carrying out their punishment are lifetime prisoners. I would like to thank him and all of the church «The Door to Heaven» for the work within these walls.

Александр КУРКАЙ,
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PEACE AND GRACE TO YOU, EDITORIAL OFFICE OF «PRISONER»!

I received the latest issue. How awesome it is, when you read a newspaper full of God's love, to know you are still needed to somebody and somebody loves you. I would also like to sincerely thank God's ministers, brothers: Aleksander Prokopchuk from Donetsk, David Miller from Kiev, Anatoliy Pazkov and Andrey Kurenkin from Simferopol, Michael Pravis from Chernigov. I would also like to express Thankfulness to sisters in God, Lidia and Zinaida from Alexandrovka, Odessa region, and to all who conduct work in the Lord. After all, this good thing is very needed to all of us. With Love in Jesus Christ,

Вячеслав ДМИТРОВ,
ул. Светлая, 2, г. Кривой Рог,
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PROVERBS

Unnecessary Load

One man came to an elder, seeing his kindness, asked:
— You're very wise. You're always in a good mood; never angry. Help me be like this.

The old man agreed to help and requested someone to bring him potatoes and transparent bag.

— If you've ever become angry at someone and hold a grudge, — said the teacher — then take a potato. Write the name of the person with whom you had conflict on it, and place it in the bag.

— And that's all? — The man asked, puzzled.

— No, — answered the old man. — You have to carry this bag with you at all times, and every time you get upset by someone; add a potato into it.

The man agreed. A decent amount of time went by and the bag was filled with potatoes. From the heaviness it was very uncomfortable carrying it. In addition, the potatoes he put into the bag at the beginning, began to rot. Some became covered with slippery nasty bloom, many sprouted, blossomed, and some began to give out a pungent decomposing odor.



Then the man came to the elder and said:

— This is no longer possible to carry. Firstly, the bag is too heavy, and, secondly, the potatoes are rotting. Suggest something else.

But the old man said:

— The same thing happens among humans in their souls. We just do not notice it right away. The actions are transformed into habits, habits — in the character create defects. I gave you the opportunity to observe the entire process from the outside. Every time you decide to take offense or, conversely, to hurt someone, think about whether you need the cargo.

Three Sons

Once a father decided to let his son live on his own. He set apart land for him, gave him bread, cattle, and said:

— Live as I lived, and may you have good luck with everything.

That son left his father and went to live in his pleasure. «Father said I should live like he did, — he thought, — and he lives happily, so will I».

So lived that son and not grieved. Very rapidly he used up his father's funds and started to ask for more, but was ignored by his father. He started apologizing, thinking he may have insulted his father in a way; but still was ignored. Then he began to curse his father and revile him.

— He himself said to me, just live the way I was living, and you will have success in all. You have lived in your own pleasure, and I lived in my own; and now only you have everything, I'm left with nothing. You tricked me...

Soon the father decided to let his second son go. He gave him land, bread, cattle, and said:

— Live as I lived, and may you have good luck with everything.

Soon that son started a separate life. Remembering the fate of his brother he started pondering about the words of his father. He understood that living like his father doesn't mean only seeking pleasure in life. He began his new life in his father's custom and while trying to build his life he asked his father questions which would help him succeed but wasn't getting answers. He became upset and broke all of his father's belongings. Then started asking him for more, but his father ignored him: and this son; just like the first started to curse and revile his father, telling everyone that his father has lied to him.

Finally the father let his third son go and told him:

— Live as I lived and you will have good luck in everything.

Then this son left the house. He pondered a lot about why his brothers didn't succeed in anything. One decided to live for his own comfort — and disappeared. Another did exactly what his father did — and things still didn't work out too well. What is meant by the words of his father? And the third son started to remember what his father did in life. He has given birth to him, took good care, and nourished him as well as his brothers, when he himself wasn't born into this world yet. He has thought them how to distinguish good from evil, and nothing but good from him they saw during their lives.

Suddenly he realized, living like his father means doing good deeds. As soon as he spoke these words both aloud and internally his father came alongside him.

— I see my son, — he said gently, — you understand everything! Now quickly go and tell your brothers and all the people in this world that doing goods to others is the only way to find happiness in life. The son went and told all his brethren, and to all in this world. From that time forward people on earth were happy not because what their father gave, but that they can live like their parents, doing good.

* * *

Visualize the father in this illustration as our Lord, the father's sons as people, and the father's allotment as human life.

Some people expect only enjoyment from life. They live fast, and in the hour of death, when insight comes, they blame God and not themselves. This is the first son.

Other people do not expect fun alone from life. They try to reach great intelligence and make life better than the one that was given to them by the Lord. To achieve anything they cannot, and they are only destroying themselves. This is the second brother.

And there are people who know that God cares for them, wish them only good and doing them only benefit. And God does not leave these people.

<http://www.smisl-zhizni.ru/pritchi>



The question of the meaning of life worries every person, regardless of their social status or financial situation. Philosophers and writers argue over this question. It is asked by men and women. It is sought after by workers and servants. Over time, some muffle it out, alluding to the lack of time or that it does not apply to them — saying it's all for the intelligent people, not for the common folk. Some find excuses for themselves — that the meaning of life is in life itself, its quality, efficiency; some say you need to live for the family, society, people (which in itself is not bad, but somehow incomplete). Everything in this world is temporary, even the human memory, which is actually shorter than we can imagine. We all want to leave at least some trace on this earth. One way or another, *we came from dust and will return to dust*.

So then, do all our efforts to get better, to make this world a better place — turn into a pile of dust? Did people appear by accident, because of some unknown cataclysm? And this planet, according to scientists, will die in time because it is subject to laws which someone has placed in this creation? And according to the first law of thermodynamics, everything in this material world is speeding towards chaos, aging and degradation?

These questions began to worry me in my youth. At school we were taught that we evolved from apes, and are the product of evolution. That we were created by nature and that God — is an invention of the ancient people who because of their underdevelopment tried to somehow explain the phenomena occurring around them. For a certain time these explanations fully satisfied me, but later, questions began to rise. How is it possible nature living by orderly laws came out of chaos? How could it produce itself and come out of nothing? And if it existed forever, why is everything in it is subject to aging and dying? Nobody could answer these questions clearly and intelligently to me, although philosophical «mind wisdom» and hypotheses I heard a lot of.

It was then that I heard about the existence of God from my grandmother. At first I laughed at her and called her «illiterate and obscure». But then for some reason (I realize now that my grandmother was praying for me) I began to think seriously over her words. What if this is all true, and there is Someone Who created the universe, and me in particular? If he did, then He made me for a specific purpose and therefore my existence has a goal. It might be for the moment unknown to me, but He knows.

I was told that the I may receive answers to questions by reading the Bible, which tells the story of God the Creator. But my attempts my attempts to find it were in vain because at that time the Bible was bibliographically a great rarity.

The next push towards the knowledge of the meaning of life, was the death of Alexander Meni. I suddenly discovered that there are people who have dedicated their entire lives entirely to tell others about God and about how one can come to Him and believe in Him. I began to search for the book by A. Meni.

The first of these was the «Son of Man». I swallowed it in one breath. Its description was extraordinarily vivid and clear about Jesus Christ, why He came to this earth, how He lived, died and rose again. Meni urged all to acquaint themselves with the gospel and know the Lord, believe in Him. The desire within me reigned to get a Bible and read it for myself. Finally my wish came true. But to my disappointment, when I first began to read it, from the book of Genesis, I fell asleep on the first page. After a while, I lost interest in it.

Since that time, not a year had passed. Behind was the army with its harsh school of life (and sometimes school of survival). But I still did not abandon attempts to appeal to the unknown God, hoping to get answers to my questions, and often simply help. Sometimes, lying down after lights-out under a thin army blanket, I prayed to Him as I could, in my own words. But life twisted me with its rapid twists and turns; seeking God was not so acute and urgent.

One day, on the bus I met my old friend, Vitaly. He was standing and reading the Bible.

— Are you interested? — I asked him.

— Trying to — with a smile, he said.

— You should stop by sometime — I said.

— Sure, I'll come over today — promised Vitaly.

In the evening he came to my house, holding a Bible.

— On the bus you asked me whether I was interested in the Bible — Vitaly started — and I said that I'm trying. In fact, it has become my life. I know the Lord as my Father and Savior, I took him in my heart and am now born again. Now my life has changed. The love of God filled me and changed my life.

That day, he talked a lot about the fact that God loves me and wants me to know Him personally; He wants to

change my life and the most important thing — God gives me eternal life with Him in His heavenly kingdom only because he loves me like a father. He, in the form of His Son Jesus Christ, ascended for me on the cross, died in agony, and then rose again only to save me from sin and give me a new life.

To be honest, for me it was a shock. I tried to find an excuse, but an inner voice told about the rightness of what I heard. After our conversation, I attempted to talk about it with friends but they said that Vitaly is «sectarian». «He does not drink vodka, does not go to disco clubs, does not curse or swear. And in general is strange, ever-smiling, happy, is he by chance a schizophrenic?!» — a friend of his told me.

«Maybe Vitaly really is a sectarian? If he will pull you into their sect, then never mind trying to remember what your name was, your whole life will turn into hell» — I thought then, and decided to go to our Orthodox Church. Maybe there will I find what I have been long looking for. But when I came there and happened on a service, I did not understand a thing. The whole service was conducted in the old Slavic language, which was the same to me as Japanese. Why and for what reason — I did not understand, although I tried really hard to. Yes and the old women (which was most of the congregation), at my attempt to learn something, hissed at me giving a withering look and saying: «You do not need to understand anything, it is not your business. Stand and take it in». What is there to take in if I don't understand anything?! The priest, at my attempt to speak to him, excused himself that he's busy and sent me to the deacon. The deacon advised that I come more often to church and gave me a Prayer book; which I also could not understand (what is the meaning of prayer written there?) To engage in «chiseling out» prayers, I did not want to. After all, prayer — is communication with God, and how do you communicate through a piece of paper? More so that you absolutely do not understand anything of what is written there!

I continued to go to church, still trying to grasp what was happening there. But my life did not change. Still something tormented me from the inside, and the entire time until the end, I still could not answer my questions.

Then again on my path of life, I met with believers. They were my age, but they had something that was not in my life, something I so badly wanted to obtain. The guys excitedly told me about Christ, so much so passionately that I could not help envy them. For me, God and religion were something dreary, some kind of burden. They are sincerely glad of this opportunity to communicate and talk to me about Jesus. What struck me at the time was their knowledge of the Bible, and especially the enthusiasm with which they read it. One of the believers, Maxim, told me to read the Bible from the New Testament. «The Bible must be read as a book about Jesus Christ, so read the Gospel for starters, and before reading pray to God that He would reveal to you the Scriptures, because it is His book», — said Maxim to me.

Not shelving it, I sat down and read the Gospel. I truly wanted to understand what was written there, and God Himself began to open His Word. My heart has long been waiting for that news, which sounded in the biblical lines. Realization of the full depth of sin overcame me. It turned out that drinking, smoking, stealing — are the consequences of the most important sin: **separation from God**. My «self-dependence», when I scratch Him out of my life living on my own self-will, — is the main sin. But he so loved me that He gave His only begotten Son, that I should not perish but have eternal life (*John. 3:16*). When I realized this, a bitter lump went up in my throat and tears flowed from my eyes. I cried like I did not for a long time in my life. On that day, I asked Jesus Christ to come into my life and be my Lord and the love of God filled my heart. I felt as if a heavy burden has fallen from my shoulders, and my whole being was filled with joy. Then I found peace, peace with God in my life.

Since then, I often talked about what God has done in my life; and the most frequently asked question — is the matter of repentance.

I speak today to those who are reading these lines: forget everything said by people. Forget your fears, do not look at people, look at God and listen to His words: «**I am the way and the truth and the life**» (*John. 14:6*), «**Come unto me, all ye that labor and burdened and I will give you rest**» (*Matt. 11:28*).

Dear friend, if you really want to get rid of the weight of sin, if you are looking for love, understanding and meaning in your life, know that there is One who said, «**I have loved you with an everlasting love**» (*Jer. 31:3*), He who himself is love.

Igor POPOV,
Beryozka, Vladimir region, Russia.



THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

I. Formation of the Third Commandment
The Third Commandment is laid out in **Exodus** and **Deuteronomy**.

Exodus 20:7 — *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain* (KJV; translation used throughout the article).

The Old Testament word used in this commandment, can be translated as:

- pointlessly, in vain;
- Falsely swearing using Gods name.

In order to avoid unnecessary disputes, it should be noted that both are offensive to the Lord:

Leviticus 19:12 — *And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.*

Additional verse:

Proverbs 30:7-9 — *Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

II. How to understand the Third Commandment
What does it mean «to speak the name of God in vain»?

1. Definition. According to the dictionary, the word «vain» means unnecessary, superfluous, useless, senseless and ineffectual.

2. The Third Commandment paraphrased. Thus, you should not use the name of God in a meaningless manner; pointlessly, and to no avail, like it is something unnecessary and useless.

3. A positive reading of the Third Commandment. The Third Commandment can be paraphrased as follows: bear only the name of the Lord consciously, with sincere intentions; in the right (appropriate) context, for a useful purpose.

III. «Do not pronounce the name of the Lord in vain»

1. What is a violation of the Third Commandment?

— **Using the Lord's name as a curse or abuse**, in bad context, cursing someone or wanting evil to someone.

— **Falsely swear by the name of God**, which is an oath by the name of God with intent to deceive, misrepresent facts, or mislead. This is exploiting the name of the Lord. In the Old Testament times, Gods name was considered piety, when a person took an oath in the name of God; it assured the integrity of the person giving the oath.

Deuteronomy 10:20 — *Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.*

In the New Testament, Jesus talked a lot about the commandments, explaining the deeper meaning of each commandment. So, on the Third Commandment, he said: **Matthew 5:33-37** — *Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, **Swear not at all**; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*

Hence, the New Testament tells us not to swear at all: **James 5:12** — *But above all things, my brethren, **swear not**, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.*

— **Violating the promise made to God:** **Ecclesiastes 5:4-5** — *When thou vowest a **vow unto God**, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay*

— **False prophecy** — saying an idea, whose authorship is attributed to God. Why is this a violation of the Third Commandment? Because a lie is accredited to God and his holy name.

— **Religious babble** a reflex to use God's name without a spiritual motive or dedication to the Lord. It is the use of God's name as a word-parasite or to link words. For example, cries like «Oh my God!», «Oh Lord!».

— **Use of the name of the Lord unworthily** (such as magic spells or any kind of divination).

— **Blasphemy**, cursing against God. An example of blasphemy and why it is a sin, are the words from the **Book of Job (2:9)** — *Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? **curse God, and die.***

If you remember, the Jews deliberately tried to accuse Jesus of blasphemy, to put him to death: **Matthew 26:65-66** — *Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, **He hath spoken blasphemy**; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, **He is guilty of death.***

False charges were also filed against Stephen, **Acts 6:11** — *Then they **suborned men**, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.*

— **Empty rhetoric prayer.** In our prayers address the Lord and His holy name, praising the Lord and His name. In order not to violate the Third Commandment, we must turn to the Lord only with a sincere and open heart. Our prayers are not to be deceitful, hypocritical, memorized to be automatically spoken or read. They should not contain similar words and «swelling words of vanity» (**2 Peter 2:18** and **Jude 16**).

The Lord is against hypocritical worship: **Isaiah 29:13** — *Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and **with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men**; **Matthew 15:7-9** — *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But **in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.****

— **Violating the Third Commandment with actions.** When we call ourselves Christians, but do not act as Christ would in a similar situation — is this not the use of the name of the Lord in vain? We are just masquerading as Christians. That is why the New Testament calls us to live worthy of the name «Christian»: **Ephesians 4:1** — *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.*

— **The substitution of the name of God.** When we do not call God by his name and try to call him other names. For example, some people say that Krishna and Buddha — are also the names of God. Isn't this the same as calling Vasya, Peter? I do not think they would like it. Likewise, God does not like being called different names.

— **A person can blaspheme and profane the name of the Lord in what he dedicates to him**, and how he acts with the holy things of the Lord (that is that which the Lord called holy): **Leviticus 22:1-2** — *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they **profane not my holy name in those things which they hallow unto me: I am the LORD**; **Ezekiel 20:39** — *As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD: Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.**

— **When a person rejects the sacrifice of Jesus Christ** or detracts from the identity and role of Jesus Christ, he is breaking the Third Commandment, because it rejects the name of God, whom He revealed to the world as the Savior.

2. Why is it important not to violate the Third Commandment?

A. The name of the Lord is a reflection of His nature and character.

The Lord and His holy name — are inseparable. When we use God's name in vain, we devalue the Lord Himself and what He is.

God is holy and holy is his name: **Psalms 102:1** — *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.* Holy means separated for a special purpose. The Lord is incompatible with sin and empty pointless activities. When one mentions the name of the Lord in vain, they then join a holy God with sinful living.

B. The name of the Lord is access to God and His mercy, grace, and blessings.

Jesus left us his name, saying: **John 14:13-14** — *And whatsoever ye shall ask **in my name**, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing **in my name**, I will do it; **John 16:23-24** — *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father **in my name**, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing **in my name**: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.**

When we use the Lord's name in vain, we deprive ourselves of the blessings which access is opened through the name of our Lord God.

3. How can we avoid breaking the Third Commandment?

A. Is it possible to stop using the Lord's name in vain?
Man is not able to fulfill the law of God on all 100%. This also applies to the Third Commandment.

Firstly, man is limited in his knowledge and understanding of God and therefore is not able to completely understand and realize the greatness and holiness of God and His name.

Secondly, our adoration and worship of God is very far from the perfect worship which the Lord deserves. Thus, it appears that the Third Commandment is not simply one of God's commands but the gracious permission of the Lord to use his name. This permission has a limit, which is defined in the form of the Third Commandment.

B. The relationship, on which the commandments of God are confirmed.

We should not forget what the relationship between God and man are at the heart of God's law. It is a relationship that can be described as a covenant, commitment to the covenant (agreement) with the Lord; as well as respect and love.

Thus, we must use the name of God with love and respect: to extol and praise the name of the Lord (is — a holy reverence, worship). **Psalms 74:21** — *O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name. **Psalms 67:3** Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.*

IV. «The LORD will not leave unpunished»

The second part of the commandment reads: *...for the Lord will not leave unpunished the one who takes His name in vain.* This means that the Lord will surely punish those who violate this commandment.

The use of the Lord's name in vain might seem a harmless thing. What's wrong with that? Is the Lord going to care if we say his name an extra time during a conversation? What's wrong with that?

In fact, if you think about it, using the name of the Lord in vain...

...**Could offend the Lord.** In the New Testament, Jesus Christ told his disciples that the 10 commandments are reduced to two: «Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind» and «Love your neighbor as yourself». The Third Commandment is a reflection of love to God. A man, who loves the Lord with all his heart, would not take the name of the Lord in vain. The use of God's name in vain is an insult to God and is lowly.

...**May impair our relationship with the Lord.** The Lord calls people who blaspheme and dishonor his name, enemies and senseless: **Psalms 74:18** — *Remember this, that **the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name**;*

Psalms 139:19-20 — *Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain.*

Moreover, according to **1 Timothy 1:13**, slandering God and his name is an indication of ignorance (lack of knowledge of God) and disbelief *...was before a **blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious**: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*

...**Can ruin the reputation of God in the eyes of the surrounding people.** **Romans 2:24** — *For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. The Lord commanded to sanctify His holy name: **Leviticus 22:32** — *Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the LORD which hallow you,**

The Lord does not leave unpunished anyone who uses his holy name in vain. And, as we noted earlier, the people who lived in Old Testament times, knew about it perfectly. **Job 2:9** — *Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? **curse God, and die.*** Job's wife advised him how he could quickly end his pain and suffering in this world. She knew that for blasphemy against God, the Lord will put Job to death.

The Lord provided the death penalty for blasphemy: **Leviticus 24:10-16** — *And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp; And the Israelitish woman's son **blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed.** And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:) And they put him in ward, that the mind of the LORD might be shewed them. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever **curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.***

An example of how the Lord will not leave unpunished people who violate the Third Commandment of God's law, is described in **2 Samuel 21:1-2** — *Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites. And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel **had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them** in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.*

God punished the Israelites because they violated their oath of truce with the Gibeonites.

God's Word warns us that the Lord does not leave without penalty those who detract from God's name. At the same time, the Lord grants mercy to repentant sinners. An example is what the Apostle Paul said of himself in **1 Timothy 1:12-17** — *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a **blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious**: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

On the example of Paul, we see that converted sinners not only cease to profane and blaspheme the name of God, but, on the contrary, begin to praise God and to exalt his name among the people, proclaiming the Lord to unbelievers: **Acts 9:15** — *But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.*

This is something that all Christians are called to — to proclaim the Lord's name on all the earth, that is, to be witnesses of Christ: **Acts 1:8** — *...But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

This is the fulfillment of the Third Commandment.
This article for the newspaper «Prisoner» was kindly provided by the Bible Discussion Club Montreal, Canada
<http://www.cogmtl.net/Articles/101.htm>

In the present day, the word «prison» has become an everyday word for many citizens. However, the attitude toward those who are there does not change. Society looks with contempt at those people who are serving a sentence, or coming out of jail to freedom. In most cases, prisoners, current and former, remain outcasts in society. To put it mildly, the society does not want to «dirty itself» by getting to know current and former prisoners. Prejudice and contempt of society to these people makes them even more cruel and tough than they already are. The so-called righteous hate the wicked, the latter, in turn, answer in kind. To this day, that fire of hatred continues to burn between people.

Today, I once again want to remind of the words of the Bible, which say: **«Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall».**

Unfortunately, many people now, as before, do not think about the fact that everything in this life could drastically change. If today you do not know what prison is like, there is no guarantee that you will not find out tomorrow...

No person will willingly want to go to jail. However, not always can a person anticipate and protect themselves from the risk of certain circumstances. Statistics show that in prisons are not only hardened criminals, including murderers and maniacs, but also many people who are serving sentences for crimes committed under extremely extenuating circumstances. And quite a significant percentage of people spend their lives in jail on falsified cases. It's safe to say that at one time these people, as well as many now, ironically referred to that dictum: **«From prison and from begging do not forswear...»** But it's true, because a person does not always know where they can stumble and fall. And because it sounds trite, society neglects such warnings. Incarcerated people should not be treated by society as some kind of scum. Even toward the most hardened criminals Christians must have love. For the Lord teaches: not only to love our enemies but to forgive, bless, and pray for them (Lk. 6:27-28). And if God Himself forgives all sinners, then how do we look in the eyes of God, when we look with scorn toward those who served or are serving their sentence in prison?

Why have people formed a stereotype that anyone who has been in prison or in jail, is just a goner? Why such hostility to these people?! And what has every one of us done to make our society cleaner? Why is there such a high percentage of crime everywhere?

To answer this and other questions, I want to disclose in parallel with the above, a problem on a global scale really, to which, unfortunately, many people are indifferent. But all that is happening in human society, is more like what goes on in a shelter for the mentally ill, who have lost not only their common sense, but also their human identity. No technical progress is able to compensate for the degradation that affects all of present day human society. Distraught humanity stands on the edge of a bottomless abyss.

Worldwide there is an unsubstantiated struggle against drugs, banditry and other criminal activity, which is called crime. But with all this effort, not only is crime is not to eradicate; no one can even reduce it. Perhaps today we live in a period of the most sophisticated evil, which manifests itself in the form of global crime, which is like a plague that affects all human society.

Crime becomes like a contagious disease, unilateral and infecting society with no hope of recovery. Today, through prisons and jails go hundreds of thousands of people. Soon, perhaps, there will be no family who would not have been affected by the troubles of prison. Maybe not directly, but indirectly this tragedy concerns many families. And the main tragedy is that this trouble does not affect just adults — this trouble also affects the younger generation, and those who are still children. What do they see, read, and learn from us adults?! Perhaps my words seem a bit harsh, but it is impossible to state it otherwise; society has ruined their

culture and their language completely. Today people's language has converted to and is made up of slang words. Nowadays the media has bared itself and, accompanied by sounds of music, openly promotes sin. Celebrities and films with great pleasure replicate the sinful world, and actors readily agree to film in those movies where they need to portray «cool» guys — thieves, murderers, prostitutes and other baggage of this sinful world, thereby, wittingly or unwittingly, raising the characters to the rank of romantic heroes. Of course, you can say that this work purposefully exposes sin in all its filthiness. But then the question arises: why is it that after watching these TV shows, movies and reading such literature, even more people want to sin? Is it a secret that in the present day, television, bookstores and the Internet is completely clogged with filth and crime; including endless murder,

prisons and jails? Does anyone really believe that, cutting criminals off from society by a high fence and prison, you can thus get rid of the crime and sin? Why is no one interested in the reality that actually happens in captivity? For example, who is interested in how people live behind prison bars, what they think, and what they seek? «Well, a good-for-nothing is incarcerated, then let him stay there, he must deserve it!» That's precisely how the bigger part of our society thinks, because the government itself reassures people that they quickly change criminals by putting them behind bars and in jails. It's a pity that no one even thinks about why it is in prison specifically that criminals form even more cruelty and hatred toward society.

Regarding prisons and jails many different books are written, and many movies and documentaries are filmed. However, in reality, society knows almost nothing about these real people,

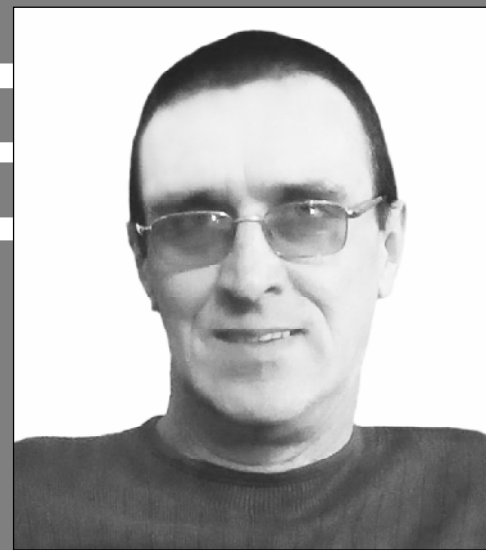
influence of life in prison. Not everyone reaches these prison walls already a hardened felon. Unfortunately, they become one here. The violence and anger they develop is not due to the fact that people there do not have property or a normal life. No. All the severe difficulties faced by the people in prisons are not the cause of the anger that they form, while living there. The reason lies elsewhere.

Any man by nature has a need from time to time to pour out his soul to someone; to openly express all the pain that has accumulated over a certain period of time. This need is particularly characteristic of those who fall under family scandals, cheating, betrayal, and very nasty situations. After such stresses a person simply needs to pour out his soul to discharge from negative energy. And only after that a person regains new energy. For as they say in such cases: «The boulder fell off my soul» (a Russian saying that means a heavy

FROM PRISON AND FROM BEGGING DO NOT FORSWEAR...

(a Russian saying that means one can never be sure of
never needing to beg, nor of never being in prison)

«Therefore let him who thinks he stands
take heed lest he fall» (1 Cor. 10:12)



horror, violence, drool-inducing erotica and pornographic material that could easily pass for a textbook for future sinners (criminals)? The proposed list of such «culture» and «fun» is now very high in many circles of society. But it is by the level of culture in a society, specifically, that the health of a nation can be judged.

In one well-known film, an actor (no less famous) uttered the true phrase: «the thief has to be in prison!» And that is fair, for every crime needs to be punished by law. However, if we look at the problem deeper, in reality that is not enough. Imprisonment without spiritual repentance — is a meaningless reformation of people and, therefore, an absolutely worthless use of budgetary funds. A prison or jail must be something like a hospital (of course, in a figurative, and good way), where a person could change not only physically, as is commonly believed, but also be healed spiritually; to be released healthy and useful to society. Undoubtedly, it needs to be so, and so we would prefer it to be. However, the reality is far from it. Most prisoners do not get spiritually healed, but even acquire more skills of this sinful world while incarcerated. Along with these skills, inmates form hatred and brutality towards the entire society. What's the point of parole supposedly for good behavior that yearly lets out hundreds of thousands of people to freedom? After all, of these people, only a small percentage remains free and returns to a normal life. All of the others, if not immediately, but fairly soon, return to prison, and usually with good «trailer» of novices who are immediately plunged headlong into prison rules and completely inhuman thinking...

Today in society it has become popular to do multiple parodies on the stage of the so-called new Ukrainians and Russians. Is it really funny?! After all, we laugh at our own grief and over our misfortune, from which we cannot get rid of and, do not have the strength to end. Why is this happening; crime grows and progresses, and the society although afraid of it, still continues to laugh, when it's no longer even funny?

Why is the society so indifferent to what goes on behind the walls of

or rather society simply does not want to know about them, and generally despises them. The world behind prisons and jails, in fact, is cursed and rejected by society. On one hand, it is presented as something cool (in movies), and on the other hand, it is shown only as the world of serial killers. But in fact, prison is a world tragedy! Therein reside people of all classes and of all ranks; professors, teachers, workers, politicians, homeless, artists, actors, priests and doctors... and the list goes on. Of course, the circumstances and sentences are different for everyone, but there is just one thing that unites them all — disobedience to God's commandments.

And as long as the world lives on in a global lack of spirituality, no one will be immune from prison. And just how can spirituality and culture be revived, if the majority of people are completely characterless, and with great pleasure pick up and imitate the talentless nonsense that comes out of the walls of captivity?

It is simply astounding; laws are created and updated each year in any government, but in society, nothing has changed with respect to crime and its consequences. What is going on?! What is the weakness of politics and power? Everywhere the desire to change and improve their society is discussed, but for some reason, beyond these words, progress is never made. Although how can positive changes be made to society, if the daily advertising of sin seeks to affect the consciousness of mankind through films, literature, Internet and etc.? In the end society receives what public authorities don't prevent. I am personally convinced that any government policies that are not based on Biblical laws — are a complete madness, entailing both physical and spiritual destruction of a society. Unfortunately, not one committee, checking these institutions, will ever be able to learn about the real lives of people in jails and prisons. Reports and statements on paper — are one thing, but reality is quite different.

The fact is that it is easier to protect a person who just got incarcerated from evil at the very beginning, when they still have a normally functioning mind, and have not fallen fully under the

burden was lifted). That is exactly what happens with those people who, for one reason or another (including their own folly) are incarcerated.

When I did not know what prison was, I always thought that those in it were very strong-spirited people. But it turned out quite differently. There are physically strong people, but strong in spirit I have met very few. This is the reason why people quickly fall under the influence of prison life, under its laws and regulation

One has only to analyze any rebellion organized by prisoners to soon understand that all of these people acted on the basis of a pack (group), where one went (or does), there go others. Why is that? Because an imprisoned person has no hope that he is still needed by someone other than his «brothers». Crossing the threshold of prison, a person is deprived of not only freedom, but also the right to speak up. Although many people who become imprisoned still hope that they can change and help save others who live in freedom. Very many people want to pour out their souls, and not just on the shoulder of their cellmate, but openly and publicly in front of people out there, in free society. But who listens to these people and who needs them? This is precisely one of the main reasons why prisoners become so embittered against society, they realize that no one needs them. That's when they turn their backs to society and begin to live only by the laws and regulations that apply in prisons (not meaning the formal laws, but those that govern relations and hierarchy between inmates). Can such a person change for the better? Of course not, to remain a normal person and choose the right path in prison is difficult; only very few manage to do so.

To teach evil and brutality in prisons is not necessary. All this is acquired in jail very quickly, especially when these people are simply ignored, or rather are not treated as people. As a result, the government and society get what they strive for...

Long-term observations give us a right to fully say that people who are imprisoned do not have any positive role models or anyone they consider an authority to themselves out of those who

are free and not imprisoned. Free society and the world behind barbed wire are such strangers to each other, that when they meet, the people who are free show aversion to the prisoners and the prisoners bare their fangs towards the aversion, if you will. Society strongly wishes to get rid of crime, but not only is crime not declining, it actually brings its habits into this society (the habit to steal, to use prison slang, etc.).

The question arises: Is it possible to change the consciousness of people and prisoners and actually reduce crime in society?

Of course it's possible, if a prisoner comes out of prison feeling that they have an identity as a person, and are needed in society.

The fact is that society has not only isolated from themselves violators of the law, but also deprived them of having any freedom of expression and of the implementation of their views and thoughts. Every prisoner feels like an outcast and the dregs of society. It is this feeling that begins to form into malice and cruelty in inmates and stays with the majority of them when they are released.

Convicts have no role models and ideals that may have come from the world of freedom (outside of prison). The main role models are themselves. No literature, no social and psychological services or anything else that was brought from the outside, is able to plant the seed that would bring forth the necessary and useful fruit in prisoners. Here, only the prisoners themselves can produce a positive revolution in the environment of the underworld.

In 2012, we presented the first issue of «Prisoner». This project was begun so every prisoner could freely express their thoughts and to share them with the public creatively implementing their feelings according to the theme of the newspaper. As you know, this newspaper has a purely Christian direction. The name «The Prisoner», has nothing to do with criminal concepts. The Prisoner, and the main figure of all in this newspaper is our Lord Jesus Christ. It is specifically He, whom humanity had not spared and crucified on the cross, who occupies a central place in this newspaper. «The Prisoner» is based on two main commandments: «love your God» and «love your neighbor».

Thank God, that today, because of the newspaper «Prisoner», a large number of people have come to Christ. After reading the newspaper «Prisoner»; many former prisoners carry on prison ministries in prisons and jails today. As of today, the newspaper «Prisoner» is published in two languages (Russian and English) and printed not only in Ukraine, but also in America. It has spread over many countries of the world to its tens of thousands of readers.

The project of the newspaper «Prisoner» truly made a revolution in the environment of the underworld. There are many former drug addicts and crime bosses, who, thanks to «Prisoner» have come to God, and in the present day work in the field of God, preaching the gospel in prisons and jails. Unfortunately, they cannot meet with all the inmates, however, through the newspaper, «Prisoner» we can openly say their names by publishing their testimonies about their revival to set an example to others.

In conclusion, I would like to appeal to all free citizens, or rather — to the whole human society: **please, do not neglect those people who are in bondage (jail or prison). Give people a chance at rehabilitation. For the Lord himself «...frees prisoners from shackles... hears the poor and doesn't neglect prisoners... For he has looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to free those that are appointed to death...» (Ps. 67:7; 68:34; 101:20-21).**

I think that it will be useful for all of us to remember what the apostle Paul said: **«Remember the prisoners, as if you were with them in chains...» (Heb. 13:3).**

I don't justify any prisoner (except for those who do not sit for their own crimes). However, I'd like to tell everyone the following words: **It is not crime we need to fear, but our complete indifference and attitude to this problem. For not in vain did someone say: «From prison and from begging do not forswear...»**

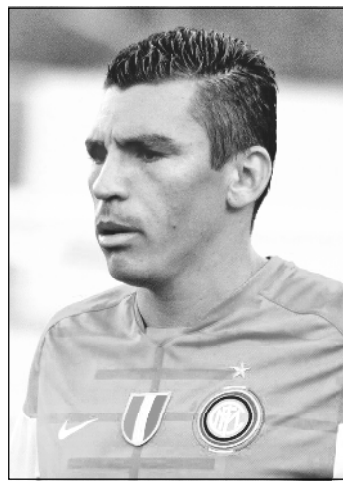
I. GORIK.

When he first took part in the international championship, he said: «To put the uniform of the national team of Brazil — has always been a dream».

From a young age, my mother would take me to church; my understanding and experience speaking with God grew. That's when my life completely changed. I did not have a disciplined life, nor had high self-esteem. All of that changed once I met Jesus personally. Today I not only want to go through life with God, but also with His help I want to achieve my dreams. I am grateful to God for the goals that I scored. I do not go on the field to score goals, I am the defender, I have other functions, but sometimes I

get a chance to score. When I get the chance, I am glad that I can help my team.

The Bible plays a crucial role in my life... It has beautiful words: **«Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth**



his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper» (Psalm 1:1-3). These words influenced me in time during my life. I also studied the Bible and felt God's protection on me. I think that in the life of a professional soccer player, and in other professions, it is important to know that there is only one safe way; it is Jesus Christ.

<http://joyouslife.ucoz.ru/publ/2-1-0-5>

SHORT LIFE STORIES OF FAMOUS PEOPLE

I grew up in East Germany and had the honor to be the goalie of the national team GDR in the Olympic Games and other international competitions. Like all of the inhabitants of East Germany, I remember very well the feeling of loneliness and emptiness that we experienced while under the communist regime. But in the capitalist world of the West, people are looking for something that would fill their inner emptiness

me and push me to seek God.

A few months later, I met with the Brazilian goalkeeper, a devote Christian. He always carried Christian literature and the Holy Bible. He would often give the material to the captain of rival teams when wishing the players best of luck. This is how I received my first Bible.

Sometime later, when our team was on the 10-day training camps, I was able to read the Bible and

Jesus is alive, and I'll be with Him forever!



that would give their life meaning.

I came to the realization that to know what truth is, is to go to the One who is Truth itself. Just as the fall of the Berlin Wall reunited East and West Germany, Jesus can destroy the wall in our hearts that separates us from God.

In 1991 I played for «Dinamo» (Dresden, East Germany). After playing in several games, In the hotel, a player from a different team was telling me about Jesus, but I didn't want to hear it. I got angry and said, «Jesus had access to our country for 2000 years, now it is the turn of the communists». Little did I know that his words would greatly influence

read it all — from cover to cover. What struck me the most was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I remember that I then thought, «This Jesus the greatest deceiver of all time, or he is the biggest truth». I was tormented by guilt before God, but I was not ready to believe in Jesus Christ...

I began to attend bible studies to learn more about God. My friends in the group noticed my inner turmoil and the chaos that reigned in my soul. They advised me not to set away my problems, but to turn to Christ for relief from suffering.

I bent down on my knees by my bed and prayed, «Jesus, if you really do exist, then do something with me do whatever you want!» This simple prayer was the beginning of the miracle! «Resurrection» has become a reality for me. I will not say that I understood everything immediately, but then, as now, I have become convinced that Jesus is alive, and I'll stay with him forever!

Rene MULLER,
<http://www.yesheis.ru/rene-muller-iisus-zhiv-i-yas-nim-budu-prebyivat-vechno>

Fred Higgins – Captain Biker

At age 12, he was expelled from Boy Scouts for smoking. As a teenager, Higgins was in a motorcycle gang, was a drug dealer and worked as a bouncer in a bar. He was involved in various criminal cases.

«If you do not like my appearance today, you ought to have seen me then» — said Higgins.

At age 15, he responded to the call to repentance in the church «Assembly of God», but he only abandoned his former lifestyle after a few years.

«Many people have sown seeds in me before I began to bear fruit» — he said.

Eventually Higgins not only surrendered his life to Christ, but also responded to the call to serve. He served as pastor of a church, he again began to drive a motorcycle but with no intention to return to the lifestyle of bikers.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Higgins felt the doors open to the community of bikers. In 2003, Higgins was the chaplain, of «Assembly of God» among bikers in the southeast of the state of Georgia. Because of his past, he was quickly accepted into their ranks. «But knowledge of the culture does not mean knowing all the answers. I must pray every day: «God, I do not know how to do it, you have to show me», — he says.

Higgins returned to that environment feeling welcomed.

«If you are prone to criticism and condemnation, you will not be friendly to bikers in society. — said Higgins. — I'm just trying to bring them closer to God».



As a result of his ministry each year hundreds of bikers pray the prayer of repentance. From my own experience, I know that this prayer may not lead to an instantaneous change. Higgins holds consultations on various issues helps control outbursts, gives advice about premarital relationships, weddings and funerals to those members of the community of bikers, who do not have a pastor.

«The purpose of my actions — is to preach the Gospel — said Higgins, which I do most of the time in the states of Florida and Georgia. — I have a pastoral approach. Week after week, I watch their lives; I try to see them as often as possible».

Higgins maintains relationships with a number of clubs, hundreds of bikers, but has the ability to reach thousands across the country, since they already know about him in other states. He won their trust, because bikers know that he is real. «If you want to reach the lost, you have to be where they are», — says Higgins.

<http://afmedia.ru/lichnost/08052013-2119/fred-higgins>

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

Aleksander KASHO

My name is Alex. I was born and raised in the city of Odessa. As a young boy I was athletic, and liked to play soccer. It was easy for me and so I became good at it. I visited the sports section; and like many boys age 14, I dreamed of becoming a soccer player. In one instant, the curiosity and the influence of older friends pushed me to commit an unwise act — I tried drugs. At first it looked like self-indulgence, but soon I began to take psychotropic pills. When I was 15 I tried drugs for the first time, and I became addicted.

However, I continued to play soccer, and in 1982 I was called to serve on a sports team. After serving, I returned to my hometown, and got a job as a soccer coach. After a while I met with my former friends, all of whom had continued to use drugs. Spending time with former friends again, brought me back to my old habits.

For 22 years the use of narcotic drugs forced me to have treatment multiple times, I was sentenced six times. Every time I said to myself: «That's enough! I'm sick of it!» — and still I returned to my former way of life.

In 2001 I met Galina; and in 2004 — we registered our marriage. Together we drank alcohol and did drugs.

As a result of intoxication I spent five days in a coma, I was diagnosed with «hypoxia». On the sixth day, I regained consciousness. This experience scared me greatly, and I wanted even more to stop doing what I was doing and start a new life.

I once met a longtime friend with whom I previously did drugs with. To my surprise, he was nicely dressed and had shining smile. He told me about a Christian rehabilitation center, where he got freedom from drug addiction. After hearing his story, I decided to go to rehab. Within three months of the course I got freedom from drugs and got complete healing. My wife, Galina, also took a course of rehabilitation. We believed in God, and our family received a long-awaited completeness, harmony and happiness.

Nothing makes us more miserable than the belief that we do not deserve love. Drug addicts are usually despised by society. But there is someone capable to outcast the fullness of love, revive it, pick, it up and give complete healing. It is God.

In 2007, I graduated from a training course for leaders of rehabilitation centers. In the same year I was appointed assistant of the leader of the rehabilitation center «Truth» in the Novosyolovka village, Odessa region.

In 2008 I graduated from a Christian school for leaders, and in 2009 I went on a mission to the Novokarbovka village Odessa region, where I opened a Christian rehabilitation center «New Jerusalem».

In 2010 I graduated from pastor and missionary school with united Christian churches.

In 2011 We opened a church in the Novokarbovka village in which my wife and I carry pastor and missionary service.

Ukrainian family Kasho



In 2011 I entered the International Christian University «Vision» with the specialty of

«theologian». In 2013 I was ordained a pastor. Glory and praise God for all!

Galina KASHO

My name is Galina. I was born in Odessa, in an ordinary family — mom, dad, brother and grandmother. When I was five years old, my father left us.

At school, I had no interest in socializing with peers. Instead I wanted to earn friendship and respect from older boys, and to live like them. Already from age 14 I started smoking and drinking. Immediately after I graduated from school, I was convicted for theft. Coming out of prison, I went to a trade school, and earned a secondary education. At age 20, I started using drugs. Because of this, I was sentenced two years in prison.

Freed from prison, I came home to my mother and told her that I

could not live like this anymore, but nothing changed. I married, lived with my husband for four years. Alcohol linked and at the same time destroyed our relationship — we drank, swore, and even fought. The thirst for change led me to work in a female monastery, but, despite discussions with religious people, I had severe binges, I could not control myself. Soon after my brother died of alcoholism. Forty days past, my mother died of cancer. I with even greater zeal took up alcohol, full of grief. After some time I met Alexander, and in 2004 we got married. Alcohol was put aside; a new relationship gave me hope for change. But after a

year together, we began to take drugs and drink alcohol. I once again got stuck with sin.

One day, because of obfuscation, I was taken to an institution for the mentally ill, I stayed there for two weeks. This event was a turning point in my life. After leaving the hospital, I flat-out refused drugs, booze and cigarettes. I decided to change.

And then came the bright day of our lives. A friend, who told us about Jesus Christ, about how Jesus changed his family, invited me with my husband to a Christmas celebration in the church «Awakening». After receiving the invitation, I was very happy. At the church, I asked God for forgiveness and on the same day I went to a rehabilitation center «Truth» at the Novosyolovka village. Having a full course of rehabilitation, I received a long-awaited freedom. And I wanted to help those who were confused (as I once was) — and to help them find the right path, overcoming setbacks and errors. In 2007, I was trained for the rehabilitation of people with drug and alcohol addictions, as well as counseling my own relatives who were dependent on alcohol and drugs.

In 2009, my husband and I went on a mission, served in a rehabilitation center «New Jerusalem» in the Novokarbovka village. In 2011, we opened a subsidiary, a church called «Awakening».

All glory is to the Lord for His healing and His love for me. I appeal to all who have not yet reconciled with Jesus: with God, is better than without him. You have no way to compare, but I have. I deeply regret the former life I led without God. And every day I thank Jesus for a new life!

Rustam FATULLAYEV

My heart was hardened at the world as a child. In school, I realized that life is not as beautiful as teachers make it seem.

I grew up in Azerbaijan, in Baku. After my father died (I was 13 at that time) I have firmly grasped that I must be able to stand up for myself. I remember a time when I had a fight with some older boys and they tried to put me onto my knees. According to our culture and understanding, it is a strong humiliation to be forced onto one's knees, but they could not force me, and eventually I was badly beaten. Since then I have sworn to never, in front of anyone, drop to my knees.

As a teenager, I began to seriously engage in karate. Later, when I moved to study in Kiev, I had been part of the national team of Ukraine. Along with success in sports has come understanding: that in order to have a high position and be respected in society, being a good fighter is not enough. And then I really wanted to become rich.

Nearby there were people who wanted the same thing: the athletes, ex-prisoners. We organized in groups, and found people who earned a lot of money in a semi-criminal manner, and with the help of force, and arms, we offered them to «share». It was the time of birth, of racketeering in our country. I thought that thousands of dollars would make me confident in myself. But I soon realized how wrong I was... It was a hoax. At that time, I had hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash. They were at home in a shoe box, and I did not know what to do with it. I already had all that money could

buy, but expected happiness money never gave, but only emptiness inside. On top of permissiveness the emptiness grew and became unbearable. One night I could not sleep. I was thinking about life and about who I really am. Around me was nothing but evil. I saw how people betrayed their families for money, left collateral relatives, and fled. Neither in money, nor in me was what I was looking for: kindness, sincerity, love... I was tormented by the question: is this really all that is

80%. I was asked to tell my testimony, but I was silent, thinking that they wanted to put me onto my knees...

Sometime later I was released. I was no longer the tough guy, that many envied, and many fought to equal.

I no longer had the desire to strive for something. At age 25, I realized that's it, it was the end. And no one: neither relatives nor doctors — could help me. I injected myself with huge doses of drugs. Pierced all my veins: on the neck,



given to us in this life? If life is given to us, just for us to try to reach some kind of mirage, then it doesn't matter when it ends, whether right now or in 50 years? What is the meaning of life?

It's time to collect the «harvest». Along with wealth in life were drugs. In the winter of 1997 employees of The Security Service of Ukraine went out against me. During the arrest, I got a serious spinal injury, kidney hematoma was

hands... Body temperature never fell less than 39° C (102.2° F). I could not sleep nights in a row, and when dawn came, I asked God this question: why have you given me another day to live? I hate my life and do not want to live... in an empty room, I knelt down and began to cry aloud to Him Who I did not know. Fortunately, I was then heard...

One day my mother, who already goes to an evangelism



church, led to our home some believers. They were talking about some kind of salvation, but I didn't even try to listen because I had already crossed out my life. But something in their words impressed me. They seemed sincere. When these people left, I called my mom and said, «Give them money». See, I prayed for the repose of my soul — now I have to pay. And she says: «They do not take money!» I said: Mom, I know people — they will always take money... the believers — did not take any, and it struck me.

After that prayer, I felt better. I started to climb out of bed and agreed to mother's proposal to go to church.

At first, people at church seemed very strange. But in them I saw what I could not find in money, nor power, nor authority, or entertainment. It was the spark of life in their eyes. From where? Where do they get this?.. Then I remembered that I had it. Long ago, in my early childhood, when I would wake up in the morning, I rejoiced and believed that

everything in life was going to be ok. If only I could be like a kid again!

This idea came to me during one of the visits to the church. After it came another: you'll never live like these people, you will never change, because you're used to living differently.

Right then I decided that I will not come here anymore. But I thank my Lord Jesus Christ that right on that day he touched my heart and I repented my sins, deciding to start life with a clean slate. Now, I did not care what people said. I discovered God as an identity, and he held out his hand for my salvation.

Since then I have completely stopped using drugs. God healed me and put in my heart a great desire to find a way to help the miserable as I once was.

Today Rustam Fatullayev — a loving husband and father of three children. Leads the department of social service, Churches of Evangelical Christians in Ukraine, and is the pastor of the church «The Tabernacle» (Kiev).

Kiev, Ukraine.

After surgery for eight stab wounds around my heart, I woke up in the hospital room surrounded by police escort. The first question I asked myself was, «Why did God spare the life of a murderer?!» The question was raised by me strongly, because after realizing my sinful state; I did not want to continue living. However, God clearly showed me that my life is in His hands.

Before then, my life was completely normal and included school, army, family, and work. I started my family life during a crisis; the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Changing from one place of work to another, I couldn't financially support my family, and theft seemed to be the easiest way for me to support my family. Soon after, theft became not only a common activity, but also a habit, and even mastery. I practically lived for this unlawful income and almost every new theft gave me a daring thought: «Someday I'll steal a million and my life will improve immediately».

Restoration of the country created great difficulties for many people, and people started sharing more often, not experiences in life, but how they earned large sums of money in various illegal ways. So for thieves such as I, such talk was stimulus for the next act. Either my financial need, or the smell of money, whatever it was, draw me to bigger deeds. Forgetting about my lovely family, wife and son, I, ignoring my conscience, agreed to a contract murder. This was the beginning of the end. I committed a double murder. After the second offense, I wanted to shoot myself using the same weapon I used for killing, but the devil wanting more blood-shed, deceived me again. He gave me the idea that I cannot leave life without leaving something for my family. And I, taught by the devil to build happiness on the misfortunes of others, went for another murder.

In today's world of entertainment, pleasures and sin, it is hard to find a person who would help you in doing good. On the other hand,

Victor OGUZBAEV

for any unlawful deed you can find not only partners, but also masters, which I became in the one and a half years of my criminal activities.

I grew up in a big family with ten siblings; seven brothers and three sisters. I passed survival school early, but murder in my life was a novelty. A life of crime dictated its own, and even during the day I would carry a pistol with a silencer, with which I could threaten anyone who could have gotten in my way. But no matter how long it would take, the end would come. Murdering a young family for money, where a little girl was left as an orphan, ended up with the attempted murder of myself. My accomplice fell under the suspicion of police, and to escape suspicion, he decided to get rid of me also; to put all the fault on a dead person. Cut up with a knife like a pig, in the left area of my rib cage, I ended up on the operating table and survived. I spent long nights of solitary confinement with questioning thoughts, «How did I fall so low and became a murderer?» and, «Why did God spare my life?»

I didn't know anything about God at that time; I only had a general understanding of a Creator of all, I didn't know anything else. Like any other person, in minutes of despair and no strength, I was trying to find answers to a lot of questions. Pacing kilometers from corner to corner in my cell, my attention fell right on a Bible given to me by my older brother, which was waiting for the moment I would finally open it. And it happened. The first thought that came to me was: «I will definitely read the Bible and figure it out». I clearly understood that only the Bible would give me the answers to all of my questions. The first thing that I learned from it was not only that I was a sinner for my crimes, but also a sinner by nature, which I inherited from Adam (the first person on earth). Perhaps that evil that was in me lead me to become a murderer. Though through His Holy Word God clearly said to my heart that **«...God does not take a life, but has devised plans so that the outcast is not cast out from Him»** (2 Samuel 14:14 MKJV), **«yes, for the rebellious also, that You might dwell among them, O Jehovah God»** (Ps. 68:18 MKJV). and furthermore **«For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost»** (Mathew 18:11 MKJV).

After reading those words, my heart was puzzled for some time for I am a murderer and am not worthy of anything except death. Nevertheless, God was continuing to guide me on the path of His Holy word. Through the gift of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, here I am ten years into my imprisonment and He is leading me, for I am cleaned and redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Woe is to me now if I will not be evangelizing to all about this blood of Christ that saves us from all. To become a slave of God in these cell walls of life imprisonment, is like an award to me, for I am worthy of nothing.

Addressing God in my prayers for the protection of my son, I heard in my heart God's words, «I also have sons, and they are all around you. I will protect and save your son, but you will save souls here in prison. You will help all my lost sons know my love and patience, so that they will be saved also». Therefore I evangelize within these walls. Seeds of God's words are being planted in the souls of lost children. For God's word will not return in vain. I believe that all, who believe in Jesus with faith, will be snatched from this hellfire and will reach heaven, the place of everlasting peace and joy.

Today, after walking with the Lord for more than nine years and seeing how hard it is for life sentenced prisoners to gain knowledge of Gods Word, I clearly understand why God has left me alive. People of this world only understand those who are like-minded, but these outcasts who are left by all, who understands them? Would these life sentenced prisoners believe in God's forgiveness from anyone else, except one who is in the same position? For that purpose, God chose one of us to serve within these walls. Even though no preacher can come in here, God revives people in prison by His Holy word and testimonies of the same kind. Today, again and again God shows the world not only His power, but also boundless love to His creations, making absolutely cold, callous hearts into vessels of His glory. Now, we, the believers who have repented and live in God, ask all on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled with God. There is no other way to heaven, there is only one way and it is through God and Jesus Christ. Let His long-suffering be the reason for your repentance and His mercy and love make you a child of God. To a murderer who was next to Him on the cross, who had more sins then he, he said: **«Truly I say to you, Today you shall be with Me in Paradise»** (Luke 23:43 MKJV).

Therefore, with the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, with my whole heart, I call all you who do not know God: **«Make search for the Lord while he is there, make prayer to him while he is near»** (Isaiah 55:6 BBE). Praise Him with your repentance and dedicate yourself to serve Him. May God bless you to be His servant.

With love of God to you, brother Victor.

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The Prudnikov Family Story

I rang the doorbell... The door is opened by the head of the household — Oleg, 37 year old good natured man. His wife comes out of the kitchen — Natasha a 33-year-old, attractive woman. Three curious children peek out from the other room: the eldest daughter Sasha, Lisa and their youngest son Paul. Everything in the apartment is simple and cozy. Right from the start the kind and loving relationship between parents and children is visible. You would never have thought that the parents were former drug addicts! While Natasha was preparing tea, Oleg started telling the story of his life...

He was born in a normal, complete family. At seven years of age he attended school where he studied well and his parents had high hopes that their son would get a higher education. Alas, their hopes were not to be...

During the 1990s, Russia saw a period of confusion, restructuring and inflation. Adults did not know what to do and children went out in the streets, banded together into gangs and did whatever they saw fit. So Oleg, at 15 years of age, joined a group where the use of drugs was the norm. Not wanting to be an outcast, Oleg started using drugs. He dropped out of school because he needed money; he went to work and enrolled into evening school. Oleg graduated from school and enrolled in an Institute, but could not study; studying, working, and drugs are incompatible. His lifestyle was that of a usual addict: theft, then usage. He was first convicted in 1997, but was given probation for a year and a half. After the year and a half were over he was sentenced to four years imprisonment and enforced drug treatment. While in prison, he wanted to leave this path. Oleg hoped that when freed he would not use drugs and find a job and everything would be fine. Christians came to the prison and conducted services, but Oleg stubbornly didn't want to listen, saying, «I will not join a sect». However, he began praying to God. He was freed in 2003 but immediately returned to his old habits. He returned to his previous rut. At one party, he met Natasha.

Natasha was loved by her parents since childhood; after all she was the youngest daughter. Her father strived for his family to have no needs and his good paying job made that possible. He worked in a well-known international transportation company. Natasha's friends envied her. Natasha grew as a selfish child who had everything. At 14 years of age she met a criminal youth group, which committed a murder. Shortly after, her young life began behind bars. Her sentence was shortened because she was a minor. At 17 years of age she tried drugs. The group she hanged out with, not only had young people, but also older «generous» people who handed out drugs as a treat. There she met a guy, fell in love with him and began living with him. Soon after, she became pregnant but was too scared to inform her parents and hid it for some time. Natasha's guy, as it often happens, disappeared from her life. When her parents learned about Natasha's pregnancy, they did not advise abortion but decided that they could provide for the child. Pregnancy and the birth of her daughter Sasha temporarily saved Natasha from drugs. Her parents took all responsibility for the child, and when Sasha was 6 months, Natasha returned the same group she was with previously. Her father, seeing that his daughter could not stop, began to prepare documents to take away her parental rights. Natasha's screaming, cursing, and hysterics were ignored for the sake of the grandchild; he took responsibility as Sasha's guardian. Many years passed before Natasha realized what a blessing it was that the Lord acted through her father, depriving her of her parental rights and saving her daughter. But back then it was a life of drugs, theft, and prison. At that time Natasha's mother passed away and her father began to drink from grief and despair. Child Protective Services took Sasha to an orphanage. Natasha, while in prison, wanted to quit drugs saying «When I'm released I will quit drugs, get my parental rights back, and live a normal life». But when she was released from prison, Natasha went back to drugs with even greater dose a week later. Life became pure pain for Natasha and she

just wanted to leave it. She attempted suicide using pills, but God's great grace saved her life; they pumped it out. Once discharged from the hospital, she took her previous drug dosage while her body was still weakened and it almost killed her. That's when she went into clinical death, and here the Lord showed His love and mercy to this lost, fallen soul, and returned her to life, despite the predictions of doctors. After getting better and being released from the hospital she went back to the same place, and there she met Oleg...

Unified by their situation; same problems, same health issues (they both had Hepatitis C), they started to live together and use drugs. When they found out that Natasha was pregnant, they started thinking about what to do. They decided to do an abortion. They scheduled the appointment. In the

God. The Lord miraculously freed him from drugs. Then he himself decided he needed to go to the rehab center for rehabilitation.

Before being discharged from the hospital, Natasha had an ultrasound which showed that the child had no fingers or toes and had an overly large head — Down Syndrome. The doctors were persuading her to have an abortion saying: «Why have a child with disabilities?» And also, her legs needed immediate surgery. Natasha spoke to the church leaders and decided to fully trust God with all of her worries. This decision gave her strength to not agree with an abortion and surgery. After a week passed, Natasha ended up in the hospital again with severe lower abdominal pain. Again the doctors urged her to have an abortion, but she truly believed that



Family
of Oleg and Natalia
PRUDNIKOV,
Smolensk, Russia

morning, they were to arrive at the hospital for the abortion procedure. But it happened that Natasha felt really ill that morning; she didn't have any drugs to take. Therefore, they did not go to the hospital. In one of the apartments where drug addicts came together to do their thing, there lived a Christian woman. The woman was not able to influence her son to stop, so she simply prayed for everyone that she saw coming over to visit him. Time passed before God answered her prayers. When Oleg and Natasha slept in that apartment, the woman knelt down in front of the door and prayed for them.

Oleg met a lot of people and friends who would tell him about a Christian rehab center but he would not listen. Now the time came for him and Natasha to think of something. They needed help. Oleg went to the women's rehabilitation center to talk to the supervisor. Of course the woman in the center agreed to receive Natasha, but she must come willingly on her own accord. They decided to pray to the Lord so He would lead her to the center. One girl from the same group had already come to the center and was praying for Natasha. On the sixth month of pregnancy, Natasha started to get sick from the drugs. How and why she came to the rehab center is a mystery to her; God led her there. When she came, everyone was delighted for they were waiting and praying for her. It was another miracle! She didn't understand why everyone at the center cared for her and treated her well, and showed her love. After four days at the center, Natasha felt free from drugs and nicotine. But the enemy (Satan) didn't want to let go of his prey easily. A week later Natasha fell ill. She experienced pain in her feet, they swelled up and lost feeling, and she experienced difficulty breathing. The staff at the center called an ambulance and Natasha was taken to the hospital and put in the vascular department. The doctor examined her and diagnosed her with: thrombophlebitis of the internal veins, blood clots, high temperature of 40° C (104° F); two hours left to live. Doctors identified, by the condition of her veins, that she was a drug user. Why struggle for her life? But God had different plans for her. The church and rehab center prayed for her healing, and Natasha herself really wanted to return to the center.

At this time, Oleg started going to church. The Holy Spirit touched his heart and he repented without resisting

God would help her and she witnessed to the doctors, telling them this. In the morning Natasha had a huge festering bump on her groin, which was immediately cut out. It was as if God had collected all of the contamination in her body into one spot which was immediately removed. Soon she was well enough to return to the Center. There was a little time before she was to give birth, so Oleg and Natasha decided to get married legally. The church blessed them and they went to their respective rehab centers. Before giving birth, the ultrasound was repeated and the diagnosis was confirmed: the child has disabilities, down-syndrome, and many other complications. The church and the rehab center were constantly praying for Natasha.

In June 2004, Natasha gave birth to a daughter whom they named Lisa. On this day, the doctors saw another miracle in their lives; God gave them a completely healthy baby! They could not believe their eyes. Many specialists and nurses gathered to witness this miracle and someone blurted out, «This could only have been done by your God!» Natasha, elated, cried and shouted, «Praise God!» The Church leaders advised them to temporarily leave the child in an orphanage for babies while they remained in rehabilitation. It was difficult but Natasha dutifully took their advice because she learned to trust God in everything. On weekends, Oleg and Natasha visited their children, Sasha and Lisa. A month later, they brought Lisa to be blessed by the church. Rehabilitation ended a year later. Oleg decided to be a helper in the Rehabilitation Center. He and Natasha started to compile documents for restoration of parental rights for Sasha. Their parental rights were soon restored and they were able to take Sasha home. When they were baptized, they asked God to give them another child. Thus, they had a son and named him Paul. Now, Natasha works in a pharmacy and in the rehab center, and Oleg, is serving at the Rehabilitation Center over nine years already. Only our Lord could do such miracles with people and their lives!

Going home after visiting this family, my heart overflowed with joy and gratitude to the Lord. I wanted to shout «Glory be to God! God's Alive!» He raises the fallen souls, gives hope and brings salvation!

Sincerely, Tatyana SHAROVAROVA.



WHAT IS A PRAYER OF REPENTANCE?

ANSWER: A prayer of repentance is a prayer to God by a person who realizes his or her need of a Savior and forgiveness of sins. This prayer by itself cannot bring salvation, but only a sincere repentance, an understanding of one's sinfulness and need for salvation.

The first aspect of a prayer of repentance is the confession of our sinfulness. *Rom. 3:10* says: **«There is none righteous, no, not one»**. The Bible clearly states that we all have sinned. All of us are sinners who are in need of mercy and the forgiveness of God (*1 Tim. 3:5-7*). Because of our sin, we all deserve eternal punishment (*Matt. 25:46*). Thus a prayer of repentance is a plea for clemency instead of punishment.

The second aspect of this prayer is an understanding of what God has done to remedy our lamentable state. He took on human flesh and became a man — Jesus Christ (*Jn. 1:1, 14*). Jesus revealed to us the truth about God and lived a righteous and sinless life (*Jn. 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21*). Then He died on the cross instead of us, taking our punishment (*Rom. 5:8*). Jesus rose from the dead, proving His victory over sin, death and hell (*Col. 2:15; 1 Cor. 15*). Only because of this can we be forgiven of our sins. If we believe in Jesus Christ, we are promised eternal life in Heaven. All that is required of us is to believe that He died for us and rose from the dead (*Rom. 10:9-10*). We can only be saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ alone. *Eph. 2:8* says, **«For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God»**.

In bringing a prayer of repentance, we tell God that we trust Jesus Christ as our Savior. To be saved we don't need any «magic» words. Only through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus do we receive salvation! If you understand that you have sinned and feel the need for salvation in Jesus Christ, then the following prayer of repentance can help you come to the Lord, *«God, I know I have sinned against you. I understand that I deserve to bear the consequences of my sins, but I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior. I believe that His death and resurrection provided me forgiveness. I trust Jesus and Him alone as my personal Lord and Savior. Thank you, Lord, for saving and forgiving me! Amen!»*

WHY PRAY?

ANSWER: Why pray if God controls absolutely everything? Why pray if God already knows what we are going to ask before we ask?

1. Prayer is an act of worshipping God (*Lk. 2:36-38*). We pray because God tells us to pray (*Phil. 4:6-7*).

2. Christ and the early church gave us the example of prayer (*Mk. 1:35; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 4:23-31; 6:4; 13:1-3*). If Jesus believed that prayer is necessary, then we should do so.

3. God desires that prayer should be the means of obtaining His help in a number of situations:

- a) when making major decisions (*Lk. 6:12-13*);
- b) to overcome the obstacles of the devil in life (*Matt. 17:14-21*);
- c) for calling workers to gather the spiritual harvest (*Lk. 10:2*);
- d) for providing strength to overcome temptation (*Matt. 26:41*);
- e) for spiritual reinforcement of others (*Eph. 6:18-19*).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT PRAYER

4. We have the divine promise that our prayers are not in vain, even if we do not receive exactly what was requested (*Matt. 6:6; Rom. 8:26-27*).

5. God has promised that when we ask for things according to His will, He will give us that (*1 Jn. 5:14-15*).

Sometimes, in His wisdom and for our benefit He delays His answer. In these situations, we must be diligent and persistent in prayer (*Matt. 7:7; Lk. 18:1-8*). At the same time we should not use prayer to compel God to fulfill our will on earth. On the contrary — it should be a means of fulfilling His will. God's wisdom is infinitely above our own. In situations where we do not know what God's will is, prayer is a means of knowledge. If Peter had not asked Jesus to call him out of the boat into the water, he would have missed that opportunity (*Matt. 14:28-29*). If the Syrian woman with her daughter, possessed by a demon, had not prayed to Christ, she would not have received the healing of her child (*Mk. 7:26-30*). A blind man near Jericho would have remained blind if he had not called upon Christ (*Lk. 18:35-43*). God said that we often do not have because we do not ask (*Jas. 4:2*). In a sense, prayer is like witnessing the gospel to others. If the good news is not shared, we do not know who will respond to it. So it is with prayer: we will never see the result of prayer, until we pray.

A lack of prayer demonstrates a lack of faith and trust in God's Word. We pray to demonstrate our faith in God and belief that He will fulfill the promises of His Word and bless our lives more than we can ask or hope (*Eph. 3:20*). Prayer is the primary means to see God's work in the lives of others. As our means to «connect» to the source of God's power, it will help us to defeat the enemy (the devil) and his army that we cannot overcome alone. Thus, let us come more often to the throne of God in Heaven because we have a high priest in Heaven who can help us in all our trials (*Heb. 4:15-16*). We have His promise that «the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much» (*Jas. 5:16-18*). May God glorify His name in our lives as we are more and more on our knees in prayer.

IS IT IMPORTANT TO PRAY TOGETHER? IS CORPORATE PRAYER MORE EFFECTIVE THAN PERSONAL PRAYER?

ANSWER: Corporate prayer is an important part of the life of the Church along with worship, teaching and fellowship. The early church met regularly to study the teachings of the apostles, break bread and pray together (*Acts 2:42*) immediately after the resurrection of Jesus (*Acts 1:14*). This continues until the present time. We can achieve positive results praying together with other believers. Corporate prayer instructs and unites us when we share common beliefs. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in every believer, brings joy to our hearts when we hear praises to our Lord and Savior. We are bound together in the bonds of communion which is impossible to obtain in any other way.

For those who may be single-handedly struggling with life's difficulties, the prayers of others before the throne of grace may be the greatest encouragement. Intercessory prayer also builds in us love and sympathy for others. Corporate prayer also teaches new believers how to pray and leads them to a closer relationship with the Body of Christ. At the same time corporate prayer reflects the

thoughts of the heart of individuals who take part in it. We must come to God in humility (*Jas. 4:10*), sincerity (*Ps. 144:18*) and obedience (*1 Jn. 3:21-22*), in gratitude (*Phil. 4:6*) and faith (*Heb. 4:16*). Unfortunately, corporate prayer can also serve as a platform for those whose words are directed not to God but to the audience. Jesus warned against such behavior (*Matt. 6:5-8*), urging us to avoid many words or hypocrisy in our prayers, but to pray secretly in our homes to avoid such temptation.

Scripture does not say that corporate prayer is more effective than private prayer in the sense of moving the divine hand. Too many Christians think of prayer as a means of getting something from God, and corporate prayer in most cases is but an occasion for the recitation of our needs. Biblical prayers however are multifaceted, expressing the fullness of our desire to enter into conscious and intimate relationship with our holy, perfect, and righteous God. The very awareness that God is willing to listen to His creatures leads to praise and worship (*Ps. 26:4; 63:1-8*), sincere repentance (*Ps. 50; Lk. 18:9-14*), gratitude (*Phil. 4:6; Col. 1:12*), and sincere intercessory requests for other people (*2 Thess. 1:11; 2:16*).

A request for personal needs does not occur in the prayers of Jesus, nor Paul, except when they expressed desires that were always in harmony with the will of God (*Matt. 26:39; 2 Cor. 12:7-9*). Thus prayer is a partnership with God to fulfill His plan and not an attempt to subdue Him to our will. When we reject our own desires in submission to the One who knows,

when «two or three are gathered» to pray, their prayers will be automatically supported by some magical power, is nonsense. Of course Jesus is present when two or three pray, but He is also present when a believer prays alone, even if he is separated from others by thousands of kilometers. Misinterpretation of these verses shows us why it is so important to read and understand the biblical texts in their context and in the light of Scripture.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PRAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS?

ANSWER: The Gospel of John teaches us to pray in the name of Jesus (*14:13-14*): **«And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it»**. Some people misunderstand these verses to mean that God will always give what they ask for if they say «in the name of Jesus» at the end of their prayer. In fact, this is to misuse the words as a magic formula, which is absolutely opposite of what the Bible says! Prayer in Jesus' name means praying with His authority and asking the Father to answer our prayers because we come to Him in the name of His Son, Jesus. Praying in Jesus' name is the same as to pray according to God's will: **«And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us: And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him»** (*1 Jn. 5:14-15*).



much better than we, our life circumstances and **«... what things ye have need of, before ye ask him»** (*Matt. 6:8*), our prayers reach their highest level. Prayers born in submission to the divine will always get positive responses, irrespective of whether it is the prayer of one person or a thousand. This is the power of prayer.

The idea that praying together will lead to a positive answer from God came from a misunderstanding of the text written in the Gospel of Matthew (*18:19-20*): **«Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them»**. These verses are in the context of a discussion concerning church discipline. The notion that these texts promise the fulfillment of any prayer request made by several Christians together, regardless of how sinful or foolish it may be, does not fit the context of church discipline. This idea is nothing but a denial of the whole Scripture, in particular the sovereignty of God and the commandments which tell believers to humbly submit to His will.

In addition, the suggestion that

Praying in Jesus' name is to glorify Jesus.

The phrase «in Jesus' name» at the end of a prayer is not a magic formula. If what you asked in prayer did not glorify God, and did not comply with his will, saying «in Jesus' name» is meaningless. Sincerely praying in Jesus' name and for His glory is what is important, not the appending of certain words to the end of the prayer. Not the words of prayer are important, but the value behind them. The essence of prayer in Jesus' name is to ask what is consistent with God's will.

HOW DO I RECEIVE AN ANSWER TO MY PRAYER?

ANSWER: Many people believe that an «answer to prayer» is God's fulfilling a certain request. If a prayer request is not fulfilled, it is often perceived as prayer unanswered. Nevertheless, this is a misunderstanding of prayer. God answers every prayer directed to Him. We just need to remember that sometimes God answers «No», or «Wait». God promises to fulfill our prayers if we ask according to His will. *The First Epistle of John* (*5:14-*

15) tells us: **«And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us: And if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him»**.

What does it mean to pray according to God's will? It means to pray for that which glorifies God or is clearly revealed in the Bible as God's will. If we pray for something that does not glorify God or does not correspond to His will, God will not give us what we ask. How can we know God's will? God promises to give us wisdom if we ask for it. *Jas. 1:5* says: **«If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him»**. Learn what the Bible says about God's will for your life. The better we understand God's Word, the better we will know how to pray. The better we know how to pray, the more effective will be our prayer life.

SHOULD WE PRAY FOR THE SAME THING REPEATEDLY, OR ONLY ONCE?

ANSWER: In the Gospel of Luke (*18:1-7*) we read: **«And He [Jesus] spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint, saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?»**

And *Lk. 11:5-13* says: **«And He [Jesus] said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give you. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needs. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him who knocks it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?»**

Both texts call upon us to pray and to continue to pray! There is nothing wrong with multiple requests for the same thing. If the thing is consistent with the will of God (*1 Jn. 5:14-15*), continue as long as it takes to fulfill your request, or until God removes the desire from your heart. Sometimes God makes us wait for an answer to our prayers in order to teach us patience and perseverance. Sometimes we ask what is not God's will at this particular moment in our lives. Sometimes we ask what does not correspond to His will for us, and He says «No». Prayer is not only a means by which we make our requests to God; it is He who puts his will into our hearts. Keep on asking, knocking, and looking until God answers your prayers, or until He convinces you that your request is not His will for you.

<http://www.gotquestions.org/Russian/Russian-Q-prayer.html>



The Pastor's Word

THE WILL OF GOD AND ITS FULFILMENT IN EVERYDAY LIFE

1. Does God have a plan (fate, determination) for the life of every person?

Yes, God has a predetermined plan for every person. Here are several texts from the Holy Scriptures:

Ps. 139:16 — *And in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when there was not yet one of them.*

1 Cor. 7:17 — *Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one as God has called each, in this manner let him walk.*

Mt. 6:10 — *Your kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth as it is in heaven.*

Jer. 29:11 — *For I [only] know the plans that I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.*

Prov. 19:14 — *House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the Lord.*

God gave Abraham a revelation about what was going to happen to his descendants (**Gen. 15:13**).

The choosing of a wife for Isaac, Rebekah (**Gen. 24:15-27**).

2. The will of God for specific people:

✿ King David

Ps. 139:15-16 — *My frame was not hidden from you, when I was made in secret, And secretly wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.*

✿ The prophet Jeremiah

Jer. 1:4-5 — *Now the word of the Lord came to me saying: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.*

✿ King Hezekiah

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

The expression «to your life» means a certain period of life appointed by God in advance for Hezekiah, to whose life God has decided to add another 15 years in answer to his prayer.

✿ King Josiah

1 Kings 13:2 — *And the man cried against the altar by the word of the LORD and said, «O altar, altar, thus says the LORD: «Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who make offerings on you, and human bones shall be burned on you».*

2 Kings 23:17 — *Then he [Josiah] said, «What is that monument that I see?» And the men of the city told him, «It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and predicted these things that you have done against the altar at Bethel»*

✿ The Apostle Paul

Acts 9:15-16 — *But the Lord said to Ananias, «Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name».*

3. Can a certain plan of God not happen or take place in the life of the person or people?

Yes, this happens when a person, having free will, chooses to not follow God's path.

Examples of non-fulfilment of what God had planned in the beginning:

✿ The priesthood of Eli

An example of this is the priesthood of Eli, of whom it was said to his forefather Aaron, that they will forever stand before God as priests. But because of Eli's misconduct in that he did not rebuke his sons (the priests), God canceled the spoken word, and said that He would choose Himself a faithful priest.

1 Sam. 2:30-31 — *Therefore the Lord God of Israel declares, «I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever»; but now the Lord declares, «Far be it from Me — for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days are coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father's*

house so that there will not be an old man in your house».

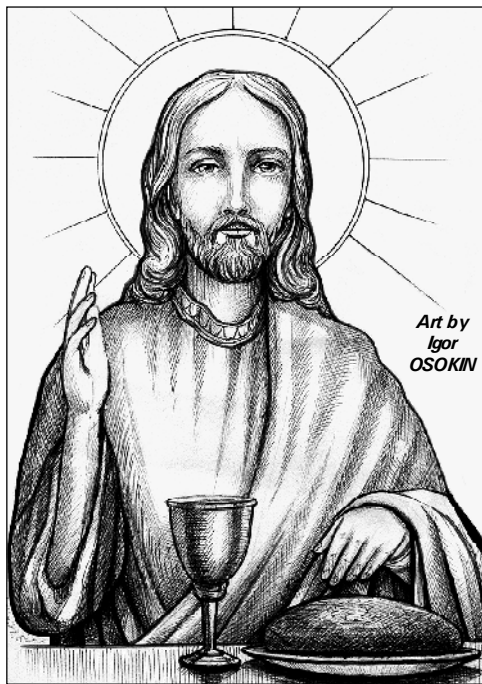
1 Sam. 2:35-36 — *But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always. Everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and say, «Please assign me to one of the priest's offices so that I may eat a piece of bread».*

1 Kings 2:27 — *So Solomon dismissed Abiathar from being priest to the Lord, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord, which He had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.*

✿ Solomon

God told David about Solomon:

1 Chron. 17:11-14 — *When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with*



your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My loving-kindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.

1 Kings 11:11-13 — *So the Lord said to Solomon, «Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen».*

The evil that Solomon had done by his departure from God was much greater than it may seem upon first glance. Because of him the kingdom was divided and ten tribes from the kingdom of Israel did not have a place to come and worship God, because the temple was in another part of the kingdom. All of the priests and people who understood the word of God and had a positive effect on the spiritual well-being of the nation ended up in Judah, which was on the other side. The kings of Israel, in order to keep their kingdom intact, were then forced to choose new priests and a new location to bring offerings to God. But this was not done correctly, and so they led the people further and further from God.

✿ The story of Jacob blessing Manasseh and Ephraim (**Gen. 48:13**)

When the patriarch Jacob blessed his grandsons, the younger of them, Ephraim, was raised above his brother Manasseh. Subsequently, the tribe of Ephraim appeared more numerous and more influential. During the time of king Rehoboam, son of Solomon, the entire kingdom of Israel (the 10 tribes which seceded from the House of David), was often called Ephraim. The capital of the kingdom of Israel was the city of Samaria, stationed on Mount Ephraim. But because of their apostasy, the tribe of Ephraim, so vaunted, ceases to exist.

Jer. 31:9 — *With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.*

Jer. 31:20 — *Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the LORD.*

Hos. 13:1 — *When Ephraim spoke, people trembled; he was exalted in Israel. But he became guilty of Baal worship and died.*

Hos. 5:9 — *Ephraim will become desolation in the day of rebuke; among the tribes of Israel I declare what is sure.*

Hos. 12:14 — *Ephraim has provoked to bitter anger; So his Lord will leave his bloodguilt on him And bring back his reproach to him.*

Is. 7:8-9 — *for the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria.*

Rahab and her family, as well as the inhabitants of Gibeon, did not die although they were ordained to be killed. The inhabitants of Nineveh were spared. Ahab submitted.

4. What must one do, for the will of God to take place in their life?

1) Have an agreement and a desire for the will of God to take place.

2) Be obedient to God and do not interfere in the fulfillment of his will.

3) Pray and ask God about it.

4) Acknowledge the will of God and strive for its practical implementation.

5. What usually happens when a person takes the initiative of managing their life in their own hands?

A lot of grief and sorrow. Rebekah in regards to the blessing of Jacob. Joshua with the Gibeonites. Samson, who in his life did not completely fulfill the will of God. Jonah, who sailed away from where he should have gone, and ended up in the belly of the whale.

6. Can a person's life go better than had been planned in the beginning?

In the Scripture we don't find an exhaustive answer to this question, but research leads us to useful considerations that can have a positive impact on all our lives.

So, as always, the text of Scripture:

1 Kings 3:14 — *And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.*

From this text we can see that King Solomon had a certain amount of days planned for his life, but if he was willing to follow the ways of God, He promised to renew it.

Lk. 19:24-26 — *And he said to those who stood by, «Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas». «And they said to him, «Master, he has ten minas already». «I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away».*

Initially, this man was destined to ten minas, but in certain circumstances the situation is changing for the better, and he became the owner of more minas than expected. Of course, a critical factor in increasing the number of minas was the faithfulness of the servant.

7. What affects the fulfilment of the will of God?

God has a plan and a will for everyone who comes into this world. And, of course, this plan is the best. After all, who but the Creator knows certain inclinations and abilities of each person. So he designed a very productive life for everyone. But God gave man free will, which He does not infringe. Therefore, everyone has the right to choose how to live. The direction of the life of every Christian is the result of the will of God and human will. What percent of your decisions will allow for the fulfillment of God's plan in your life? What areas of your life are you willing to give to God and how much? When and where will you oppose? At what stages in life does a person fall under the influence of other people? Where does one fall under the influence of the flesh and make decisions for which he and his descendants will suffer? In what cases will one make decisions under the influence of envy, resentment, or to prove one's innocence?

Let's look at what may influence the outlook and decisions made by man:

1) The Holy Spirit.

2) The Word of God.

3) Tips from spiritual mentors, sermons.

4) Information obtained from various sources.

5) Public opinion, public school (the opinion of friends, colleagues, acquaintances).

6) Personal experience and logic.

7) Sinful feelings (resentment, envy,

greed, pride, self-seeking).

8) Thoughts: **Acts 5:3** — *But Peter said, «Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?»*

9) Commercials.

10) Sinful lust.

11) Demonic impact: **1 Chron. 21:1** — *Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.*

8. Resources given by God to help people to fulfill God's will:

1) He gave His Son, through whom opened access to all kinds of His grace.

2) Pet. 1:3 — *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.*

2) He gave an example of prayer, which contains a petition for the will of God on earth as in heaven

Mt. 6:10 — *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

3) The Holy Spirit affects the hearts of people and gives them strength.

Phil. 2:13 — *For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

1 Jn. 2:27 — *But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie — just as it has taught you, abide in him.*

4) He gave the Holy Spirit, who Himself intercedes for God's will.

Rom. 8:26-27 — *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

5) He gave spiritual gifts for the knowledge of His will.

1 Cor. 14:4 — *...but the one who prophesies builds up the church.*

1 Cor. 14:12 — *...strive to excel in building up the church.*

6) The printed word of God.

Ps. 119:105 — *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

Ps. 119:9 — *How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.*

7) The local assembly of believers.

Mt. 18:15-18 — *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother; But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church...*

8) Church leaders and missionaries whom God uses.

Eph. 4:11-13 — *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

Acts 20:28 — *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*

Mt. 18:17-18 — *If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

9) Peace of heart and spiritual joy which comes from following God's ways.

Peace of heart and spiritual joy serve as an indicator. If a person is in a good relationship with God and begins to do something that is not the will of God, they usually lose their peace of heart and spiritual joy.

Rom. 14:17 — *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

As used here, the words are in the right order: peace and joy come after the word righteousness. If there is no desire for righteousness, there will be no peace, no joy.

10) God arranges the circumstances which lead to the fulfillment of his will.

Php. 1:12 — *I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.*

Aleksander BORISENKO.

PROVERBS

During the time when Christians were persecuted there lived in a certain village a Christian family. The father struggled to feed his wife and young children even though he worked tirelessly. But he cast all his cares on the Lord and trusted that one day things would change for the better. Attempting to cheer up his family and himself, he engraved on a board the words: «This too, shall pass». He hung this plaque in a prominent place in the house.

This Too Shall Pass

The years of persecution passed and were followed by a time of prosperity and freedom. The father's children grew up, and grandchildren arrived.

One day they gathered around a table, loaded with food, in the family home. They prayed and gave thanks to God for the blessings they had received. Noticing the old plaque, the eldest son said to his father, «Let's take it down, father. Let's not remember those hard times, now that all is behind us».

«No, my children, let it hang. Remember that this time, too, shall pass. Teach this to your children. You must be able to thank the Lord for everything. In hard times, thank God for the trials. When life is easy, thank God for prosperity. Only the person who contemplates eternity knows how to be thankful».

The Monkey and The Melon Seeds

Once there was a monkey who was very fond of melon seeds. One day she saw a melon on the vine with a small hole in it. The monkey was delighted, put her hand in the hole, and grabbed a handful of melon seeds. However, she could not remove her hand because the hole was too narrow.



The monkey screamed and swore at the melon but would not unclench her fist and let go of the seeds. Then a hunter came and grabbed the monkey. He had made this hole to catch the greediest monkey. The hunter said to the monkey: «You would better have remained hungry than lose your life for the sake of melon seeds».

So the enemy catches us when we refuse to see the danger lurking in pleasure.

<http://www.smisl-zhizni.ru/pritch>

It was not I who chose God, He chose me!

SHORT LIFE STORIES OF FAMOUS PEOPLE

The Clipse duo, formed by «Malice» and «Pusha T» Thornton, is known for its elaborate metaphors about the «muddy mud» and everyday life of drug dealers. Now their outlook on life is very different. Pusha T is reaping the benefits of a successful solo career, while No Malice rethought his life, finding God again. Yes, now he is a devout Christian, father of two girls, ready to talk about his relationship with the Almighty.

On the day when the Lord touched Malice, half of the duo Clipse changed forever. Changing his stage name was only one small step on the way to finding God. Malice accepted the mission to speak with those who are willing to listen. Here's what he says about himself in an interview:

«There was times when I couldn't have this conversation with an interviewer about God. «Are you kidding me? God? I'm a rapper. We ain't talking about God». That was me before. But it's the spirit that takes you and helps you become bolder with God's word. It's just like physical growth from a baby to a toddler to an adolescent. This is spiritual growth».

«I have so many friends that call me and tell me testimonies. They feel like I'm the only person they can call and tell».

«...To say that I haven't lost any fans I don't think that would be realistic because it's a different message. It is definitely a different movement; it's a different word. So to do something different and expect the same amount of fans, I don't think that would be logical. I'm sure, you know, some would be lost along the way. And that's cool».

«I'm not going to say what it is not. I haven't labeled this music. I'll let the fans call it what they want to call it. But for me it's the truth music. For me it is definitely undeniable. I know Malice can't hold a candle to No Malice lyrically. He doesn't even come close. It's different when you have a message that you're willing to put in an art form, share with people and die for. It's a huge difference. Beyond a shadow of a doubt».

«For me it's not about music. Rap is just the vehicle, you know? Rap is just the conduit to reach people who otherwise wouldn't get the message. I don't see nothing so great about rap or rappers or what's going on out there. I mean, okay it's enjoyable, it feels good, it's a lifestyle. But I think I'm one of the best to do it. Rap? I'm not impressed with it».

«My dad said that God always uses siblings to make his point. From Kane and Abel, to Isaac & Jacob. When I say that, I'm saying this is my brother who I love and who I'm close with, but I have to go a different route. We've been together all our lives and as far as this music, 12 years or better that we've been together but it should make. It's not really about me or my brother, it's about everyone that has sense enough to see. They have to say to themselves «There's something that is making that man not go that way. There is something. And I don't have nothing bad about him to say. He's a grown man he has to make a living for himself and he's doing what he knows to do and he's very talented with it. I have nothing bad to say about that. I'm just going a different route».

«Fortunately for me, I come from a family that has a reverence for God and I think a lot of us do. But the thing is when you have a personal encounter with God, when you have a real revelation of God and who he is and he's no longer Santa Claus to

you, you know, that's what made all the difference in the world to me. Of course, I would have rather just kept my cool on. I would've rather to not have to share such personal information in my life. But, I had a revelation of God and I knew it was God. And then as I read more of his word and understood. I couldn't deny it. This isn't a choice for me. I didn't choose or say I'm going to follow God. I didn't choose God, he chose me. He definitely chose me and said, «You gonna work for me».

«My grandmother introduced me to God as a child. I remember in New York I would go over to her house every weekend and before bed every night you know I had to say my prayers. And that was just something that was instilled in me as a young kid. She would always go to church every Sunday. I'd go with her at times. There were times when people would ask me «Do you believe in God» and I would say «yea» throughout my whole life. But as far as following him and understanding him, I did what I wanted to do. I ignored him. That should tell you too that I didn't just run to God».

«If you are reaching people on a major scale, he's not going to allow you to keep driving all those people to turn away from Him. He's not going to allow that to happen. So yea, when I asked for forgiveness for my sins I tell him sins known and unknown. things I know I did and things I didn't know I did. You think that you're rapping. You think you're coming up with something creative. You think you coming up with something slick. You think you're getting money. You think you're helping out your family members and a couple of your close friends. You think you're good. But now you have to ask yourself is there blood on the hands of this music. Is there? This isn't coming from No Malice. I don't make these rules but is there blood on that music? Has anyone died living the stuff you were talking about? Has anyone been sent to jail living the stuff that you're talking about that you're making sound good, feel good? Has anyone died? Even if its just one person?»

«I am not big enough to wear that... because if I could understand the magnitude of that, it would probably kill me. I got friends now that have been with us through the whole career that are doing lifetimes in jail. Lifetimes. Now what you have to ask yourself... was it worth it? I bet if you ask any of them now, was it worth it? They would say no.

«[Now] I hear music differently. I can't even jam to some of the things because when I hear the words and I know that for me that I'm grown, I'm an adult, I can handle it, but my message is really to the youth. I don't try to correct no adult. I just want the youth to know what they're listening too. Be on guard, don't just accept what is given to you».

«I can see that, and I embrace that thought. I feel like that's my gift and my gift is to articulate the gospel. I feel like a lot of people... there are those who may not have understood the gospel if it wasn't given to them the way it was taught to me. I feel like I can reach a lot of people. My gift was never to be a rapper. This gift of speech, this gift of articulation had nothing to do with rap. It works so great for rap but this was not the ultimate goal for what I've been given. But what I'm doing now is a ministry».

<http://rapzilla.com/rz/features/interviews/6517-vibe-interview-no-malice-digital-cover-story-hear-ye-him>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why did God choose Israel to be His chosen people?

ANSWER: Speaking of the nation of Israel, *Deuteronomy 7:7-9* tells us, «**The LORD did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath He swore to your forefathers that He brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh King of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commands**».

God chose the nation of Israel to be the people through whom Jesus Christ would be born — the Savior from sin and death (*John 3:16*). God first promised the Messiah after Adam and Eve's fall into sin (*Genesis 3*). God later confirmed that the Messiah would come from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (*Genesis 12:1-3*). Jesus Christ is the ultimate reason why God chose Israel to be His special people. God did not need to have a chosen people, but He decided to do it that way. Jesus had to come from some nation of people, and God chose Israel.

However, God's reason for choosing the nation of Israel was not solely for the purpose of producing the Messiah. God's desire for Israel was that they would go and teach others about Him. Israel was to be a nation of priests, prophets, and missionaries to the world. God's intent was for Israel to be a distinct people, a nation who pointed others towards God and His promised provision of a Redeemer, Messiah, and Savior. For the most part, Israel failed in this task. However, God's ultimate purpose for Israel — that of bringing the Messiah into the world — was fulfilled perfectly in the Person of Jesus Christ.

<http://www.gotquestions.org/Russian/Russian-you-are-gods.html>

ATTENTION!

Dear Readers, «Prisoner» is currently distributed in two languages: Russian and English. «Prisoner» is published in Ukraine and USA. However, the newspaper is published and distributed solely by means of free-will donations. For all who wish to contribute to the publishing of «Prisoner», you will find information included in the last column of the newspaper. For American Christians who would like to donate and render assistance in prison ministry, we have printed a section you can cut out, list your donations and specify where you want us to direct your donations. May Lord 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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We are now a federally-recognized 501(c)3 organization, so you can deduct your donations to us from your taxes!

CHRISTIAN APHORISMS

FAITH

- ☛ Believe, that you may understand.
- ☛ Faith in God is not only believing in Him, but trusting Him.
- ☛ People argue whether there is a God or not, but one thing is certain — faith in God makes a man, a Man.
- ☛ Faith in God must not be idol worship.
- ☛ He does not believe, who does not live according to his faith.
- ☛ We need not a head full of facts, but a heart full of faith.
- ☛ Beware of people who believe, for they have a God who forgives them all...

SIN

- ☛ While trying to remove a «speck» from your brother's eye, be careful not to hit his head with your «log».
- ☛ On the vine of Christ apples of discord do not grow.
- ☛ Who justifies himself for his sins, will never be justified.
- ☛ If you avoid sin, you won't fall into it.
- ☛ In vain do we hide our sin, for later it will be revealed that we warned a snake on our bosom.
- ☛ Playing with sin, we can play to the death penalty.

GOOD and EVIL

- ☛ Repaying good for good is commendable, repaying good for evil is Christian.
- ☛ We are on earth not in order to accommodate the darkness, but to shine in the darkness.
- ☛ Man invents rules for others, but exceptions for himself.

<http://golgotha.kiev.ua/menu/aphorisms.html>

WE ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

What Is Sin Exactly?

ANSWER: The Bible describes sin as disobedience to God's law (1 Jn. 3:4) and as rebellion against God (Duet. 9:7, Josh. 1:18). Sin had its origin with Lucifer, «Morningstar, son of the dawn», the most beautiful and powerful angel. Dissatisfied with his position, he wanted to become greater than God, and therefore he was stripped of any power. This was the beginning of sin (Is. 14:12-15). Now being renamed Satan, he brought sin to humanity in the Garden of Eden, where he tempted Adam and Eve with the same temptation: «You can become like God». The third chapter of Genesis describes their rebellion against God and His punishment of them. Since that time, sin has passed to all generations of mankind, and we, descendants of Abraham, inherited sin from him. The Epistle to the Romans (5:12) tells us that through Adam sin entered into the world, and all people became mortal because «the wages of sin is — death» (Rom. 6:23).

Through Adam an innate tendency to sin overtook humanity, and human nature itself became sinful. When Adam sinned, his inner nature was transformed by his sin of rebellion, bringing upon him spiritual death and depravity which was passed unto all of his descendants. People are not sinners because they've sinned — they sin because they have a sinful nature which makes them sinners. This condition is known as «original sin». Just as we get physical characteristics from our parents, we receive our sinful nature from Adam. The late King David mourned over the fall of man in the book of Psalms: «**For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me**» (Ps. 51:3).

Another type of sin is imputed sin. Used both in the financial and legal professions, the Greek word «imputation» means «to take away something that belongs to someone, and place it on other accounts». Before the Law of Moses was given, sin was not imputed to people; regardless, man was still sinful due to inherent original sin. After the law was given, sin became any violation of the law, and it was imputed to the people (Rom. 5:13). Even before sin against the law was imputed to people, there was the original payment for sin — death. All people, from Adam to Moses, were subject to death, not because of their sinful acts against the Law of Moses (which they did not have), but due to their inherent sinful nature. After Moses, people are accountable for the original sin of Adam as well as for sin imputed to them for violating God's law.

God used the principle of imputation to man's advantage when He imputed the sins of all believers to Jesus Christ, who paid for these sins by His death on the cross. By imputing our sins to Jesus, God treated Him as a sinner, although He was not one, and allowed Him to die for the sins of anyone who believes in Him. It is important to understand that sin was imputed to Him, and He did not inherit it from Adam. He bore the punishment for sin, but He did not become a sinner. His pure and perfect nature was not tainted by sin. It was as though He was guilty of all the sins committed by those who would believe in Him. In exchange, God imputed the righteousness of Christ to all believers in the same manner in which Christ took our sins upon Himself (2 Cor. 5:21).

Personal sins are those which are committed every day by every person. Because of the original sin of Adam in us, we commit individual, personal sins — from seemingly innocent thoughts to murder. Those who do not believe in Christ will be required to pay for their own personal sins as well as for original and imputed sin. Nevertheless, believers are freed from the eternal penalty of sin, which is hell and spiritual death. Now we can choose whether to commit personal sins or not, since we have power to resist sin thanks to the Holy Spirit who lives in us, directs us, and convicts us when we sin (Rom. 8:9-11). Once we

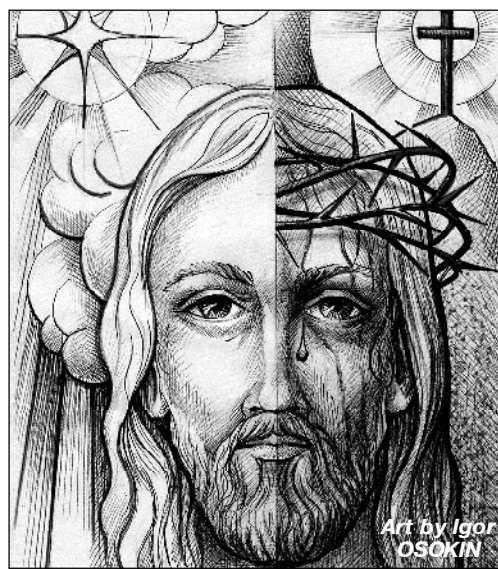
repent of our personal sins before God and ask forgiveness, our good relationship with Him is restored: «**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness**» (1 Jn. 1:9).

Original sin, imputed sin, and personal sins were all crucified on the cross of Jesus, and now «**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace**» (Eph. 1:7).

How Do I Know What Is Sin?

ANSWER: This question contains two important points:

1. There are things which the Bible mentions and considers as sins. Examples of this are found in passages such as Prov. 6:16-19, Gal. 5:19-21, and 1 Cor. 6:9-10. There is no doubt that these passages in the Bible describe sinful acts which God does not approve. Murder,



adultery, lying, stealing, etc. No doubt, the Bible presents such things as sin.

2. It is more difficult to understand if something is sinful when the Bible does not clearly speak about it. Although the Bible does not touch on all matters, there are general provisions of the Word of God which we must follow:

A. If the Bible is not clear about a certain thing, it would be good to ask not how bad that thing is, but how good it is. The Bible advises us, for example, to redeem the time (Col. 4:5). Our days on earth are so short and precious in relation to eternity that we simply cannot selfishly waste time. We should use it only for good, «for edification» (Eph. 4:29).

B. A good test is to determine whether we can honestly, soberly ask the Lord to bless us and use our personal activity for His purposes, «**So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God**» (1 Cor. 10:31). If there are doubts about how much a thing pleases God, then it is better to leave the matter: «**All that is not of faith is sin**» (Rom. 14:23).

C. We must remember that our bodies, as well as our souls, have been redeemed and belong to God: «**Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, whom you have from God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's**» (1 Cor. 6:19-20). This great truth should have a real impact on what we do and where we go with our bodies.

D. We must evaluate our actions not only in relation to God, but as to their effect on our family, our friends, and other people in general. Even if something does not affect us personally, if it is bad or harmful to someone else then it is wrong: «**It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything by which your brother falls, or is offended, or is made weak... We who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves**» (Rom. 14:21; 15:1).

E. Finally, do not forget that Jesus

Christ is our Lord and Savior, and nothing else should be allowed to take a higher priority than our adherence to His will. No habits, no joy, no ambitions should be allowed to control our lives — only Christ has such authority: «**All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any**» (1 Cor. 6:12); «**And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father**» (Col. 3:17).

Are All Sins Equal Before God?

ANSWER: In the Gospel of Matthew (5:21-28) Jesus compares adultery to lust in the heart, and murder to hatred in the heart. However, this does not mean that these sins are identical. Jesus wanted to impress upon the Pharisees that even thoughts and intentions which are displeasing to God are sin. The religious leaders of Jesus' day taught the people that they could desire whatever they wanted, so long as they did not act to indulge their desires. Jesus taught them that God judges human thoughts in the same way as action. Jesus says that our actions are the result of what is in our soul (Matt. 12:34).

So although Jesus said that lust and adultery are both sins, it does not mean that they are identical. It is much worse to kill a man than to hate him, but both are sinful in God's eyes. There is a certain gradation of sins. Some sins are definitely worse than others. At the same time, with respect to punishment and salvation, all sins are the same. Every sin leads to eternal condemnation (Rom. 6:23). All sins, regardless how «big» they are, oppose the infinite and eternal God, and therefore deserve infinite and eternal punishment. Moreover, there is no sin so «big» that God could not forgive. Jesus died to redeem us from the punishment for our sin (1 Jn. 2:2). Jesus died for our sins (2 Cor. 5:21). So are all sins equal before God? Yes and no. In severity? No. As to punishment? Yes. As to forgiveness? Yes.

What Are The Seven Deadly Sins?

ANSWER: Many people are afraid of seven sins which the Lord is not likely to forgive. The list of these sins is known to us as «the seven deadly sins». I wonder whether the idea of the seven deadly sins is Biblical? The answer is, yes and no. The text in Proverbs 6:16-19 reads: «**These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: (1) haughty eyes, (2) a lying tongue, and (3) hands that shed innocent blood, (4) the heart that devises wicked plans, (5) feet that be swift in running to mischief, (6) a false witness that speaketh lies, and (7) he that soweth discord among brethren**». Clearly this list is not at all what most people mean by «the seven deadly sins».

Most people understand «the seven deadly sins» to be: pride, envy, gluttony, lust, anger, greed and sloth. Undoubtedly, each of them is undeniably a sin, but they are not the biblical description of «the seven deadly sins». The traditional list of «the seven deadly sins» is a great way to categorize many existing sins. Any existing sin can be placed under one of the seven. But the most important thing we must understand is that none of these seven sins is more deadly than any other sin. All sin will lead to death (Rom. 6:23). We must pray to God, that through Jesus Christ, our sins, including «the seven deadly sins», would be forgiven (Matt. 26:28; Acts 10:43; Eph. 1:7).

<http://www.gotquestions.org/Russian/Russian-Q-sin.html>

YOUR LETTERS

Turn the other cheek

When I sat in the cell under investigation, I was very sad and my heart was heavy. From time to time I read the Bible. In those conditions, only the Bible can help one find peace for the soul. And sometimes, looking up, I stared for long periods of time through the bars of the window at the sky. I must say that a Russian prison is very uncomfortable. The cells are always crowded, dirty and smokey, because everyone is allowed to smoke inside. I always try to choose a place close to the window for fresh air.

In our cell there were six people, and everybody saw that I was reading the Bible. There was one person among us who had spent a long time in prison. He did not like the aura which I gave off. He told me point blank that when I was summoned for questioning and left the cell, he felt better. I replied in the same way: «When I first walked into this cell, you alone smelled like a graveyard. You didn't get up, you didn't even move to greet a fellow sufferer». He always tried to hurt me, hurt, humiliate my faith, tried to make me doubt the truth of the Gospel. But I was calm and collected, and answered and acted respectably.

Wanting to shake my faith, this man asked me, «What does it mean to turn the left cheek when you are hit on the right (Matt. 5:39)?» I said something to him at random, and then said: «I will tell you tonight, I'm sorry». At that time, all my thoughts were about the upcoming trial. This man went on talking to our fellow inmates, but I did not interfere. I was in silent prayer asking God for wisdom to give him a wise answer.

Then I heard him say: «There's no way I'm going to turn my cheek to anyone! Ha ha!»

Later the conversation turned to everyday life. The man said: «Young people today have no restraints. Attacking, robbing for no reason! They don't have no authority. Yeah, if I had a run-in with such a gang... But I'd rather give them everything, let them take it... Health is more important. These scum will cripple you and not ask your name!»

I gave a start: «Aha!» I say. «You answered your own question! The thugs attacked you — that means they hit you on the cheek! Then you gave them everything just to stay alive — you turned your other cheek!»

He did not know how to answer me, so he just smiled, acknowledging that I was right. Or rather, not that I was right, but that the sayings of the Bible and God's commands are right. Because even in that man there lives an inherent idea about the truth.

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HOW I CAN FORGIVE THOSE WHO HAVE TRESPASSED AGAINST ME

Each person has been wronged, abused and sinned against at a certain point in his life. How should we react when this happens? According to the Bible, we must forgive. *Eph. 4:32* says: **«And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you»**. Similarly, it says in *the Epistle to the Colossians (3:13)*: **«Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye»**. The key idea in these two texts is that we should forgive others as God has forgiven us. Why do we forgive? Because we ourselves have been forgiven!

Forgiveness would be simple if we had to forgive only those who ask for it in sorrow and repentance. But the Bible says we should forgive *all* those who have sinned against

us, without any conditions. Refusal to truly forgive someone demonstrates resentment, bitterness, and anger none of which should be found in a Christian. In the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to forgive our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us (*Matt. 6:12*). In *the Gospel of Matthew (6:14-15)* Jesus said, **«For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses»**. In the light of other biblical texts that speak of divine forgiveness, the above verses make it clear that people who refuse to forgive others have not felt God's forgiveness.

Whenever we break God's commandments, we sin against Him. Whenever we do wrong against another person, we sin not only against him but also against God.



Seeing the greatness of God's mercy in the forgiveness of all our sins, we can realize that we have no right to withhold this grace from others. We have sinned against God infinitely more than any person can sin against us. If God forgives us so, how can we refuse to forgive others for little things?! Jesus's parable, recorded in *Matt. 18:23-*

35, is an impressive illustration of this truth. God promises that when we come to Him asking for forgiveness, He will give it to us (*1 Jn. 1:9*). Forgiveness bestowed by us should not have limits, in the same way as God's forgiveness is boundless (*Lk. 17:3-4*).

www.gotquestions.org/Russian/Russian-forgiving-others.html

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!»



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WHY GOD ORDERED ABRAHAM TO SACRIFICE ISAAC



Throughout his life, Abraham always obeyed God, but no test could have been more severe than that which is described in *the Book of Genesis (Chapter 22)*. God commanded: **«And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of»** (*Gen. 22:2*). This was a staggering requirement, for Isaac was the son of promise. How was Abraham supposed to respond? He immediately obeyed, and early in the morning the next day, he went on a journey with two servants, a donkey and his beloved son Isaac, taking along wood for the sacrifice. His unquestioning obedience to God's incomprehensible instruction glorified God and serves as an example for us. When we are obedient like Abraham, trusting that God's plan is the best possible scenario, we magnify His character and glorify Him. Abraham's obedience to this instruction exalted the supreme love of God, His reliability and His goodness, and serves as a role model. His faith in God, whom he knew and loved, led him to be among the heroes of faith in *Hebr. 11*.

God uses the faith of Abraham as an example for all who live after

him as the only means of salvation. *Gen. 15:6* says, **«And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness»**. This truth is in the foundation of the Christian faith, as outlined in *Rom. 4:3* and *Jas. 2:23*. The righteousness that was imputed to Abraham is the same righteousness imputed to us, when we by faith accept the divine sacrifice for our sins — Jesus Christ, **«For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him»** (*2 Cor. 5:21*).

The story of Abraham lies at the foundation of the New Testament doctrine of redemption — the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross for the sins of mankind. Many centuries later, Jesus said: **«Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad»** (*Jn. 8:56*). Below are some parallels between these two stories of the Bible:

- **«Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest»** (*Gen. 22:2*); **«For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...»** (*Jn. 3:16*).
 - **«get thee into the land of Moriah...»** (*Gen. 22:2*); it is believed that in this area many years later the city of Jerusalem was built, near whose walls Jesus was crucified (*Hebr. 13:12*).
 - **«offer him there for a burnt offering»** (*Gen. 22:2*); **«Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures»** (*1 Cor. 15:3*).
 - **«And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son»** (*Gen. 22:6*); **«And He bearing his cross...»** (*Jn. 19:17*).
 - **«where is the lamb for a burnt offering?»** (*Gen. 22:7*); John the Baptist said: **«Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world»** (*Jn. 1:29*).
 - Isaac — the son — was obedient to his father by becoming the sacrifice (*Gen. 22:9*); Jesus prayed: **«O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt»** (*Matt. 26:39*).
 - Resurrection — Isaac's figuratively and Jesus' in reality: **«By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure»** (*Hebr. 11:17-19*); Jesus **«was buried, and... He rose again the third day according to the scriptures»** (*1 Cor. 15:4*).
- www.gotquestions.org/Russian/Russian-Abraham-Isaac.html

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIAN

What does it mean to be «born again»? The biblical text recorded in *the Gospel of John (3:1-21)*, provides an answer to this question. The Lord Jesus Christ is talking to Nicodemus, a known Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish government). Nicodemus came to Jesus at night to ask him questions that worried him.

Speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus said: **«Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God»**. Nicodemus asked: **«How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again»** (*Jn. 3:3-7*).

Nicodemus had a real need. He needed a change of heart, meaning a spiritual transformation. New life or rebirth happens when a person believes in God and receives eternal life (*2 Cor. 5:17; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3; 1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1-4, 18*). In *Jn. 1:12, 13*, it says that «born again» also implies that through faith in Jesus Christ we acquire the status of God's children.

From this arises a logical question: why do we need to be born again? The Apostle Paul in

Eph. 2:1 says: **«...you.... who were dead in trespasses and sins...»** In *the Epistle to the Romans (3:23)*, he wrote: **«For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God»**. In this regard, we need birth from above to receive forgiveness for sins and to restore our relationship with God.

How does this happen? The text in *Eph. 2:8-9* states: **«For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast»**. When a person is «saved», it is only because he received birth from above, spiritual renewal, and now through the new birth is a child of God. We receive «spiritual birth» when we believe in Jesus Christ and that He paid for our sins through His death on the cross: **«Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature»** (*2 Cor. 5:17a*).

If the Holy Spirit prompts you to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, then you need to be born from above. Do you want to pray the



prayer of repentance and become a new creation in Christ today? **«But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God»** (*Jn. 1:12-13*).

If so, then make the decision about repentance right now.

www.gotquestions.org/Russian/Russian-Born-Again.html

