

# MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!



## PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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

(John 8:32)

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*«I say to you that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner who repents, more than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance» (Luke 15:7).*

Who in this world came without sin and whose life can be called a saint? The answer is no one: there is no one among people other than the One, whom two thousand years ago the holy Virgin Mary birthed and whose name is Jesus Christ. This is the only one who lived and lives on earth, who came to this world without sin and who never sinned, was crucified for our sins and on the third day he resurrected so that we (mankind) through faith in this atoning sacrifice could receive forgiveness and justification before God. Therefore all people without exception are sinners, as Scripture says: *«...There is none righteous, no not one...» (Romans 3:10), «for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God» (Romans 3:23).* The Holy Scripture clearly characterizes this sinful world — as a world of sin, full of cunning and evil deeds. And if it were not for the birth of the Son of God, whose name is Christ; this sinful world would long ago have been destroyed. God still tolerates us, as it is written, *«The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some count slowness, but is long-suffering toward us, not purposing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance» (2 Peter 3:9).*

Surprisingly, almost all people understand without exception that one way or another their lives cannot be called holy, but some have a desire for repentance while others do not. Why is it that all people recognize their sinful nature, but few come to repentance?

Is it right to think that if you have never been drunk, never killed, robbed, raped, you have nothing to repent of? Maybe someone thinks that sin can be weighed on a scale for its size? Are lying and killing one and the same? Surely the majority will say: «Of course not!» However, no one realizes that lying is the beginning of a path to those terrible crimes that a person subsequently commits. It is the devil who pushes people to commit crimes; the Holy Scriptures calls the Devil the father of lies: *«You are of the Devil as father, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not abide in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it» (John 8:44).*

That's why Jesus Christ came to the world, so that the world would accept His word and commandments and finally realize all the evil it lives in. Why did God need the birth of Jesus Christ through the Virgin Mary? There are many answers to this question, but the main answer is God's love for all people. It is because of the great love for humanity that God sent His Son into the world: *«For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him*

*should not perish but have everlasting life» (John 3:16).*

The birth of Jesus Christ is the gift of God to all mankind. If it weren't for his birth, then there would not be a holy atoning sacrifice for sin, for the salvation of all. He took upon himself the sins of the whole world so that every person through faith in this saving sacrifice could receive justification and inherit eternal life. And most importantly, Jesus Christ showed us all the meaning of earthly life, without which life is simply empty.

## WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LIFE?



I had to read a huge amount of both philosophical and theological literature. However, I could not find in it an unambiguous answer to the question «What is the main meaning of earthly life?» I have found many different answers, but I found the main answer regarding the meaning of life only in the Gospel. And it was amazing to me that this meaning of life, in fact, is open and accessible to all, but many do not understand this.

What really is the main meaning of life, about which the Gospel speaks? And why do we, believers and followers of Christ, speak so little of it?

Today, there are controversies of this teaching, on what is the truth. Everyone is trying to prove something to each other missing the most important thing. The veiled love between Christians of different churches is evident today. In many cases they talk about love, not loving.

Why, two thousand years after the birth of Jesus Christ the single Christian church mentioned in the Bible is divided into many churches and continues to separate? Why, instead of unification do we move farther and farther apart, although we are called Christians?

*«And Jesus answered and said to them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many will come in My name, saying, I am Christ, and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that*

*you are not troubled, for all these things must occur; but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in different places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to be afflicted and will kill you. And you will be hated of all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, and will betray one another, and will hate one another. And many false prophets will rise and deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many will become cold» (Matthew 24:4-12).*

When you read the words of Jesus Christ about the signs of the end times, you clearly understand why in the last few years love will grow cold in many. It turns out that everything is very simple: the Lord, being on earth, left the whole mankind the main meaning of life, which for already more than two millennia people are persistently losing, and perhaps do not even understand what is the main meaning of life. It turns out that we believe supposedly in one God (here I'm talking only about Christians), we read one Bible, but every day we move away from the main meaning of life to unreachable distances.

I will not bore readers with hints about the true meaning of life. Surely, after I voice it, many will say: «we knew about it!» Perhaps they knew, but the command left by the Lord did not become the basis of your entire life.

So, all our problems lie in the absence of the true meaning of life — in the absence of love. All Holy Scripture is permeated with the instruction of love. The Lord through the Gospel directs our consciousness to the main meaning of life which is love in every possible way. All His commandments left for us speak only about the most important thing, about the love of God and neighbor.

And if each of us understood that the main meaning of life is love, then our world would be very different.

The devil's substitution of the true meaning of life mind of man is the cause of all our troubles, including hostility toward each other, gossip, quarrels, envy, hatred and all that lawlessness that manifests in a person. Everyone knows about love but not many realize that it is love that is the true meaning of our life, to which every person should approach.

When a person reaches his goal, he gets a certain satisfaction and joy. If this goal is love for all of us, then not only one person will be happy but the whole world too. The absence of love is the absence of God. For Scripture unequivocally says: *«...God is love» (1 John 4:8).* Therefore, where there is no God, there is no love. And where there is no love, there is no meaning of life. And if the true meaning of human life is not love, then the life of a person becomes useless and empty.

Today, for many, it is time to repent, even for those who, by their vanity, attributed themselves to the righteous. For every man has what he can confess and reveal only to God. Perhaps, therefore, the Lord said thus: *«I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance» (Luke 15:7, NKJV).*

I. GORIK.

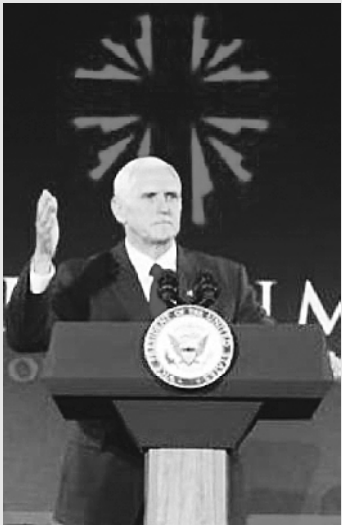
## CHRISTIAN NEWS

### Members of the US government gather once a week to study the Bible

High-ranking members of the administration of the US President Donald Trump, once a week gather in the White House, where they study the Bible. This is reported by Christian Broad-casting Network.

Spiritual exercises are led by the Protestant theologian and former professional basketball player Ralph Drollinger, founder of the spiritual exercises Capitol Ministries, dedicated to religious work with American political leaders.

Drollinger organized a Bible study in 40 state capitals, a number of foreign countries, and now for a dozen members of President Trump's cabinet. Among them are Secretary of Health Tom Price, Energy Secretary Rick Perry, Secretary for Education Betsy DeVos, Minister of Agriculture Sonny Purdue, US Attorney General Jeff Sessions.



The curator of the program at the White House is Vice President Mike Pence, who plans to join the group as soon as the schedule allows him. President Trump is also invited to study the Bible, every week he receives a copy of the report on the next lesson from Drollinger.

The head of Capitol Ministries is very pleased with his students. «This is the best Bible study I've ever taught in my life», he told CBN. Characterizing the members of the circle, he remarked: «They are very obedient. These are pious personalities, whom God has exalted».

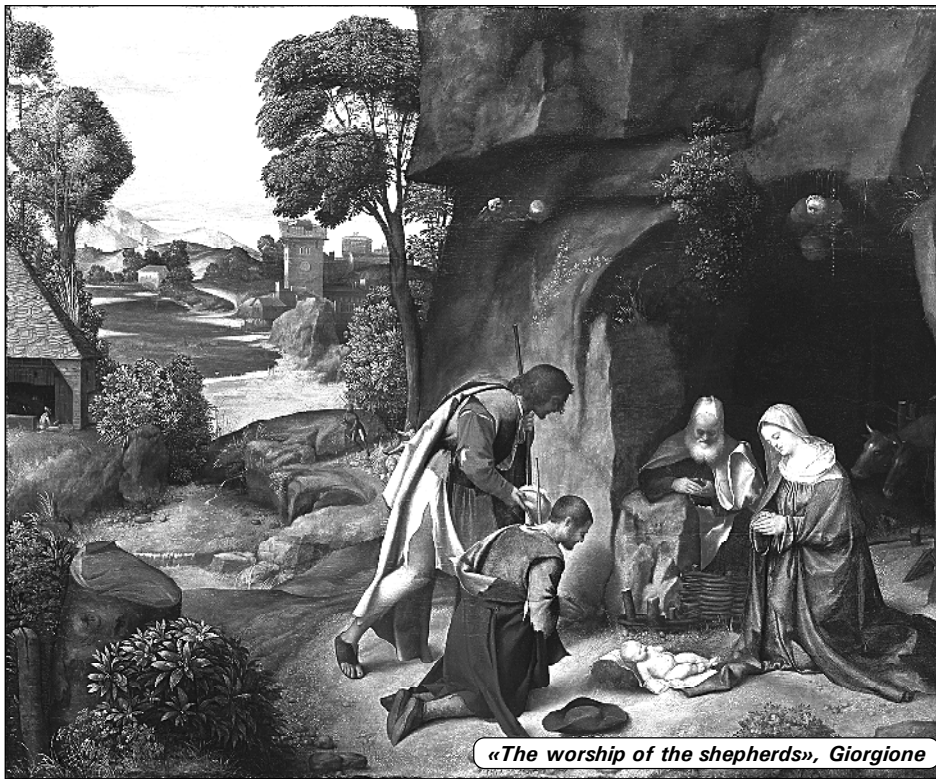
Drollinger sees in Vice President Pence a lot of similarities with biblical personalities such as wonderful Joseph, Mordecai, and Daniel. All of them at one time or another occupied the number two position in the government. And he compares President Trump with the legendary biblical strongman Samson.

<https://cnl.news>

The birth of God in the flesh two thousand years ago forever changed the course of human history. God the Father gave to this sinful world the most precious thing that He had — His Son. Only in eternity a person can fully understand the price of such a Gift.

*Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory (1 Timothy 3:16).*

In this one verse of the Epistle of Timothy contains all the Good News. Jesus is God in the human body, Who came to people who were degrading and waiting for the Messiah. Left the glory of Heaven, He came to give freedom



«The worship of the shepherds», Giorgione

one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

God loved the descendants of Adam, who could not cope with sin. The first time Jesus came into the world to save it. Every day on earth, people receive the gift of eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

God gave mankind two thousand years to correct their mistakes. The second time Jesus will come is to judge it.

#### 3. Manifestation of God's salvation

*But the angel said to them, «Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord» (Luke 2:10-11).*

## What does the Birth of Jesus Christ Mean for us?

and a new life to all those who believed in Him. Jesus knows firsthand how difficult it is for a righteous man to live in this insane, morally corrupt world: He was betrayed, hated, insulted, humiliated, rewarded with evil for good; the closest people renounced Him; He knows all the temptations of the world, but He did not commit a single sin.

Studying in the Word of God the reaction of Jesus to what is happening, we learn how He acted in those or other situations. This is a hint for us. When you do not know what to do, ask yourself the question: what would Jesus do in my place?

Jesus justified Himself in the Spirit: He was moved by the Holy Spirit, and He conquered the carnal works. All the angels saw His glory when He resurrected.

Thanks to the followers of Jesus, the gospel spread throughout the whole earth: there is no place where people do not know about Him. Jesus — is not one of many, He — is the one and only living God who died for all mankind and resurrected in glory. God offers salvation to every person, without imposing, and the choice is — up to the person.

*For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that He might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. <...> It is written: As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God (Romans 14:9, 11).*

His Word was, is and will be actual and true always. This is a message to people, a guide for their lives. Jesus — is eternal, the Word of God — is eternal, and everything that is not built on an eternal basis is temporarily and doomed to destruction.

Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, God through the prophet Isaiah spoke about the birth of the Messiah and about Whom He will become for us.

*For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).*

The Son of God became the Son of Man, so that the sons of men may become sons of God. On his shoulders are epaulettes, symbolizing the supreme power over all mankind.

#### JESUS — WONDERFUL

He came to the world in a wonderful way: the Holy Spirit descended on the God-fearing Virgin Mary, and she became pregnant. God chose this pure vessel to fulfill a great mission on earth. Jesus was born from the seed of Heavenly Father. He was not a descendant of Adam and had DNA that was not infected with sin.

When born in our heart, Jesus forbids sin to rule over us. Therefore, the regenerated person can say «no» to sin; he becomes disgusted from those actions and actions committed before repentance. The righteous nature of Jesus in him reacts to all worldly abominations. Never would the thoughts of murderers, drug addicts, prostitutes, thieves and other sinner's change, if God's miracle — the birth from above, had not occurred.

#### JESUS — COUNSELOR

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you (John 14:16-17).*

The Holy Spirit is the best counselor and advisor for us. He quietly says in the heart how to act in those or other situations. He gives answers to all the questions and directs to the right path. He is always there.

#### JESUS — MIGHTY GOD

Our strength is in His name.

*Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him (1 Corinthians 1:26-29).*

God needs a vessel through which He will act, who will not ascribe to himself His glory, which He will fill with His power.

#### JESUS — EVERLASTING FATHER

One day a person's heart will stop beating. Where will he spend eternity? God wants to give all people Heaven, and the devil, knowing his end, wants to take with him to hell, as many victims as possible. Everyone chooses a lord to whom he will serve and worship.

Jesus says: follow Me, and I will bring you to the abode of Heavenly Father

*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).*

#### JESUS — PRINCE OF PEACE

Peace — is God's shalom (the Hebrew word for «peace») in the heart. The birth of the Child brings a person joy, peace in the heart and light. This is the kind of peace that this world can never give.

The following demonstrations will help us understand the meaning of the birth of Jesus. Manifestations — are proclamations of supreme power.

##### 1. Manifestation of God's faithfulness

God said in the prophets that people will come to the truth: the second Adam will come, Who will correct the mistakes of the first. The first time, God said this in the Garden of Eden.

*So the Lord God said to the serpent, «Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel» (Genesis 3:14-15).*

*God always remains faithful to His Word: For no word from God will ever fail (Luke 1:37).*

##### 2. Manifestation of God's love

*For God so loved the world that He gave His*

Israel during the birth of Jesus was under the yoke of Rome. Many thought that the long-awaited Savior would deliver them from Roman power. You can have external independence, but be in devil's captivity.

We are free from the devil's captivity, because the Blood of Jesus has forever redeemed us from slavery. He was born in our heart, which had the foul smell of sin. In the heart, a lot of negative has accumulated for years, which only Jesus can sort out. A hard stone can not immediately turn into soft clay. This is the process to which you need to be prepared. The main thing — is to allow Jesus to do with the heart all that He wants.

#### 4. Manifestation of God's deliverance

*But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, «Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in Her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins» (Matthew 1:20-21).*

If the Son frees, indeed, man will be free. Salvation and freedom are only in Him.

The devil wanted to destroy Jesus in the first days of His birth. On the orders of Herod, who feared the appearance of a new long-awaited king, male babies were killed in Bethlehem and its surrounding areas. But Joseph saved the Child of God: he went from Israel to Egypt until the death of King Herod.

The birth of the Infant into the world brought deliverance to the people. The word «deliver» in T. Efremova's dictionary means the following: save from danger, from something painful, helping to avoid anything undesirable, burdensome; liberate.

The religiously-minded Pharisees hated the King-Redeemer because of envy: people followed Jesus in crowds, gaining freedom and spiritual fresh bread.

Christians follow in the footsteps of Their Teacher: the world does not understand them, rejects them, and hates them. But even the smallest ray of light is stronger than darkness, and the smallest flame of a candle can light a lot of candles around.

#### 5. Manifestation of God's return to people

*The virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son, and they will call Him Immanuel, which means «God with us» (Matthew 1:23).*

Now there are no walls that separate the heart of man and God. The veil by Jesus' death was torn from top to bottom. It was God who was the initiator of the restoration of relations. And He is with us always, great and almighty.

Jesus gave us everything necessary for life and holiness, everything that people lost in the first Adam. Receiving from God, do not forget to thank Him and ask Him the question: Lord, what can I do for You?

The mystery of Christmas is revealed: Jesus — is the Savior and God, who opened our spiritual eyes. He is the Morning Star, which has risen in our hearts, leading us to the Kingdom of Heaven.

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PASTOR'S WORD

WHAT DO WE FEED OUR ENEMY?

Who is our enemy? Christians may say, we have no enemies other than the devil. Yes, and that is true. When the Bible speaks of a human's victory over the devil, it doesn't mean they have destroyed him (terminated his existence), but rather it speaks of the destruction of the devil's schemes and of his expulsion from a particular territory. In war, the enemy territory is the location from which the enemy leads the attack. In this sense, the enemy territory for us Christians is our flesh through which the enemy attacks and tempts us. It is necessary to clarify that it is not the body itself that is a tempting substance, but what lives in it. It is the shabby, carnal nature with its pride, laziness, selfishness and a tendency to all that is sinful. It was the flesh who is the enemy of the reborn human spirit and of it is said the following:

**Gal. 5:17** — *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would.*

**Gal. 5:24** — *And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.*

**Rom. 7:18-19** — *For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise.*

As we know, the devil performs the necessary work to prepare God's children for the kingdom of heaven. After the fall of mankind everyone person who comes into this world has something in their flesh, it can be called an «infection,» with which the devil corrupted Adam and Eve (the first people) and which is passed on from generation to generation. This infection is a human tendency to sin, which is typical of the devil, with his pride, independence and rebellion against God. In the same way that doctors vaccinate people to make the body resistant to any disease, God has also allowed the devil, an infection carrier, to come close to His new creation, that is people, to a close distance. It is true that man has free will and was infected voluntarily — through obedience to the devil and his disobedience to the Creator.

**Luke 17:1** — *And he said unto his disciples, It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come; but woe unto him, through whom they come!*

The end goal for a person is such, that in the days of his earthly life, after suffering the consequences of sinful infection, he should develop his own immunity against pride and sin, to be stable and reliable successor of the eternal kingdom. That is why the salvation of man has opposite values in comparison to those who are earthly minded.. People of this world appreciate the temporary things: outer beauty, influence, mind, wealth.

**1 John 2:16** — *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

Therefore, man's salvation is not on the basis of his personal achievements and merits, but of outside help — Christ the Savior. This is a blow to personal dignity and pride, because man cannot save himself.

To gain eternal life, the temporary life must be ignored and all the things that are appreciated by this world.

To be great in the kingdom of heaven, it is necessary to be humble now.

**Eph. 2:8-9** — *for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not of works, that no man should glory.*

**Matt. 10:39** — *He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

**Matt. 20:26** — *...for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.*

Each person carries a responsibility for the part of the

universe that is given to him, for which he will answer before God. And this part that we are given is our internal world. Does it follow after the laws of the Kingdom of God or after the laws of this world? Every sober minded individual has a responsibility for themselves, for their appointed internal and spiritual strengths which he can



use according to his choices. He is responsible for his thoughts and choices.

In the book of Isaiah a question is asked: «Who can abide in the Lord's holiness and be on His holy mountain?» and the answer is given below.

**Isa. 33:15** — *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from taking a bribe, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil.*

Why is it that, according to this text, a person must close their ears, so that they would not hear of bloodshed, and their eyes, to not see evil? Will this really reduce amount of evil? And will our lack of action make it better for the victims of bloodshed? No, the text here does not refer to those instances where we may be able to help establish justice and protect the innocent. The main idea is rather that someone's grief should not entertain us as in the way that it happened in ancient Rome in the amphitheaters and today is seen in movies. This world lies in wickedness and every day many atrocities are performed in many corners of the Earth. This cannot be our daily bread. It is impossible to read or listen to everything that happens on our planet, and if we try to do this, it will not only distract us from what is important, but will also bring damage to our souls. We should not take up our time with those things that do not have a direct relation to us and which we cannot change. We should give them to our Lord, as the righteous judge, for Him to approve the just and judge the evildoers.

God gave people a free will and everyone must come to the understanding and be convinced of the law of the harvest.

**Gal. 6:7** — *...for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

Someone may experience grief because they are reaping what they sowed to others. If we will make ourselves full of snippets of someone's life without knowing the big picture we will come to the wrong conclusions. Here is what the Bible says:

**1 Cor. 4:5** — *Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God.*

But returning to that for which we will give account for to God. Let us talk about our responsibility. We already said that God will ask us of all our choices, of our deeds and actions. We will be tested to which degree we are controlled by our old, sinful nature and to what degree our actions were influenced by it.

If a person does not turned to God and is not born from above, then the devil is his relative because he carries the same nature as a person that is not reborn. This is what Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews.

**John 8:44** — *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do.*

If we are born from above and have a new, contrary to the devil nature, then the devil will truly be our adversary. But if we are connected with God and remain in the right condition of our spirit, then our enemy is not scary. As it is said in a proverb, that a ship is not frightened by the water that is on the outside but rather by the water that is on the inside. Our salvation and reward is determined by if we will stand on guard and reject the dirty waters of the world or let it in. The enemy will search in our flesh quality that are like his so that he may use these weak points to subdue us. If we still have pride, that he usually finds and uses those who may unjustly offend us. If we rely on people instead of on the Lord, people will let us down. All of this is necessary, so we may see the weak points in our lives and fix them.

Sometimes we may knowingly follow our flesh, feeding and supporting it, and then we find ourselves defeated in the battle against it.

Therefore it is very important to know, what do we feed our enemy? In the current context, what do we our old man? Let us point out a few unnoticeable things which are food for our old, Adamic nature, through which it is sustained and obtains strength and eventually begins to conquer our spirit.

- Satisfying its curiosity
- Slackness and lack of control over oneself
- Achieve knowledge in order to be exalted above others
- Search for human praise or boasting
- Dreams of one's own personhood
- Self-justification (rather than admitting mistakes)
- Dedication of time and money on entertainment
- Excessive concern with one's appearance
- Care of your own image
- Lust (lack of control over sexual desires)
- Insults, envy
- Daydreaming, etc.

To sum up this discussion, I would like to mention a few texts from the Bible

**Eph. 4:27** — *...neither give place to the devil.*

**Rom. 8:6** — *For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace*

**Rom. 8:13** — *...for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live*

Aleksandr BORISENKO.

Angels for Help

One person wanted to participate in the construction of a temple, but he did not have much money. He left to the mountains and looked into a granite slab, broke it off, chipped and polished it and decided to carry it to the temple as a gift. He started looking for people who could carry it, but no one would carry such a massive rock to the temple for less than five coins and he did not have this money.

But all of a sudden four small and frail peasants come to him and say:

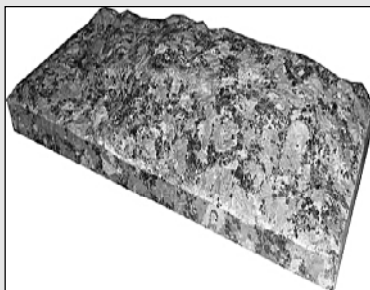
— So be it, we will carry your rock for coin, but you have to help us. We will put the rock on your back and we will help you from four sides.

— But I will be crushed immediately by this heavy slab and you are all so skinny, you won't be able to help either he replied

— Decide for yourself, and think about why you want to give a gift for the temple, for God or to show off in front of people

This man thought and said

— I want to try for God



He prayed and offered his back. The frail men put the slab on his back and for some reason it seemed lighter than light. They quickly made their way to the temple.

The man turned around to pay the frail men but they were nowhere to be found.

Endless bread

Once there was a poor old woman. She was so poor, that sometimes she did not even have anything to bake some bread. She had a sinister neighbor who always reproached the old woman for her poverty. One time the neighbor noticed that everytime she goes to bake bread, the old woman's chimney also releases smoke as if bread is baking.

— Did this poor lady also get rich? — the neighbor was surprised. — I should go over there and check.

The neighbor comes to the old woman and sees her pulling a loaf out of the oven. The old woman sat her neighbor down and offered her some fresh bread.

The neighbor was surprised. — Where do you get the bread? Not long ago you were the poorest of the poor, but now you are baking bread daily?

The old woman told her that she



became tired of poverty. And so that she would not be embarrassed, she started putting some flaming wood in the oven every time the neighbor would bake. A week passed, and another and the old woman thought, «Let me ask God for mercy every time I let my oven smoke.»

That's what I started doing. I put some wood in the oven prayed, and all of a sudden there is a knock on the window. A poor old man, all in rags is asking for bread. But this house doesn't have even a piece of bread. The old woman gave the old man her last potato.

He ate it and asked for bread again.

— Where will I get bread for you old man? — asked the old woman.

— Get it out of the oven says the old man.

The old woman looked into the oven, and there laid a fresh loaf of bread. She gasped, pulled the loaf out of the oven and started feeding the old man. He ate the whole thing and asked for more.

— I have no more bread, — says the old woman.

— Get more out of the oven again, — says the old man.

The old woman looks again, and another loaf is there. She pulls the loaf out of the oven, completely surprised.

— How long will God give me bread?

— As long as you will share with all the hungry with a clean heart, — says the old man

Since then no bread ever goes to waste in the kind old woman's home.

<http://pritchi.ru>

Every person has his own idea of prayer. One may think that prayer is a set of magical spells, the repetition of which guarantees success, luck and well-being. Another believes that prayer is a set of religious expressions that you need to know by heart, in order to scream and reach out to God. Still others believe that this is one form of blatant religiosity, while the fourth believes prayer is a personal relationship with God and a form of communication with the Lord. What is prayer? Does God really hear our prayers? Why doesn't God always answer prayers? What is needed for God to not just hear but also to answer prayers? The answers to these and other questions follow.

### What do we need to know about prayer?

Prayer is a conversation with God, the communion of our spirit with God. It is not meditation and not a set of spells. This is a direct appeal to our Creator. Prayer can be spoken aloud or in thoughts, constant or intermittent, with or without an occasion. In the Bible, prayer is called «supplication» (Exodus 32:11), «pouring out the soul before the Lord» (1 Samuel 1:15), «crying to heaven» (2 Chronicles 32:20), «searching for God» (Job 8:5), «approaching the Lord» (Psalm 72:28), «kneeling» (Ephesians 3:14).

Prayer requires one to have faith in the Lord, in His ability and desire to communicate with us, and His omnipotence and total control over all.

In order to be heard, prayer must be sincere (Hebrews 10:22), spoken with respect, admiration, humility before our Lord and Creator and desire to submit to His Divine will. Prayer should be pronounced with the belief that God can hear our prayer and answer it, fulfilling His word: *Ask, and it will be given to you...* (Matthew 7:7-8, 21:22, Mark 11:24, John 14:13-14). Also, prayer should be performed in the name of Jesus Christ (John 16:23-24, 15:16, Ephesians 2:18, 5:20, Colossians 3:17, 1 Peter 2:5).

As for specific words (the text of the prayer) or behavior during prayer, the Bible does not give any one rule. On the contrary, the Scriptures show that different men of faith prayed differently. Some people prayed on their knees (1 Samuel 8:54, 2 Chronicles 6:13, Psalms 94:6, Isaiah 45:23, Luke 22:41, Acts 7:60; 9:40; Ephesians 3:14, etc.). Others bowed their heads or bowed to the ground before the Lord (Genesis 24:26, 52, Exodus 4:31; 12:27; Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:35, etc.). The third extended their hands to heaven (1 Kings 8:22, 38, 54, Psalm 27:2, 62:5, 88:9, 1 Timothy 2:8, etc.). The fourth prayed standing up (1 Samuel 1:26, 1 Kings 8:14, 55, 2 Chronicles 20:9, Mark 11:25, Luke 18:11, 13).

Many places of the Holy Scripture encourage us to pray (Exodus 22:23, 27; 1 Kings 3:5; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalms 36:4; Isaiah 55:6; Joel 2:32; 1 Thessalonians 5:17, etc.).

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 — *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

Isaiah 55:6 — *Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.*

James 5:13 — *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.*

#### THE PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER

There are different types of prayer: secret prayer (Matthew 6:6), general or family prayer and glorification of the Lord, (1 Thessalonians 5:25, 2 Thessalonians 3:1). Intercessory prayer is not only necessary, but is

also the command of the Lord (Numbers 6:23; Job 42:8; Isaiah 62:6; Psalms 121:6; 1 Timothy 2:1; James 5:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:25).

James 5:14-18 — *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.*

#### ANSWER TO PRAYER

The Bible contains many examples of answered prayers. They are mentioned in the following Scriptures: Psalms 3; 6:9; 17:7; 27:6; 29:2-4; 33:5; 117:5; James 5:16-18, etc.

Other examples of prayers heard by God:

• Abraham (Genesis 17:18, 20, 18:23-32, 20:7, 17-18).

• Moses:

— for Pharaoh (Exodus 8:12-13, 30-31, Exodus 9:33),

— for the Israelites (Exodus 17:11, 13, 32:11-14, 31-34, Numbers 21:7-8),

— for Mariam (Numbers 12:13),

— for Aaron (Deuteronomy 9:20).

• Samuel (1 Kings 7:5-12).

• Solomon (1 Kings 8, 2 Chronicles 6).

• Elijah (1 Kings 17:20-23).

• Elisha (2 Kings 4:33-36).

• Isaiah (2 Kings 19).

• Jeremiah (Jeremiah 42:2-10).

• Apostle Peter (Acts 9:40).

• The Apostolic Church (Acts 12:5-12).

• Apostle Paul (Acts 28:8).

#### EXAMPLES OF PRAYER IN THE BIBLE

• The prayer of Abraham's servant for a wife for his master's son (Genesis 24:10-20).

• Jacob's prayer to God that He would grant reconciliation between him and his brother (Genesis 32:24-30, 33:1-4).

• Samson's prayer to God that He should deliver him from thirst (Judges 15:18-20).

• King David's prayer to God that He destroy the conspiracy of Ahithophel (2 Kings 15:31, 16:20-23, 17:14-23).

• The Prophet Daniel's Prayer for Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation (Daniel 2:16-23).

• The prayer of the prophet Nehemiah so that God would soften the heart of the king of Persia and allow Jews to return to their land and restore Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:11).

• Prayer of Esther and Mordecai for the deliverance of Jews from extermination (Esther 4:15-17).

• The prayer of the faithful for apostle Peter in prison (Acts 12:1-12).

• Apostle Paul's prayer for God to deliver him from the «sting in the flesh». God gave him spiritual power, while the stinger in the flesh did not remove (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

*Prayer is like the dove that Noah sent forth, which blessed him not only when it returned with an olive-leaf in its mouth, but when it never returned at all* (Edward Robinson).

#### WHY DO WE NEED TO PRAY?

God knows all our needs and wants and He can give us everything we need without prayer. However, He does not do this to bring us closer to Himself, so that we realize our need for our Heavenly Father. God's purpose is not to force us to kneel down and

beg Him. He wants us to seek Him and want to communicate with Him.

### The prayer «Our Father»

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4) is the unity and the rule of prayer given to us by the Lord. However, it must be remembered that the prayer «Our Father» is rather a general plan of prayer, rather than a prayer itself.

«Our Father»: an appeal to Heavenly Father; relationship with God as the Father.

«Hallowed be Thy Name»: the personality of God; allows God to be the God of your life.

B. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said: **Matthew 5:8** — *Blessed are the pure in heart.* How are they blessed? The answer is in the same passage: *...for they will see God.*

C. Practical application. When you pray, do you need something from God or are you looking for the face of God? Do not forget that only the pure in heart will see God. When you seek God in prayer, make sure that the thoughts of your heart are pure.

How can one have a pure heart? Ask the Lord to examine your heart, as King David did: **Psalms 139:23-24** — *Search me, O God, and*

between you and God, then check yourself: Do you harbor anger at your neighbor, do you hold a grudge against someone else whether be it a friend or relative, have you forgotten to forgive one of them? Always remember the words of the Lord Jesus: *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy* (Matthew 5:7).

#### 3. THE LAW OF FAITH

James 1:6-8 — *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive*

## TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

# PRAYER



«Let Your Kingdom come»: May His kingdom be within us (Luke 17:21).

«Let Your will be done»: God has a plan for each as individually and the world as a whole. May His will be done in your life today.

«Give us this day our daily bread»: God is concerned for our physical and spiritual needs.

«Forgive us our sins (debts)»: God's forgiveness; forgiveness means repentance.

«Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil»: God's protection.

«For Thine is the kingdom, and power and glory»: God's greatness, supremacy.

The first three requests concern God and His glory: «Your name», «Your kingdom», «Your will». The second three requests concern ourselves: «give us», «forgive us», «do not lead us in».

The most important thing that needs to be paid attention to is that prayer should be addressed only to God. Why? Because He is God and only He is able to answer our prayers.

### The Seven Laws of Prayer

#### 1. CLEAN HEART LAW

Psalm 66:18 — *If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*

A. God does not listen to the prayer of the unrepentant sinner: **Isaiah 59:1-2** — *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or His ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.*

*know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Confess your sins and weaknesses to God and ask for His forgiveness and spiritual healing: **Psalms 51:11-14** — *Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.*

2. THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS

Anger and malice fill the world. They became a familiar phenomenon at work, school, in stores, on the streets, and even in churches. However, anger and malice are a powerful obstacle in our prayers.

A. Most of us know The Lord's Prayer by heart. But not everyone realizes that when we say the words *forgive us our sins (debts), as we forgive our debtors* (Luke 11:4), we often pronounce ourselves a verdict. When we ask God's forgiveness, but we ourselves hold anger or resentment against our neighbor, we sign our own judgment.

B. Turn to the Gospel of Mark 11:25-26: *And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*

C. Application. The spirit of forgiveness is something that every one of us sometimes lacks. If you feel that God does not hear your prayers, or if it seems to you that something stands in the way

anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

A. It must be remembered that **lacking faith is doubt: Hebrews 11:6** — *And without faith it is impossible to please God...*

B. If you pray, believe and trust in God. Otherwise, why pray at all? C. What do you trust more?

Your own feelings? The circumstances which surround you?

Your own eyes and ears? The little ones! Start trusting God! In **Mark 11:22** Jesus said: *...Have faith in God.*

We trust the bank but why don't we trust God? Others begin to believe **only when** they see. But Christians must believe, and **then** they will see.

4. THE LAW OF GOD'S WILL

A. Correct your reasoning behind your prayers

James 4:3 — *You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*

One pastor prayed and saw Jesus crying in a vision. He went to Jesus and asked: «Lord, why are you crying?» And Jesus answered: «I receive more prayers for new cars and houses than for perishing souls.»

It must be remembered that God is not a Goldfish, nor a gin from a bottle and not Santa Claus. Prayer should not be self-centered. It should first of all be directed to the search for our Creator, the achievement of spiritual growth, the perfection of one's spiritual personality and the well-being of one's neighbor.

The goal of prayer should be to **glorify God** and not for **our pleasure**. Knowledge of God's will helps to properly direct our prayers.



## REMEMBER JESUS' WORDS:

...Blessed are those who have not seen and believed (John 20:29).

### A. Prayer in accordance with God's will

1 John 5:14-15 — *And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him.*

In The Lord's Prayer we find an example of praying in accordance with the will of God: *Thy will be done on earth as well as in heaven.*

We believe that we know God's will, but this is not always true. Therefore, never assume anything and always strive to know the will of God then your prayer will never go unheeded: **Ephesians 5:17** — *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

### 5. THE LAW OF JESUS

**A. John 14:14** — *If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.*

Has it ever happened to you that you wrote a check to someone, but you forgot to sign it? And without your signature, this check is invalid! Similarly, without the name of Jesus, our prayer is not valid. We do not pray to Buddha or Krishna, we pray to the Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ.

### B. The Name of Jesus is not a magic word or spell

The Bible says: *Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:11-12).*

### C. Praying in the name of Jesus Christ...

- 1) we recognize Jesus as our Lord and Savior,
- 2) we recognize that access to the Father lies only through the Son,
- 3) we proclaim unity with Jesus (in words and deeds).

### 6. THE LAW OF SPECIFIC PRAYER

In the movie «Wizards» Ivanushka (this role is performed by Aleksandr Abdulov) got to the magic wand and decided to use it to call Alenushka. He waved his magic wand three times and said: «I want Alyonushka to be here!» Immediately the whole hut overcooked and all sorts of things climbed from all angles. Ivanushka was taken aback and indignant that the wand did not work, because Alyonushka did not appear in the room. But then they explained to him that Alyonushka appeared, but not the one. The wand could know which Alyonushka he was talking about. So she called candies «Alyonushka», dolls «Alyonushka», a dish set «Alyonushka», a cow named Alyonushka and so on.

### A. When we pray, our prayer should be specific

☉ If you pray for forgiveness, it is necessary to specify the sin for which you are asking God for forgiveness, and not to ask for forgiveness for all your sins in general. Of course, He already knows all your sins and He can forgive them all. But the problem is that often we do not know for ourselves what sins we want to be forgiven for. Therefore, do not be afraid to call your sin by name, repent in it before the Lord and ask forgiveness and strength not to repeat it.

☉ If you are asking for healing, be extremely precise: describe the problem, show God what exactly hurts you, then ask for healing.

☉ If you pray for unsaved friends or relatives, be as specific as possible. It is not necessary to

simply list the names of all relatives and friends in prayer. Spend special time in prayer for each of your friends or relatives. Always remember that your individual prayer for each soul shows God how much you worry about this or that person.

☉ If you are praying for other things, also be specific. Share with God your problem, need, fear, excitement, etc. Explain to Him why you need His help in this situation and how much you need what you ask for. Describe all the details. Praying in this way, we begin to realize our own needs. And sometimes (this also happens!) We realize that we do not really need what we ask of our Heavenly Father.

### B. Biblical examples of a specific prayer:

☉ The prayer of the servant of Abraham for the future wife of Isaac (**Genesis 24:10-20**).

☉ Elijah's prayer for rain (**James 5:17**).

☉ Prayer for the faithful about Peter, imprisoned in prison (**Acts 12:1-12**).

### 7. LAW OF TIME AND PLACE

#### A. The law of the place

I do not believe that the church is the only place where you can pray. Some people think that if they come to church or to the cathedral and pray there, then God will certainly hear their prayer.

Dear friends, God is able to hear a prayer spoken anywhere.

☉ Moses prayed in the wilderness.

☉ Elijah prayed on the top of the mountain.

☉ Daniel prayed in his house.

☉ Nehemiah prayed in the presence of the king.

☉ Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

☉ The disciples prayed in the upper room.

☉ Apostle Paul prayed in prison.

☉ Apostle Peter prayed on the roof.

#### B. The Law of Time

☉ **1 Thessalonians 5:17** — *Pray without ceasing. This means that we can pray at any time, no matter what situation we are in.*

☉ Nevertheless, our prayer is very important for God, therefore, each of us needs to allocate **special time** for communication with the Lord.

Let us illustrate this idea in the following way.

Imagine the following two situations:

☉ You have a serious problem. You come to a friend to ask for help. And while you explain the essence of the matter to him, he listens to you and at the same time vacuums the floors. **How would you like that?**

☉ Another situation: a friend comes to visit you, goes to the toilet or is going to take a shower and, while he does it, screams from the bathroom: «By the way, I had a problem and I need your help». **Would you like that?**

Similarly, God is upset when we do not give Him the time, attention and respect that He deserves. Therefore, we advise each of you to choose a special place and time for communication with your Creator.

### CONCLUSION

Today you got acquainted with the seven laws of prayer:

1. The law of the pure heart.
2. The law of the forgiving spirit.
3. The law of faith.
4. The law of God's will.
5. The law of the name of Jesus.
6. The law of a specific prayer.
7. The law of place and time.

If you follow these seven laws, your prayer will never remain unheeded and unrequited.

☉ *Material for the newspaper «Prisoner» kindly provided by Biblical Discussion Club, Montreal, Canada*  
<http://cogmtf.net/Articles/037.htm>

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**QUESTION: Christ died for me, for you, for all of us as I understand from the Bible, He conquered. The whole universe watched and saw this victory. All the celestials saw who Satan really was according to the Word of God. Why, after such a great victory on our planet does Satan have power over so many people? I know the words «freedom of choice», but when a person voluntarily says before God and all the celibates: «I want to be with God, I want to glorify Him», the believer falls under the onslaught of the defeated one, which is Satan. If there was a victory, everyone saw who is who, why do people continue to be born into sin, continue to fight and defend the truth, and continue to suffer?**

**ANSWER:** Satan only has power in the field and to the extent that God allows him. Remember the Book of Job: the righteous was subjected to severe physical trials and losses because God allowed Satan to do this over Job. Later we see that this was done first of all for Job himself. This is an example that reveals the «power» of Satan on earth today. It reveals the domain Satan can «rule», only at the physical level. Satan does not have power on the spiritual level that where the focus of our consciousness, our mind and spirit is. The way we act, think, believe, love, feel with our hearts is out of the reach of his influence. Here we are the masters, he has no leverage. And it is through the spiritual victory that was made on the Golgotha cross. He can only send us thoughts but is in our power to accept them or get rid of them.

Christ justifiably said that his kingdom is not of this world. The spiritual world is not visibly present in this world. But people have the potential of spiritual life, the capacity to communicate spiritually with God. This is due to the spirit of man — the highest substance in us.

From Adam we inherited sinful flesh and the flesh does not cease to exist after repentance and rebirth, it does not become more holy and righteous. But the born again Christian gains power over the flesh (the old nature), the power to control his desires and actions in accordance with God's order. And this is also a manifestation of the victory of Christ.

The victory is that, having undergone all trials (bodily and spiritual), Jesus Christ did not sin in any case. Even experiencing great suffering on the cross, beatings, ridicule, reproach, betrayal, and the hatred of people, He did not break the law but endured and won!

Taking into account the scope of the victory at the Calvary, we can clearly see the effects of this victory in our lives and not seek its manifestations where they cannot be.

The flesh does not cease to exist, the flesh is opposed to the spirit, and the flesh dies. If this were not so, the Christians would have lived forever since the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Remember what was said to Adam in the Garden of Eden.

**Gen. 2:17** — *...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (NKJV).*

Do you notice what the Lord said: «*you shall surely die*»? Now tell me, what kind of death is it talking about? Not about physical death, it's obvious! Otherwise, Adam would have died before he finished swallowing the fruit.

Compare these words now with what was proclaimed with the resurrection of Jesus:

**1 Cor. 15:55** — *O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*

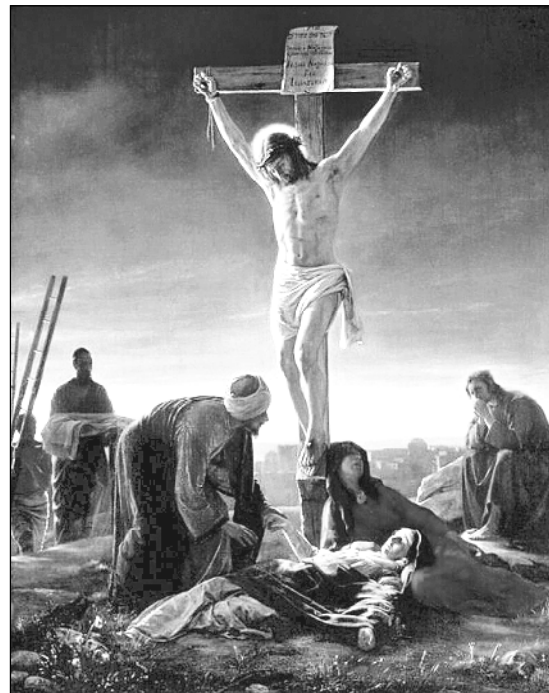
And here is the prophecy about this:

**Hosea 13:14** — *I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes.*

Do not you see the connection between the words of God spoken in the Garden of Eden, Adam's death, and the words about death in this prophecy?

Yes it talks about the same thing — about spiritual death. And it was the opportunity of spiritual rebirth that God gave to people through the victory of Christ. There is only one way out of the state of spiritual death — spiritual birth. In this victory on Golgotha, God of his own free will and love for us gives us the opportunity regain what was lost in the Garden of Eden — a spiritual life which does not end with physical death, and that is born in us, will not disappear or be taken away — forever and ever!

Now it is obvious that this victory has nothing to do with what is happening today in the physical world; victory at the Calvary — a victory in the spiritual realm. But because we combine both spiritual and physical, what we perceive in the



spiritual world is reflected onto the physical world; this is the church. This is the actions and motivation born again Christians. In this sense, this victory has its reflection in the physical world.

As for the physical flesh, it continues to be a barrier and an instrument in the hands of Satan, and thanks to this, we can be tested by God, tested in everything. The fact that birth and death continues does not imply that the victory has no manifestations or that it did not take place. There are no apparent inconsistencies; we just need to correctly interpret the realm of the victory accomplished by our Savior on the cross.

**1 Cor. 15:54** — *So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: «Death is swallowed up in victory».*

This prophecy refers to the time when Christ will come a second time (and only applies to born again people). This final of God for us, is a reward for what we endured for him here on earth.



**QUESTION: Why did God choose only the Jews? Were there no more worthy people?**

**ANSWER:** God chose one of the people who settled the earth after the Flood. He chose a man who was righteous and listened to Him, who did as God commanded. He chose this person for himself from all the inhabitants of the earth at the time. That man was Abram, later called Abraham (father of many), because God promised to make of him a great nation, God foresaw and chose His people in Abraham.

By human standards, we can say that God did not choose himself a formed people and at that time it was really so. But God lives in eternity, and he sees all life on the planet through all time. He sees the consequences of any action until the end of the world, so if we're talking about God choosing a numerous nation before it existed we can safely say God chose this nation before the creation of the world.

Abraham was the first representative; the father in the flesh of the Jewish nation. From him God made as promised, a large nation. Through His chosen among the Jewish people He taught His people His laws and regulations. He revealed himself to rest of the people in signs and wonders so that they had no doubts about the existence of their Creator and so they would worship Him alone and not the work of human hands, or some ideas, or demons.

God chose Abram Himself and told him (**Gen. 12:1-3**):

Now the Lord had said to Abram: «Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed».

It is important to note one more thing. Abram, it's not difficult to guess, already belonged to a clan (relatives). Therefore, in order to elect himself in a nation of many in this man, God commands Abram to get out of this clan, of the land in which he lived, that there is no mixing of the blessed people, and those people who were Abrams relatives.

It is also important to see in the last verse (**Genesis 12:3**) Promise to all nations (families).



<http://christiansite.in.ua/documents/questions.html>

**«Not avenging yourselves, beloved, but giving place to wrath; for it is written, «Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord» (Romans 12:19).**

Is it easy to love your enemies, as well as those who have done or are doing evil? No, it is not. Moreover, man in his sinful nature is a selfish and vindictive creature and which quite often calms themselves through revenge on the offender. Revenge is like compensation for the evil that another person has done. Some manage to take revenge at once, while others can carry their revenge for months and even years. Revenge for many becomes their main meaning of life. By human criteria for those who have offended you there must be an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth. So it was and so in many respects it is happening now, moreover, not only do unbelieving people take revenge but also believers. The Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Romans drew attention to the revenge of those who already believed in Jesus Christ and considered themselves a Christian. He addressed these Christians using the word «beloved». Why did the apostle Paul warn Christians not to take revenge on anyone? Firstly, because all people are not without sin (Romans 3:10) and even being in faith are far from perfect. Secondly, no Christian is allowed to judge another person for example choosing for them his/her punishment. As it is written, **«Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with whatever judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with whatever measure**

**you measure out, it shall be measured to you again» (Matthew 7:1-2).** And thirdly, the Lord Himself who came to earth to offer Himself for our sins left us a commandment that is completely opposite to revenge: **«But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you...» (Matthew 5:44).**

It turns out that Christians not only should not take revenge on their enemies but on the contrary love them. And it is with this attitude towards our enemies that we automatically fall under the protection and patronage of God. And who can protect us best from enemies than the Lord God Himself? He belongs to the whole universe and as it is said, **«In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all flesh, even of man?» (Job 12:10).** It is also written: **«There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you who judges another?» (James 4:12).**

From all that has been said, one thing becomes clear: we attain true perfection in faith only when we really begin to forgive and love our enemies and offenders. The Lord Himself left the true path

without vengeance and cursing. He said: **«...Jesus said to him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me» (John 14:6).**

Are there any Christians today who never take revenge on anyone but on the contrary treat their enemies with love so that they turn to God with repentance? I can confidently

Jesus Christ Himself forgave all his murderers and did not avenge and curse them in any way. In return for revenge he suggested to all people the choice with which everyone can achieve eternal life. God's revenge, spoken of in the Epistle to the Romans by the Apostle Paul, it does not imply that God will begin to take revenge

on someone by doing this or that evil. No. God is love, and therefore any revenge on the part of God is simply excluded.

In the words «I will repay» rather it emphasizes that any enemy He will ultimately make for another person a friend.

It is rather difficult to love your enemies, and many do not understand how such a thing can happen. However, God calls us all to love not to revenge. And he does not only expect us to love those who love us, but to love those who from the human point of view do not deserve love. Jesus Christ for that matter passed the earthly path in the image of man in order to show all of us with his own example what true love should be. And if we take this example from the Lord then of course in our lives there will never be room for revenge and cursing. By the way, curses and bad wishes for another person always have a boomerang effect. For all that one man

wishes another will sooner or later return to him. All our words have both creative and destructive power. And not for nothing in this regard the Bible says: **«...For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned» (Matthew 12:37).**

Much of what we say and think has greater power than we can imagine. That's why spiritual people are always advised to be extremely careful with their words. There is a remarkable place in the Bible where it says: **«There is no speech nor are there words; their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, and he comes forth as a bridegroom from his canopy; he rejoices as a strong man to run a race» (Psalm 18:3-5).** So it turns out that everything we say is not only heard by the person we are speaking to but also where it is inaccessible to our understanding. Therefore, it was said to us that **«...you will be justified by your words, and you will be condemned by your words»,** in other words — what a person sows, he will reap.

In conclusion, it can be unequivocally said that revenge and curses are displeasing to God. Perhaps that is why the Apostle Paul instructed and said: **«Not avenging yourselves, beloved, but giving place to wrath; for it is written, «Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord» (Romans 12:19).**



I. GORIK.



say that there are. Even from the very beginning when the publication «Prisoner» was only making its first steps in the prison ministry, we published a fragment of the story of a Christian woman who not only did not take revenge on her father's murderer but on the contrary her attitude towards this person led him with repentance to God. Undoubtedly it is very difficult to understand this for unbelievers but for believers it is in general an example of perfect love. For so many cannot love and forgive, even a believing person, although everyone knows perfectly well that

## TESTIMONES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

### Addict, Thief, and Homeless... Becomes Christian!



Everything was well, but when I turned eleven years old my parents got divorced because my father cheated on my mother. Holding resentment against my parents, I stopped taking their opinion into account, doing everything my own way. Most of the time I spent on the street being influenced by the streets, I began to deceive and steal. But the worst thing was that I enjoyed this kind of life.

At the age of 15 at my friends' birthday party I saw gold in his house and decided to steal it. But the secret came out — the parents of this guy wrote about me a statement to the police, and I was arrested. My mother persuaded my stepfather to hire an expensive lawyer, so that I was not put in jail. I tasted impunity and decided that with such a

patron as my stepfather, I would get away with everything. Without realizing it, I began to ruin my life further and further. I did not notice how I lost all my friends, my relationships with my parents broke up, and I remained alone. Because I was a complete addict and a thief, they drove me away from everywhere. In the end I became a homeless person and lived in a factory. On my body began to appear ulcers, due to a long time of systematically using drugs. Once when they released me from the police station, I unconsciously turned to the Lord. I was dirty, hungry, and I had nowhere to go. And going to my sister, I said: «Lord, at least have my sister be at home to let me in!» On that evening my sister was at home, she pitied

me, gave me food and clean clothes. While living with my sister, I still continued to inject.

Once, when I saw my old friends I wanted to take drugs with them but they told me about Jesus and how the Lord changes the destinies of people. I believed them because I knew who they used to be... I came to church. After my repentance I started to go to a home group, where brothers and sisters prayed for my aching legs. Once, my friend gave me a pile of invitations and told me to give them to people and invite them to church. Not understanding how you can walk and preach with sick legs, I still obeyed and went. It also happened that I just stood in one place and handed out business cards with the words: «God loves you!» In the Bible I read the passage: **«How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, making peace heard; who brings good news, making salvation heard; who says to Zion, Your God reigns!» (Isaiah 52:7).**

On my heart was joy and confidence: that the feet should be healed when one preaches and talks about Jesus. In 2006 there was a church conference under the motto «Everyone born of the Lord — triumphs over the world!» And Jesus gave me freedom!

With God I have overcome all the sins in my life: drugs, drunkenness, smoking, deceit. Relations with relatives were restored. I began to serve the Lord. Literally within a year God blessed me with a family that I did not even dream about: a beautiful beloved wife and son. I started to work, and take care of my family. My old friends are surprised that everything has changed so much in my life — and this is all God's glory!

Aleksandr RYABCHIKOV,  
Zaporozhye, Ukraine, [www.igclife.com](http://www.igclife.com)

## PROVERB

### TROUBLE IN THE HOUSE

The Trouble came and cried out:

— I came, open the gate!  
— Welcome! — Cheerfully answered the owners, opening the gate widely.

— What do you mean? Or do you not understand who I am? — The Trouble was surprised.



— Why? We understood. It's just that we accept both you and joy as given from the hand of God Himself, knowing that He is sending everything to us for our own good! Well, why do not you come in? Or can we help you?

Trouble looked up at these owners, stood hesitantly. And she left to look for other homes where she really could become a misfortune!

<http://pritchi.ru>



# «I SPENT FORTY-FOUR YEARS IN CUSTODY»

(Interview with a former criminal authority, and today the pastor of the Church «Reconciliation»  
Anatoly Polishchuk, known in the past as Tolya Kharkovsky)

— Dear Anatoly, first I want to thank you for taking the time and agreeing to do an interview for our publication.

As a criminal you were quite an infamous figure. However, your conversion to Christianity has radically changed your life for the better. I'm sure that the readers of the «Prisoner» would be interested to know more about you and perhaps our conversation will be a great lesson and a blessing for those who would change their life for the better.

Tell me where you were born and when you first crossed that line, where you gave yourself into the life of a criminal (became a criminal).

— I was born in the village of Bulatovo, the city of Krasnovirshensk, Perm Region, on November 6, 1947. From birth, I have never seen my father in person. According to my mother, I know that he was repressed, and then shot. Since childhood I have gotten used to making independent decisions and being responsible for my actions. Like all the boys, I got into a lot of trouble on the streets. For my «heroism» I got into prison while being a child of just sixteen. When I was eighteen I was supposed to be imprisoned for three years, but I was released only after thirty years. All the extra years I earned while staying in prison. The terms of my imprisonment changed accordingly, as a result of my behavior.

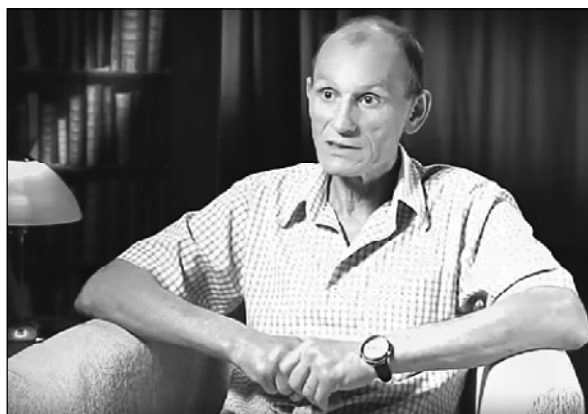
Once I escaped from a special regime. I stayed on the run for eight months and sixteen days. My escape was declared an all-Union search. At that time, I thought that I was the coolest, smartest and slyest and that no one would ever catch me. I thought that my life has been put in its place. During my time on the run, when I was in Kharkov, I committed a serious crime: an armed robbery which resulted in me causing serious bodily injuries with a knife. I was convicted under Article 101 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR. To life I had a thievish approach

mistaken), had no right to marry and start family. In general I always tried to live by conscience, by thieves' conscience as I was taught.

— When did you first feel that you were tired of prison life, and when did you repent?

— I was tired of prison life when I lost all my relatives. Then I was paralyzed for eight years, after I received a back injury before I was arrested by the UBOP. This was my last arrest and the last term, which was fourteen years. This term I received when I was innocent (arson, grenade explosion), but by then nobody was interested into whether or not I was actually innocent.

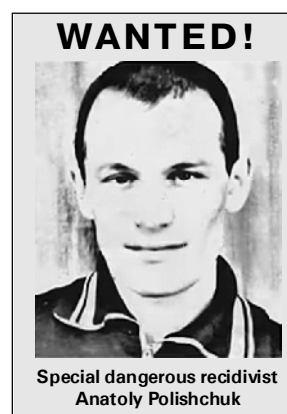
In my childhood I was baptized in an Orthodox Church. My belief in God went like this: light some candles in the church and I'm free



Anatoly Polishchuk during an interview

After thirty long years of imprisonment, I was released. I had to endure the great loss of the few

— As far as I know, you visit the institutions of the penitentiary system along with other Christians.



places of detention?

— Of course, we do. Moreover, not so long ago we visited my brother Igor in prison with our brothers and sisters. We spent five and a half hours with him in the prayer room. For four hours we communicated personally with him, and in the next hour and a half, six more Christian brothers were brought to us from among life-long prisoners. Thank God for such a meeting!

As for the newspaper «Prisoner», it opens eyes to many people in the most wonderful way. Those who come to learn that the editor is on

life imprisonment, start involuntarily digging through their sinful past realizing their mistakes repenting and looking for an outlet and eventually finding all the answers to their questions in the Bible, thank God. Therefore, the newspaper «Prisoner» is simply necessary so that as many people as possible think through it and come to God. In my time there was no such newspaper. Thank God that now something like this exists. After all I did not know Igor personally, I came to know this new-

paper and together with my brothers and sisters we spread it to the hundredth colony in Kharkov and to others. I am sure that now this newspaper will be much more likely to fall into my hands, so that I could personally hand it to all those with whom I will have communication and visits.

— Do you have plans and goals that you would like to achieve and achieve in the near future?

— Of course I do, — to visit as many colonies and prisons as possible with the Good News. I really want all people on earth to repent. On the grave of Taras Shevchenko it is written: «It will be right on earth...» So, about six months ago I added the words in chalk: «...when you believe in Jesus». And to this day no one else has erased those words! In any case, a month ago I saw them there.

— Our publication spreads across eleven countries of the world. What would you like to wish the readers of the «Prisoner»?

— I personally want it to be read by as many people as possible, since the newspaper «Prisoner» displays the glory of God. Also I wish that as many people in different countries and different estates could get to know it. I wish that people will grow in faith and never leave the path of God. Readers of the «Prisoner» have an amazing opportunity — the examples of other people could help them rethink their lives and come to God.

I wish all the employees of the «Prisoner» abundant blessings from God! And personally Igor — success in his editorial work and early release! And of course, I wish all the readers of the «Prisoner» not to lose heart in the difficulties, but to know and remember that they are sowers of His Word. This I tell you not only as a pastor, but as a man who in his time passed all the hells of the earth.

And those who have do not yet know God, I advise you to hurry! As it is written, «Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day» (Ecclesiasticus 5:7, KJV).

This interview was taken by Irina DOLGUSHINA.



VUIN-1, in the center behind Anatoly Polishchuk and convicted Igor Trubitsin, editor of the newspaper «Prisoner», printed under the pseudonym Igor Gorik

to leave. I truly believed in our great Lord when I was again behind bars with my last term. In 2002 Praise God I repented. According to my faith and the mercy of God, I was healed. After some time, I became the pastor of the church in the colony. I treat all denominations equally and positively. For the Lord God who is the one and only, lived in our hearts and souls. I was released in 2010.

people close to me. I lost almost all my relatives: two brothers died, then my mother died, and my wife died from the explosion of a cauldron — that same beloved woman, whom I had eventually married.

— When you turned to God and repented of all your sins, how did world respond to this, in which you not only stayed a few decades, but also occupied a prominent position in the criminal hierarchy?

Tell me, how do the prisoners react to the fact that the former criminal authority comes to them with the Good News?

— To be honest, they relate in different ways, but basically everyone just welcomes my decision, even those who are far from God. When I was an unbeliever, I envied those who already had faith. Now they envy me in this respect.



Anatoly Polishchuk at a meeting with prisoners in the TIC-100 in Kharkov

therefore to all this added to my status of authority.

— How many years did you spend in captivity?

— In total I spent forty-four years in prison. During this time, I was at liberty once during the escape (eight months and sixteen days), and three and a half months I stayed free after a thirty-year «imprisonment» — and soon I went back behind bars. In what prisons was I in? Yakutia, the Primorsky Krai, Khabarovsk, Solovki, Komi SSR, Arkhangelsk, Murmashi (near Murmansk), Ukraine (Nikolaev, Kharkov, Kherson, Vinnitsa, Zhitomir...).

— If it's not a secret, for what merit did you gain the status of a criminal authority?

— As in everything, any person acquires authority by his actions and actions. You know for thirty years I kept my word the code of honor in a thievish manner, that is, I had no right to kill, go to robbery (and if I was caught in a burglary, I had to convince the tenants that I was

Today I am the pastor of the church «Reconciliation» in the city of Kamenskoye (previously Dneprodzerzhinsk). I have a family: a beautiful wife, four foster children who are like my very own, and a few grandchildren. When one of my grandchildren meets me after a trip, they smother me with hugs and kisses. I always say to myself: «Lord, did I really need to sit for forty-four years, to see all your blessings like this!»

— What happened in your life that you suddenly turned down the «privileged» status of criminal authority?

— Love for a woman. Her name was Love. She visited me at my prison for twenty-eight years. Once again, when she came to see me on a date, she saw a prisoner, who had a tattoo on his feet: «They Are Tired of Walking Under Convoy». She looked at me then and said: «I will also make myself a tattoo: «They Are Tired of Carrying out Deliveries». Now she's gone.

— In any way, resistance presented itself. But I firmly decided and gave everything into the hands of God. That's it. He did everything!

— When you came to God, did you have such moments when you wanted to return back to where you once were?

— Never! And I am sure that this desire shall never arise. Is it possible to compare light with darkness or abandon vision and become blind?

— Are there among your acquaintances criminal authorities those who, like you, turned to God and departed from the criminal life?

— Yes, of course there is. I still support communication with all authorities and I testify to them about the Word of God. Among them there are my friends: Volodya Zakharov, Andrey Lyadnov, Cever, Vasya Tuz, Cross. They, by the way, became believers of God after me in the prison. Of those whom I know, four hundred people believed in jails and prisons; I communicate with some older churches in the prisons.

— How many prisons and colonies did you visit when you were already a Christian?

— In Ukraine, I visited almost all of them: Lugansk, Kherson, Nikolaev, Lvov, Zhitomir, Vinnitsa, Kharkov, Sumy, Donetsk... Now we talk about trips and visits to colonies in Germany, Poland, I even received an invitation to visit some in Russia. Thank God!

We are in normal relations with the administrations of the institutions, in particular with the administration of colony No. 56 in the village of Perekrestovka, Romensky district, Sumy region. Recently visited the hundredth colony in the Kharkov region. This is my mission, which I must now fulfill. As they say escaped from eternal perdition oneself — must help save another.

— Do you know that the newspaper «Prisoner» is headed by a person sentenced to life imprisonment? And do you think that this newspaper is necessary in

# REPORT FROM THE SWISS



The prison «Witzwil» in the canton of Bern is more like a fun and prosperous farm than a grim prison. The director of this extraordinary correctional institution upholds a model based on trust, which helps with the reintegration of prisoners into civil society.

In 1958, the French cinema released a Yves Robert comedy «Neither seen nor known» (original title — «Ni vu... ni connu...»), starring French comedian Louis de Funes. Many viewers remember the cheeky scoundrel Blerot, who was serving time in prison for poaching in his hometown of Montpayar. The director meets the celebrated hunter and fisherman with an embrace and asks about his habits, tastes, and reveals the secret of the correctional system: «We live, as it were, in a «family-type prison». Here, everyone is engaged in what he was doing before taking the wrong path».

The administration of the Swiss men's prison «Witzwil» has been guided by the same principle for more than a century. Labor is the basis of the correctional system, imprisonment in a socio-educational style — as described by the «Witzwil» administration. Low security,

humane treatment, a variety of activities in the fields and workshops, even providing «vacation» for meetings with family — this approach not only helps remind you who you were and how you lived so far, but get good professional training. The main goal in this case is to release a healthy citizen back into society, not a hardened criminal.

And it all began back in 1891, when the canton of Berne purchased a plot of land in the marshes and outskirts of Witzwil which became available after the bankruptcy of the company that had its own production there. The head of the company was a man named Witz, a native of the village of Serglie, hence the name of the future prison. It's funny that on the Swiss dialect «witz» means «joke».

In 1895, after the drainage of wetlands, they built hundreds of single cells, housing for employees, workshops, a kitchen, and a chapel. At first, «Witzwil» served as an addition to the Berne prison «Saint-Jean», which was already crowded. With the end of the Second World War «Witzwil» was at maximum capacity of 600 prisoners.

Today «Witzwil» is the second largest prison in Switzerland. Presently it holds 186 prisoners, of which 52 % are foreigners. It also has 157 employees, including guards and other professionals. The prisoners not only provide for

chickens. In addition, the prisoners engage in beekeeping — there are 26 hives installed here.

All this is located on 825 hectares. «Witzwil» is a large farm, they say, the largest agricultural enterprise in Switzerland. They grow fruits, flowers and vegetables, make a variety of food and drinks, sew clothes, there is carpentry. All this is sold under the brand *Made in «Witzwil»*. I never had anything like the apple juice I had here.

This is a prison in which they are paid money, computers are available, and they are released from this place; 1,240 times a year, the «Witzwil» checkpoint opens for those who have the right to «leave» — it lasts from 12 to 56 hours. In «Witzwil» they are not afraid to give prisoners a fork, axes and big knives and they are not watched constantly by guards. In the production zone there are no guards at all.

«Witzwil» is the most uncommon of correctional institutions. Here the life of the convicts is arranged in such a way that their degree of freedom (odd word for

these fields and gardens are part of the prison. Not everyone condemned immediately goes to «Witzwil». The average socio-demographic portrait of a prisoner in this prison looks like this: a 35-year-old man with nine years of education or an unfinished profession, he often changes his job, uses drugs and is associated with a criminal environment, his average stay in «Witzwil» is 230 days. Approximately 65 % of those here sit are in for drug dealing, theft, illegal stay in Switzerland, 12-14 % are rapists, including pedophiles, and 10 % are murderers.

Those who committed non-serious crimes can immediately be in the «Witzwil», murderers and rapists get here if they show positive dynamics and are ready to take the path of correction. So, a prisoner can spend four years in a regular prison or a prison with more strict content, but the last two years of their term can be in «Witzwil».

In any case, having got into «Witzwil», the prisoner first of all finds himself in its central part, where a three-month quarantine passes. This



themselves, but also bring «Witzwil» a real income: sowing, plowing, repair vehicles, raise cows, pigs, birds. The complex consists of nine units comprising which have 20 cells a piece, and the barns contain 480 cows, 136 horses, 1 200 pigs, 112

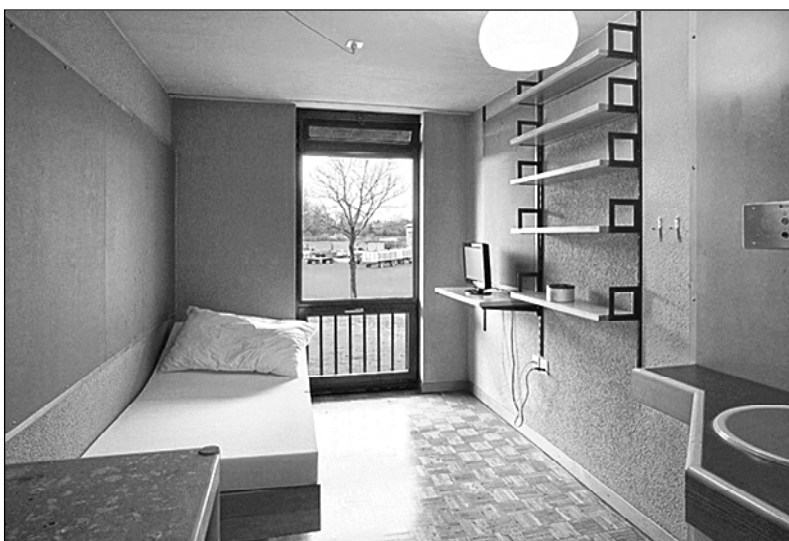
describing the prison) is extremely high. And how they will use their freedom inside the prison will affect their lives not only during the term of imprisonment, but also afterwards.

«Witzwil» is surrounded by fields and gardens. Actually,

is the most thoroughly protected section of the prison. Prisoners eat in small two-story buildings where they also spend their weekends and evenings.

I go to one of the rooms (no I cannot call it a prison cell). It looks like an apartment: bed, bathroom, books, magazines, TV, computer. You can only use the computer for playing or writing. Do the prison staff monitor what their prisoners read? Yes, and those convicted of pedophilia are unlikely to be able to buy a catalog of children's underwear.

Prisoners of «Witzwil» go to work, passing through checkpoints. There are two working zones. One is controlled: there is no guard in it, but it is surrounded by a fence with cameras and thermal imagers. Here are





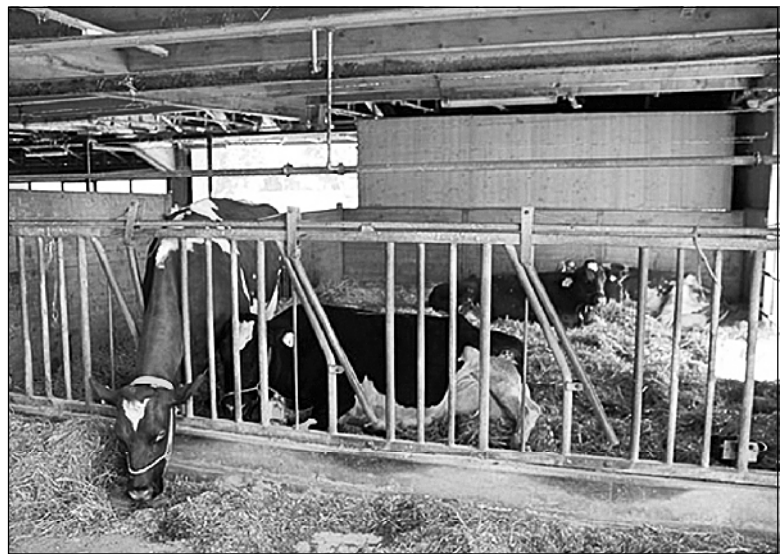
# PRISON «WITZWIL»

workshops, stables and barns. Further are agricultural land, they are generally not protected, once in three hours the foreman comes to check how the prisoners work and whether they are in place. But before being allowed to work,

from the decision of the foreman and another raise on the recommendation of the psychologist. The basic rate for the prisoners is 26 francs, but the inhabitants of the «Witzwil» only receive 60 % of money they earn: the rest

convinced that the presence of women (about one-third of the 157 employees here) is beneficial to prisoners, those who are serving sentences begin to hold their tongue, speak quietly, and maintain communication skills that are

security. He speaks with obvious pleasure about economics. «Witzwil» has with an annual revenue of 24 million francs, the institution earns 10 million. But Schwartz talks about education with much greater passion.



the prisoners of the «Witzwil» are tested.

In the hangar, where the psychologists responsible for the professional orientation work, I meet a sad intelligent man with glasses who collects a large wooden puzzle. I start asking him questions, but he shakes his head: «No, I'm not a psychologist, I'm a prisoner, a few days here, I'm testing». If a person is sitting and the uniform pants are not visible, you cannot distinguish a prisoner from an employee.

There are two people who are responsible for the professionalization of the inhabitants of the «Witzwil». One of which was a child psychologist in her previous career, the second was a machinist and a craft instructor. They conduct initial vocational guidance courses, which last from 2 to 10 days, and a monthly assessment. Prisoners fill in the questionnaire on 17 pages, demonstrate their skills on a variety of machines and tools. After passing the tests they can get a recommendation to get an education. Sometimes prisoners learn outside the prison. They can get salary increases based on their monthly tests, which accounts for 80 % of their salary, 10 %

will be their starting capital when they are released.

The two psychologists are handsome guys and they are very passionate about their work. «It's so important that a person, even being here, makes his choice and learns something. Or realizes what he has. But you cannot force anyone; they must make the choice themselves».

In the meat workshop of the kitchen, I meet Carlos, an illegal from the Dominican Republic, a very carefully trimmed beard, a bright stone in his earring. He is working with a huge knife, cutting meat that will be packed and sold. He made his choice: «Here I got a lot of experience, not everywhere can you see as much things as here in «Witzwil», I have been here for 30 months. When I get free, I will return to the Dominican Republic, I cannot stay in Switzerland. But here I got the profession of a cook and I'll do it at home. Only there I will need to take a cooking course. Meat is the same everywhere, but the tomatoes are different».

Here everyone works together: prisoners and employees, men and women. Hans-Rudolf Schwartz, the director of «Witzwil», is

easily lost. For six years in an ordinary prison, Schwartz says, a prisoner loses his usual social skills. In «Witzwil» this is not so.

Gray haired and fit,

His mission is to bring back the people back to society completely socialized.

Schwartz shows charts and tables, a code of ethics officer of «Witzwil» speaks



Schwartz was a school teacher, an officer in a tank division, for five years he worked as a school principal in Colombia, the largest Swiss school abroad. Then he was the director of the prison in Lucerne for six years. Ten years, he leads the «Witzwil». «Thanks to the army and Colombia, I know, what security is,» says Schwartz, «thanks to teaching I know what is upbringing».

But in a few hours of our conversation, Schwartz barely speaks about

about the importance of prisoners and employees working together, an individual approach to everyone, for the prisoners to have psychotherapy three times a month, about the importance of proper selection of professions and education. I ask the director of the institution if any prisoners escape from here, after all, work without the supervision of prison guards should be a great temptation.

«Five or seven people try to escape every year, but usually everyone is caught. Someone manages to escape abroad: in my 10 years being the director in «Witzwil» only 20 people did not return. The risk of escape is higher the heavier the crime committed by the prisoner. But our task is to help a person change and if he does not have serious

mental problems then it is possible.

We are dealing with those,» says Schwartz, «who have not received the best opportunities in life. The criminal environment has affected their fates, but I hope that the resocialization in «Witzwil» will give an effect that will last a lifetime. The right environment and proper work help give them chance at a new life».

The words of the director of «Witzwil» and the prison psychologists responsible for professional orientation remind me school phrase from the Soviet Constitution: «From each according to his abilities, to each according to his work». It seems that I did not learn anything new about Switzerland in «Witzwil»: the same attitude toward efficiency, devoid of the pathos of humanism, belief in freedom of choice, willingness to gradually improve the world. But I understood the important thing about my own past. All this day I compared the incomparable. It was not necessary to compare actual correctional institutions, but different ideas about punishment and correction.

In the institution owned

store where the seller is a prisoner, I drink apple juice, I buy a piece of cheese and a pack of dried pears. Around me are fields where people working are visible. The space between them and the free lands of the canton of Bern is unclosed, there are no insurmountable obstacles. It seems that this is an ideal prison, where utopia ironically combines with anti-utopia: prisoners not only do not think about escaping, but some want to stay. However, this does not answer the question, do they really want to be re-socialized. And 39 % of the prisoners of the «Witzwil» go back to prison.

Mikhail KALUZHSKY,  
www.nashagazeta.ch/news/  
14873

www.colta.ru/articles/  
swiss\_made/13477



# TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

My childhood was no different from that of my peers, except maybe that my family lived below average and I was not particularly spoiled. When I was six years old I my little brother was an infant. My parents would leave to work and since I was the oldest, I was assigned to swaddle the baby, bathe, feed, etc. All five of us lived in a one bedroom apartment.

The school I attended had a weak program but because it was close to home that was where I went. It was hard for me there because I wanted to learn but my classmates wouldn't let me. Why? Because I was a diligent student who did not support them in their rowdiness. This was during the restructuring of the soviet union and my classmates called me a Communist; I was the black sheep. Gradually I was forced to miss class and in the end I left the school altogether because of this.

Because of the pain I suffered, I became embittered. I still remember how often I had a desire to cut the throat of one student. It was one of the most unpleasant moments in my life, which tainted the rest of my life. My parents finally finding time for me realized that I had to be transferred to another school. But at this current school I was one of the few successful pupils so the director did not want to let me transfer.

The new school which had a much more intense program than the previous one was too much for me, I was behind and I didn't have time to devote to studying because the war started. My father went to war and I as the eldest in the family had to work and feed the family. At the age of twelve I worked as an assistant electrician in the military helping repair the barracks. Then I worked at a hotel guarding cars, then a gas station where I worked for a year and a half. All this time I visited the school from time to time so that they would not expel me. My father talked to the director saying: «I protect my homeland and you in the war, my son must work to feed the family.» I made it to ninth grade with fake grades, I could not count on a future career.

In 1995 my parents sold their condo and moved to Ukraine believing we could have a better life in another country. We didn't have any connections besides a friend of a friend. After the war my father changed, he became a bit out of sorts and my parents divorced. There, in the Ukraine, I again decided to try my luck with education; I enrolled in an occupational technical school to become a tractor driver, in parallel to studying in evening school. But experiencing a social crisis I barely made it a year and a half. One day I was caught stealing and I was immediately humiliated and kicked out of school. Once again I began working odd jobs.

Once I was invited to church to hear a sermon and pray. When I attended these meetings, I experienced repentance. Leaving practically all my sins and being baptized, I changed my life. I was given a Bible — the Word of God to read daily and strengthen my faith so I can know God and His will. Over time I began to shorten the time I spent reading the Bible until I stopped altogether. Weakened in faith and met with temptations and difficulties, I departed from God returning to the old way of life. It is not easy

for a young person to resist temptations, especially since none of my relatives supported me.

At age 17, living in a foreign country and having a conditional conviction, hungry, without the means to exist, I was like a cornered animal ready for the most insane act. Fathers psyche collapsed completely, and for reasons unknown to me he committed suicide. As the eldest I had the responsibility of feeding my family. All my money went into the family, and I could not afford anything for myself.

I could not stay in this village anymore, and I ended up leaving on my own to the only place I could go, my homeland Georgia. All I had was about twenty bucks and a bunch of church addresses. 17 years old, in the winter, I set

remember the preacher's words: he said that God has a plan for me, but I just laughed inside. I was troubled by other questions: where to get money, to smoke as soon as possible. But from that day on they began to pray for me.

I had a few days left until I was accepted into military service. I needed money for the road, and I thought that I would do another metal recycling run, a last one. I did not know that this would in fact be the last time.

The twenty-ninth of March, 2004. Seven kilometers from the village, I was not alone but with the neighbor boy who was 15. When we climbed the mountain and collected the metal, a military convoy was driving through, apparently the

but my left leg felt strange. I remember lying there looking at the sky feeling so pleasant and peaceful. I remember praying to myself and I did not know what to ask of God. A life? Without hands? But it seemed to me that I would not live anymore. But the I had a desire to live, a feeling of something unfinished. Also a thought went through my head: «Why did I smoke? If I survive I won't smoke».

Then I tell Sam: «I'm not dying, run for help». I asked him to straighten my leg because it was uncomfortable, when he pulled my leg the bone marrow oozed out of my knee, it was yellow. The patella was fractured. That's when I felt pain. Sam left me a plastic bottle of water and ran for a car. I wanted to drink but he put the

jeep hit a mine in Iraq and tore off one guys arm below his elbow and his leg. He was in a hospital in Germany for three months and then in America, I was home after three weeks. I didn't want to stay in bed and I hobbled around on one leg. If it wasn't for those Christians I met who prayed for me I would have had a worse ending.

When a preacher came to my hospital, I had seen him before, I will not say that I was glad to see him. Believers would visit me often and I even went to a few church services but this did not give me satisfaction. I became much more rude, imagine someone not scared of getting beat up or prosecuted. I would get drunk and go out on the streets and swear loudly cursing everyone out. I was twenty three, I smoked for many years but I never smoked in front of my mother. Once a Christian was talking to me and I blew smoke right into his face out of disrespect, I said there is nothing wrong with smoking and that some smokers live to a hundred years. Then he asked: «If there is nothing bad about smoking, why do you hide it from your mother?» Subconsciously I knew smoking was wrong but I didn't want to admit it.

I would say rude things about God and to God but I knew that he existed. One day one of my old friends offended me and I started thinking that I was useless, no one needed me. Then I thought about the believers who were not expecting anything from me, they just gave, so I texted the preacher that I was sick of this life and I wanted to start over. He called me and told me to pray and read the bible. The next day he came and I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and personal Savior. He prayed for me.

When I started reading the Bible it was surprisingly easy to read, which was not the case before. And when I read I began to understand more and more that I was to blame for all my problems. My desire to smoke and drink disappeared in one day. I only knew how to pray and ask God for forgiveness. When I read that kids can be punished for the sins of their parents I got really scared about my kids being punished for my sins, this was a huge motivator to stop sinning and seek forgiveness.

Gradually my conscience returned and felt ashamed and until I apologized to everyone I did evil to I did not feel comfortable. I thought that I could not apologize but with God's help it was very easy and pleasant. The more I read the Bible, the more I changed. Now I know for sure that my children will not be responsible for my sins. Now I have what is worth not only hands and feet, life itself, it is the forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. It turns out that I could have avoided many problems had I listened to my conscience and asked Jesus to lead my life instead of trusting my own strength which is paltry compared to God's.

...Yes, I do not already have the same health as before. I have no hands. Yes, I only have one leg. But I have a heart that can love my family: my wife, son and two daughters. I learned to love. Rather, God taught me how to love. Just because God is love.



**Shalva BEGIASHVILI,**  
Georgia.

To the publication prepared  
**Irina ANTONOVA.**

## GOD IS LOVE



bottle of water far away and I tried to reaching for it for some time, it was hard because it felt like my hands were still there. When I finally brought the bottle to my lips using the stumps of my hands most of the water had spilled out and all that was left was blood and dirt. Sam ran seven kilometers through the mountains with a bag of iron in his hands. He told the first person he met about what had happened and together they went looking for a car to bring me back.

When they found a car, with some difficulty, the driver didn't have gasoline so Sam recycled the metal to get money for fuel.

Periodically I would shout so Sam would hear my voice and find me. When Sam arrived the guys couldn't load me into the car because my knee hurt too much. They went to the military unit eleven kilometers away for help. I was not alone, all this time I cried out to God even though I knew that it wouldn't do anything for me right now but I wanted to find peace somewhere.

I remember the guy offering me a cigarette but I refused. When the military ambulance arrived they gave to painkiller shots, bound my limbs, and drove me away. On the way I joked, amusing the doctors; saying: «Here is your practice». And all that time I wanted to drink, but the doctor wouldn't give me any water, washed my face.

When I arrived at the intensive care unit they cleaned my stumps with peroxide and finally felt real pain. Four or five hours passed after the explosion but I didn't lose consciousness for even a second even though I lost more than two liters of blood. I started gradually shutting down. The doctor would not let me faint and slapped me, three or four time I drifted out and then came to, then I fainted and that was it.

When I came to about four hours later, a nurse stood by my side. My leg felt weird so asked her: «What's with my leg?» She said: «Your leg is fine.» But I immediately understood what was going on and said: «I already saw myself without hands and you're scared that I'll find out I don't have a leg?»

A few years ago a Georgian

out. A day and a half ride by bus I completed in 10 days. I saw the hospitality of believers in practice.

Then there was the army, which I left by my own choice to go earn money. I lived with my grandmother and six months later my mother, my brother, and sister also came. We learned that twenty kilometers from the city, in a former military town, they sell cheap apartments. They were cheap because they were sold without any documents. These were temporary housing for the military who lived there while under contract and thus the apartments did not belong to anyone. So we bought an apartment for the price of a used fridge, not very nice but livable. The population of the village was about three thousand people, and the majority of which were low-income and did not have money for more expensive or prestigious housing. Most of them lived by collecting and recycling scrap metal, there was plenty of it lying around.

At age 21, I had absolutely unexpected children — twins. I was not ready for family life or children and myself in need of everything. I did not take the news seriously and my own children with their mother lived separately. But sometimes I visited them.

Over time I noticed that the excuse of having two children had a big effect and gradually I began wanting to be around them. I began visiting more often and eventually I moved in and we began living as a family. At all I moved to them and began to live a family life. But, having no education, no future, no job (it was a difficult time in the country) I collected scrap metal. I completely forgot about the Bible I brought from Ukraine and didn't even know where it was.

Soon I had hope of living in prosperity if I became a military man. After getting all the necessary documents (successfully to my surprise), I was soon to serve under contract and receive a higher salary.

Once I heard that not far away, in fact in the neighborhood there was a gathering of Christians where they conducted church services. Out of curiosity, I went to one of those. There God spoke to me through a preacher but I was very prideful and thought that I knew everything. Thus I pushed God away. I

top brass. They saw us and drove up, I, not wanting to ruin my not yet started military career decided to hide. Sam decided to come up when he was called. Apparently, the commander asked him what he was doing there, Sam said that he was collecting iron to help the family. The commander pulled out a fifty lari bill (about twenty-five dollars) and ordered him not to come back to the area.

We had to go further in search of iron and move farther away from the village. I found a small projectile, it reminded me of the blanks loaded with sand I took apart earlier. I thought I would take it apart later if I didn't get enough other metal. I got tired of lugging it around so I chucked it. After searching the hills and fields we set off home. I stumbled upon this same charge and decided to take it apart. It was necessary to unscrew the spout of the projectile, since it was aluminum, and I needed only ferrous metal. I began to disassemble it and when it was almost apart I heard a bang and I immediately understood what happened; this wasn't an instructional charge but a weaponized one.

At first I saw nothing, I was blind, the first thought that came to me was «what a stupid death». I stood for a few seconds then my left leg gave out and I rolled into a small hole. Sam heard the bang and ran up to me, he started crying and panicking. Gradually my vision returned and I saw that my hands were gone, poof, vaporized. Just strings of meat was all that was left. I was very thirsty...

Sam offered to go get someone, I said: «Wait a minute, if I die at least you'll know». I did not feel pain at that moment



## TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

# God's Family. You Were Created for God's Family

When we trust Jesus Christ with our lives, God becomes our Father and we — His children; other believers become our brothers and sisters by faith, and the church — our spiritual family (Rick Warren, «Life with Meaning»).

## FIVE BUILDING BLOCKS OF GOD'S FAMILY

**Romans 12:9-16** — Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation...

### 1. THE FIRST BUILDING BLOCK OF GOD'S FAMILY — NO HYPOCRISY

**A. What does «without hypocrisy» mean?**

Let love be without hypocrisy... (Romans 12:9), that is: «May your love be un hypocritical.»

Hypocrisy means «changing masks,» as artists change masks depending on the role they play.

...but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:7-8). Not hypocritical, genuine people do not deceive themselves (self-deception) or those around them.

The motto of many rehabilitations missions: «You are sick as much as you are enslaved by your secrets.»

**B. How can one be genuine and un hypocritical?**

Genuineness comes not from television programs, not from reading smart books, not from philosophical reasoning, not from feelings or sensations, but comes only from the Word of God!

**Hebrews 4:12-13** — For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

### 2. THE SECOND BUILDING BLOCK OF GOD'S FAMILY — POLITENESS (COURTESY)

...Be devoted to one another in brotherly love... (Romans 12:10).

Believers have ...to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men (Titus 3:2).

Learn to listen: **James 1:19-20** — This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of

man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

Politeness also includes submission, obedience: **Ephesians 5:21** — ...and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

### 3. THE THIRD BUILDING BLOCK OF GOD'S FAMILY — MUTUALISM

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another... (Romans 12:15-16).

**A. What is mutualism?**  
Mutualism means helping one another in spiritual growth:

**1 Thessalonians 5:11** — Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

**Romans 14:19** — So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

**Hebrews 10:24** — And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.

When together, we are stronger:

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** — Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

Mutualism consists of love for one another:

**1 John 4:11** — Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. It's not just love, not unrequited love, but mutual love.

Mutualism also consists of leniency towards one another:

**Romans 15:7** — Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

Mutualism is also manifested in serving one another:

**Galatians 5:13** — For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Mutualism also consists of forgiveness:

**Colossians 3:13** — ...bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

**B. How can mutualism be reached?**

Prayer. Pray for those in need and be «devoted to prayer» (Romans 12:12).

Respect. ...Give preference to one another in honor... (Romans 12:10).

Accountability (responsibility for each other). Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much (James 5:16).

### 4. THE FOURTH BUILDING BLOCK OF GOD'S FAMILY — HOSPITALITY

The Bible teaches in **Romans 12:13**: ...contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.



Drawing by Igor OSOKIN.

An example of hospitality and mutual assistance is the first apostolic church: **Acts 2:44-46** — And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart...

**Question: why, when we eat together, do we strengthen God's family?**

People relax, forget about their complexes  
People are liberated during a meal together

- All barriers disappear
- People are open to communication
- Food brings people together, unites people. People get to know each other.
- People develop a mutual dependence

### 5. THE FIFTH BUILDING BLOCK OF GOD'S FAMILY — UNITY

Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation... [do not be arrogant] (Romans 12:16).

Jesus prayed for our unity in **John 17:11-22**: I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are... The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one.

Unity is harmony in relationships: **1**

**Peter 3:8** — To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit...

Unity of mind and thoughts:

**1 Corinthians 1:10** — Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Unity of goals.

Unity of spirit:

**Philippians 1:27** — Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel...

**Ephesians 4:4-6** — There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

### CONCLUSION:

1. Share with each other your true thoughts and feelings (no hypocrisy).
2. Respect and honor each other (courtesy).
3. Support each other

(mutualism).

4. Share with each other (hospitality).
5. Live in harmony with one another (unity).

Always remember that if you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then you became a member of the Body of Christ — a member of the family of God: **Romans 12:5** — ...so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Material for the newspaper «Prisoner» was provided by

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Montreal, Canada

<http://cogmtl.net/Articles/062c.htm>

## CHRISTIAN NEWS

## A Shaman from China Saw Jesus in a Dream and Followed Him

A former shaman from a village in northwest China left her former life filled with demons and darkness, and dedicated herself to Jesus Christ. All this happened to her when she saw Jesus in a dream on her deathbed.

The story of the former shaman was reported by a group that fights against the persecutions of Christians, Open Doors USA. Ting said that her abilities once attracted thousands of people to seek her «divine advice».

But one day her health began to deteriorate, and she became completely paralyzed. Doctors, she said, could not explain her illness.

When she was on her deathbed, Ting said she had fallen asleep and saw Jesus. «I was in the back seat of a taxi when my brother led me to end my darkness. But then three men, who were dressed in shiny white robes, approached, but their light was so bright that I could not see their faces. They told me that I

had to make a choice. And when they were speaking, two other men, in black robes, were inviting me to follow them. I knew in my heart that one of the men in the white robe was Jesus, so I followed Him».

When she woke up, she said that her body miraculously could move again, and her health improved. Ting knew that Christ had healed her, and so she decided to give her life into His hands, and gave her heart to Jesus.

As the organization Open Doors USA said, Ting «could have just as easily returned to the life she knew — filled with demons and darkness». But, despite the persecution and violence she experienced at the hands of her family,

she decided to become a Christian.

«She did not give up, holding on to the Word of God, which became flesh inside her. She had a dream that changed everything».



It was noted in the Open Doors organization that Christians in China, especially in rural areas, are subject to severe persecution. The country is on the 39th place in terms of the level of persecution of Christians around the world.

Becoming a Christian is considered a complete disgrace and greatly affects the relationship with the family. According to the group, Christians are rejected by their dear people and sent to exile.

The Open Doors organization added that the Ting story serves as a reminder that no one lives beyond the reach of Jesus.

Other religious Chinese groups, such as China Aid, also published reports on the growth of Christianity in the most populous nation in the world, but persecuted believers are increasingly exposed to violence.

The imprisonment of Christian pastors and activists was reported, such as pastor Zhang Shaojie, who in 2014 was

sentenced to 12 years in prison.

«The recent reports that he is on the verge of life and death after being subjected to torture in prison would be an unacceptable abuse of human rights even if he were guilty, but the deliberate ill treatment of the unjustly convicted pastor is completely sad injustice», said Mervyn Thomas, Executive Director of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, in June.

Other pastors, such as the Rev. Eric Burklin of the China Partner, who teaches the Chinese Christian leaders, stated that, despite the persecution, Christianity is flourishing in terms of quantity.

Burklin said in June that he was talking with one of the pastors in Nanjing City, who shared with him that he saw 100,000 new believers come to Christ on average each year.

«It's incredible!» Burklin exclaimed.

<https://cnl.news>

It happened back in late May 2013, but we got a video recording and more accurate data recently. The Nigerian survived on a flooded ship, spending 72 hours at the bottom of the sea — as much as Jonah in the belly of a whale (three days).

as water seeped slowly but steadily into a 4ft sq air bubble in the cabin.

«All around me was just black, and noisy. I was crying and calling on Jesus to rescue me, I prayed so hard. I was so hungry and thirsty and cold and I was just praying to see

scouring the waters on a presumed body recovery operation were shocked to hear faint hammering in reply.

As a diver's light approached, Okene hesitated to swim outside the air pocket in case the startled diver might use a jack-knife on him. «I went to

Once Harrison had been located, there were worries he would panic during the rescue, while his body had absorbed potentially fatal amounts of nitrogen. «His heart wouldn't have been able to pump [back on land] because it was just so full of gas», said Christine

## MODERN JONAH IN A SUNKEN SHIP



Harrison Okene, a 29-year-old cook, was the sole survivor of the Jacson-4, which overturned after being battered by heavy swells. Eleven other crew members died as the vessel sank some 12 miles (20 km) off Nigeria's mangrove-lined coast.

«It was around 5am and I was on the toilet when the vessel just started going down — the speed was so, so fast», Okene said by phone from his hometown of Warri. Scrambling out, he was unable to reach an emergency exit hatch and watched in horror as three crew members were sucked into the churning sea.

The water swept him into another toilet as the boat plunged 30 metres into the freezing depths. Wearing only his underpants, Okene prayed

some kind of light.» Every evening, his wife sent messages to her husband with the text from the Bible, so that Harrison would read them for the night. The night before the cook read psalms from 54th to 92nd. The sailor from memory recalled the psalms and repeated them one by one, pleading with God for help.

«I prayed about a hundred times», Harrison recalls. «When I was tired, I simply called on God by name and hoped for Divine help». On the second day, the sailor, dying of cold, hunger, dehydration and suffocation, heard the sound of a ship engine.

He had been underwater for almost 60 hours when he heard a hammering on the deck. A team of South African divers

the water and touched the diver. He himself shivered from fear. So I stepped back and just held my hand in the waters and waved it in front of his camera so they would see the images above deck».

«The diver walked in and at the back there was an air pocket he was sitting in», Paul MacDonald, an officer on the support vessel wrote on Facebook. «How it wasn't full of water is anyone's guess. I would say someone was looking after him». Survival specialists agree with him: the amount of air in the «pocket» is limited, but it did not end before the arrival of rescuers. In addition, Harrison all this time was waist-deep in cold water and could have died from hypothermia.

Cridge, medical director of the Plymouth-based Diving Diseases Research Centre, who advised the rescue team.

Okene was strapped into diving equipment, then led to a diving bell which took him to the surface, where he spent two days in a decompression chamber. «To survive that long at that depth is phenomenal. Normally you would dive recreationally for no more than 20 minutes at

those depths», said a training consultant from the Professional Association of Diving Instructors.

Okene said, «They told me all the others had died and I cried because I thought I was the only one who had been trapped in the boat», his voice cracking. Despite suffering from nightmares and peeling skin, daily helpings of his favourite banga soup dish — a fish and palm fruit soup — have helped him feel much better, he said.

«I cried out to God. He did it. It was a miracle. God saved me», Harrison says. All three days he was praying nonstop.

<http://bible-facts.ru>  
(based on material from [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk))

### PROVERB

## One day old Butterfly

A one day old butterfly sat down on a perennial cranberry bush and began to admire everything that she could see:

«The sun is so kind and beautiful! You can't compare gems with dew! And the meadow is so green, the sky is so blue! And the air? I do not even have enough words to describe it! I can only say: thank God for everything!»

«I have lived so many years and did not notice anything!» — thought the



cranberry bush, and said aloud: «It's okay, tomorrow you will get used to all this!»

«Tomorrow will not exist for me», the butterfly said sadly, closing her eyes forever.

The cranberry bush admitted to herself with a shame that for almost a hundred years she had not seen and, most importantly, did not appreciate all that this butterfly had in a single day of her life.

<http://pritchi.ru>

## ATTENTION!

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

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

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



**Hope of Freedom**

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

### MY DONATION:

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

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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!**

Merry Christmas



## Dear readers of «Prisoner»!

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

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

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



## PRISONER

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*God bless you all!*

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