



PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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

(John 8:32)

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INDIFFERENCE

In every country there are two societies. One is free and the other is behind barbed wire. These two societies are divided among themselves by high fences and lattices. If I may say so, in every country there is a state in the state. The difference between the two is that one is considered a free state, filled with; so, to speak, law-abiding citizens, and the other; is confinement, in which the criminals are in. However, despite the differences between the two, there are evidently the same problems in both of the worlds; life, medicine, and work.

It has been this way since ancient times that criminals who violated the law of their country were isolated from the free society for a certain period of time. They were imprisoned with their actions and rights limited. The same thing is happening today. However despite crime not reducing, it is progressing all the more, stepping up with technological progress. So why are people imprisoned and still are to this day if prison does not change things? Is a free society winning by imprisoning people, and should we continue to use this practice?

From the Christian point of view, it can be unequivocally said that God does not prohibit the existence of prisons, since punishment for any criminal must necessarily be, as long as he lives on earth, for after life is the judgment of God. The only thing that God does not encourage or welcome is violence, torture, humiliation, and the like. For example, Jesus Christ while on earth, told people a parable about the king: *«Then the King will say to those on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry, and you gave me food: I was thirsty, and you gave me drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in: Naked, and you clothed me: I was sick, and you visited me: I was in prison, and you came unto me»* (Matthew 25:34-36).

Proceeding from the foregoing, it becomes evident that for society, prison is not something new nor unknown. Places for serving sentences have been present for a long time. For so long that now there is a stereotype that are present and former prisoners are not only alien, but also dangerous for society. From ancient times, those who were once imprisoned or currently are, are treated with apprehension and prejudice. A very large percentage of former prisoners are confronted with misunderstanding from others when out on freedom and soon again go to jail and oftentimes they aren't alone, this time other newcomers trail after them. It turns out to be a complete absurdity: people who violate the law are imprisoned so that they would regret sinning. During their stay in prison they are corrected, however, despite being imprisoned they not only do not change, but become all the more hardened criminals than they were before. Vicious circle, instead of re-educating people in captivity, they become even more sophisticated villains. Therefore, after these people are liberated, society is afraid of them and frowns upon them.

What then is the reason that the correctional institutions today are not able to correct those who have crossed the law and was imprisoned? Is it fully the responsibility of those working in cor-

rectional facilities or not? What needs to be done for positive changes to take place?

If you can dive deeper into this problem, it is immediately evident that the reason lies not only in prisons or colonies, where prisoners cannot be re-educated or at least directed to the right path. The reason, as it turned out, lies in the society itself, or rather, in each of us. Crime is not born on its own — it arises from our sinful nature and lawlessness, which is the consequence of our sinful life. No wonder it is said: *«Whoever committed sin committed iniquity; and sin is iniquity»* (1 John 3:4).

All that a free society receives today in response to the so-called forced re-education is a boomerang upon returning. Wisdom says: what a man sows, then he will reap. The fact is that a rather large percentage of convicted people after receiving the sentence perfectly understand that from now on they will never be accepted by society back as full-fledged citizens of their country. Even in prison, they put themselves on the rogue list, because they feel not only a disdainful attitude on the part of the staff, but they also know from the example of those who returned to prison that the doors are closed to them in many places as well. It turns



out that during the years spent behind bars, people do not transform themselves into a positive side, but, on the contrary, form a negative in themselves, because they already know beforehand what awaits them at large. Therefore, statistics confirm that fact that more than half of the released inmates go back to prison. And they do not return themselves, but mostly with new people. And this is how everything goes on around a circle to infinity. The offender does not change due to the fact that the society does not change from which he left.

Today in many countries the cause of this vicious circle is finally realized and by introducing new methods and approaches to reducing crime in their country, they receive positive results. Thank God that today and in our country, the penitentiary system is gradually reforming. For the first time in decades, this punitive system has been transformed into a humane education system, where people can later, if they wish, re-socialize to become fully-fledged people after their liberation. Inside the system, reform seems to have begun. There remains only one thing — to change the society itself, including not only the staff, but also the society that accepts former prisoners into its ranks.

There is a hope for change, as today the prison system is open to access not only to journalists and human rights defenders, but also to prison officials who

conduct spiritual and pastoral work with the special contingent, preaching the Good News of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Who are the prison officials and what role do they play in the reform of the penitentiary system?

First of all, these are Christians who voluntarily visit prisons and colonies preaching the Gospel. As the Lord teaches: *«...the healthy do not need a doctor, but the sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance»* (Mark 2:17).

The Lord encourages believers to preach the gospel among those from whom many have long ago turned their backs on. Unfortunately, places of imprisonment, like the prisoners themselves, have always been and are not a priority among a free society. The world behind barbed wire and free society are still hostile to each other. The society cannot understand in any way that by rejecting former prisoners, it thereby increases the relapse after their release. People often repeat crimes not because they liked the prison or the colony, but because they are not accepted by society. Former prisoners who do not have any social ties at large are potential candidates for relapse and as I already mentioned above, these people tend to tag along after themselves

others to prison with them, typically young people who have illusory romance in their head. These young people are typically children from dysfunctional families and individual cases are from families of believers.

Despite the fact that the society has not yet been reconciled with those who leave places of deprivation of liberty, thanks to prison officers these former inmates still have a chance to start a new life, so to speak, from a clean slate. This is facilitated at liberty by rehab centers, missions, and churches from whom brothers and sisters serve to those incarcerated. However, to the great regret, the state does not finance this ministry and omit is very poorly supported by other Christians who have never visited prison. For some reason, many are convinced that «serving those prison is not for me or my loved ones». While people are well, no one remembers the proverb where it says that from prison and from money do not renounce. Indifference to prison service is present in the majority of our fellow citizens, including among Christians. Few people understand that due to indifference to prison and prisoners, the society now has everything that is called horror and nightmare...

Any crime in the state depends on the society that makes up this state. And if this or that society wants the percentage of crime in their country to be zero, then first of all it is necessary to eliminate indifference in this society. I often quote one very wise statement, which I want to finish with this article today. To change something in yourself or remain the same is the personal decision of every person. Just remember: **«Do not fear your enemies. The worst they can do is kill you. Do not fear friends. At worst, they may betray you. Fear those who do not care; they neither kill nor betray, but betrayal and murder exist because of their silent consent»** (Bruno Jasieński).

Igor GORIK.

CHRISTIAN NEWS

Unusual shelter made for the homeless in the UK

Leaders of the charity organization, The Rucksack Project have joined the various efforts of refurbishing abandoned vehicles — such as a double-decker bus — into a shelter for the homeless.



The Stagecoach bus was saved from being reduced to scrap and was put to urgent use by charity workers. It has now been turned into a sanctuary for those who have no roof over their heads.

The transformation, that lasted eight months, cost \$8,000, and required the skills of nearly 80 workers, revealed a 12-bed home with a fully operational kitchenette.



The Stagecoach will be parked in front of St. Agatha's Church. It is being hoped that it will help an estimated number of 300,000 homeless people currently residing in the UK.

Aleksey KOVALYONOK,
<http://bog.news>



YOUR LETTERS

Good day, Igor! I greet you and all the brothers and sisters working for the editorial team for «Prisoner» with the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. May the peace and grace of God be upon you!

I ask you not to be upset with me. It so happens that I have to turn to you with another need.

Regular Reader's Letter

The thing is that from January 1st to present day, I continue to wait for positive change in my life and impatiently wait for a new edition of your newspaper «Prisoner». January has almost come to an end and there is still no new edition. Because of the country's current state, I've been asking those imprisoned whether they receive any mail from Ukraine. Their response: no. I'm very concerned. Could it really be that you stopped shipping «Prisoner»? It's a lot simpler for those living out in society because everyone has a computer at home. For me, personally, it's really difficult to find someone who would be able to print the newspaper out for me. But when I receive «Prisoner», as odd as it may sound, my mood improves and not only — I have the desire to live — that is how much positivity your newspaper brings with itself.

A huge thank you for all that you do. I join the Ukrainian people in worrying for those located in Donbass. Truly, your times are quite difficult. I'm continually amazed by your work. I carefully follow all the news from Ukraine. Your newspaper is also full of information that is not shown on the television or aired on the radio. That is why any abnormality in receiving the newspaper really worries me. If possible, please sign me up for a regular reader of your newspaper.

I still have a long time to go before my sentence is up but your newspaper «Prisoner» provides this meaning and bright colors.

I'll be looking for missed numbers but would you please send me the first edition of this year? I would be utterly grateful.

I think you from the bottom of my heart and wish you health, faith, and patience. You're doing a great deed — kudos to you.

Regards,

Vladimir MALITSKY,
Hlybokaye, Belarus.

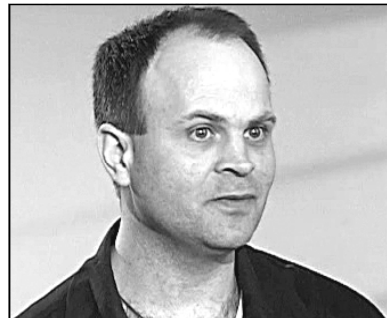
I'm Sorry

My name is Sergey Romanov. February 1996, I committed a horrendous crime for which I was sentenced — death penalty.

It's impossible to fix the crime I committed because I took the life of people who could have been living now.

I believed in God, by God's mercy, in 1997 and later I was able to confess and repent of my sins before Him. And because of Christ's blood that was shed on the cross, I believe that God heard and forgave me.

«Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!» (2 Corinthians 5:17).



Nonetheless, how do I ask for forgiveness before all the people I've hurt? How do I ask for forgiveness when, in essence, you can't forgive murder? My soul hurts from this. Being in prison, it's impossible to find all the people who were affected by the harm I've caused them because they're all scattered in different locations and I don't know of their whereabouts. What am I to do?

How do I carry out and carry through my regret and forgiveness before the people I need to be asking for forgiveness from?

I only have one hope — God. I don't doubt that He knows everything. Everything hidden becomes revealed even for people. God is eternal and there is nothing hidden from Him. He is omnipresent and omniscient. Because of His mercy, I was given a second chance through the magazine «Prisoner» which has around 10,000 readers and it reached a person who suffered directly from me — this man's name is Roman Vladimirovich Bondarev.

Roman Vladimirovich, I ask you, forgive me. Unfortunately, I can't change anything and I'm not looking to justify my actions (murder has no justification) but I cry out for mercy. I repent and repent and ask for your forgiveness.

Sergey ROMANOV,
Imprisoned Christian — 22 years
behind bars. Vinnytsia, Ukraine.

You Pass on the Spirit's Strength and Hope

Greetings, the regarded and favorite staff of «Prisoner»!

Just a few days ago, I received another edition to your paper. I'm so happy that God supports your editorial office and gives you all love and mercy and wisdom. You don't only give us hope, you also give us the strength of the Spirit so that we feel protected behind these walls.

Throughout my life, I blamed everyone except myself. I always thought that I'm right and do what's right but when I looked around myself, I realized all my 48 years of life have passed without light!

I'm incredibly grateful to God today that I have sisters in Christ that are imprisoned with me. Because of your newspaper, many girls here or women experience a change of heart, look, change of thought and this cannot not bring happiness. I constantly pray for all of you and your precious ministry.

Every Christian is responsible to testify their Christian life with their words and actions. This is the most happy and fulfilled life. This joy is reflected on our faces and in our speech and actions. We all need to find strength in the Lord and walk in the Truth.

I'm wishing all of the editorial staff at «Prisoner» an abundance of health and success in work and God's ministry. May God abundantly bless you and your ministry!

With the utmost respect and love of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Svetlana RASCHENKO, Chernihiv, Ukraine.

Dear Editorial Staff at «Prisoner»!

Thank you for your blessed ministry that you do for God's glory. A special thank you to brother Igor Gorik and sister Irina Dolgushina, who give all their strength, health, and energy to publish and mail this newspaper. I ask everyone to support me in prayer so that God will send sister Irina faithful helpers who can help so the «Prisoner» newspaper can be printed in Russia and Belarus since shipping costs tripled as of this year.

A huge thank you to all the sisters who don't spare their strength and finances in supporting Christian prisoners: Anna Demyanovna Glazova, Nelya Hilimendik, Valentina Bakumenko, Vera Karpenko, Zhanna Zhdaha, Dana Marinyuk, Nina Kostenko, Lidia and Zina Bugayov among many others. God strengthens the faith of His children because of these women's faithfulness and consistency. These women help provide modern spiritual food and fulfill other needs.

I recently received a letter from a prisoner. I called his testimony «The First Step Toward Repentance».

Attached is his original letter:

Glory to Jesus Christ! God's peace be upon you, sister L. and your family. I wanted to tell you about myself, confess, that I lied to you that I was «white and fluffy»... No, I pretended to be a «Pharisaic Christian». What should I do? I slander, I'm greedy, and I envy others my conscious torments me — I'm constantly asking for help. This is the truth that I was afraid to tell you, sister L. When truth is told, I get annoyed. When it's quiet in the «house,» I make noise — there is a demon inside me. I can't do anything with myself. And I'm baptized and go to church. I read the Bible although I don't understand it too well. What kind of Christian am I?

An inmate advised me to confess and stop lying to myself. So please, help me. Tell me how to be and what to do. All I want is to receive care package but I don't want to do anything. Please forgive me for everything, sister L. Pray to God for me. Don't abandon me.

Regards, brother N.

Regardless of its content, this letter made me happy. God is working in this man's heart and reveals sin. This man is an orphan who was taught in an orphanage for kids with mental delays. I advised him to continue on God's path and not leave it even when he feels disappointed but to rather confess his sin before a congregation and have everyone pray for him.

... *The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you (2 Chronicles 15:2).*

I'd also like to cite a letter from a former prisoner, Nadezhda Kosenkov (she was released in 2016). Her letter was printed in the journal «Gospel Behind the Barbed Wire» (3rd issue 2017, page 15):

When you're locked up behind bars, with no freedom, you truly see who really needs you. Where are our friends and acquaintances? You almost never get a letter from anyone but your mom because she's the only one who actually cares and it's also pathetic to see how many inmates communicate with that only person who genuinely and loyally loves them. They make huge orders for care packages and don't even think if their mom will have enough money for herself, after their orders, for something as generic as bread. I mean they betrayed her love with their sins and left her alone and now they use her?..

Often times, I remember my mom. I didn't really pray for her because everything was fine with her. In prison you kind of pray for yourself more often... and suddenly, I received a letter from my sister: «Mom died!» What torment! Her death was so unexpected... to think of the countless sleepless nights she had when she prayed for her troubled-daughter... and I could not even hug her and tell her «I'm sorry.» I don't want anyone to experience anything like that. Pray for your parents, bring them up in prayer to God, ask God to bless them. Love them!

May God bless the employees who work for «Prisoner» and all of its readers!

Lidia ANDREYEV,
Zaporizhia, Ukraine.

The Newspaper «Prisoner» and Bible School «Emmaus» Answer Questions to Any Spiritual Questions

Greetings, respected brothers and sisters in Christ especially Igor and all the creative employees in the editorial office of the wonderful newspaper «Prisoner»!

My name is Ruslan. I am a Christian, I am 43 years old. I've been behind bars since 2001. This is my first sentence. I'm serving a life sentence. It's been a few years since I turned to our Lord Jesus Christ, when I let Him into my heart and life and my life radically changed and continues to change for the better. Praise and glory be to our Lord and Savior — Jesus Christ!

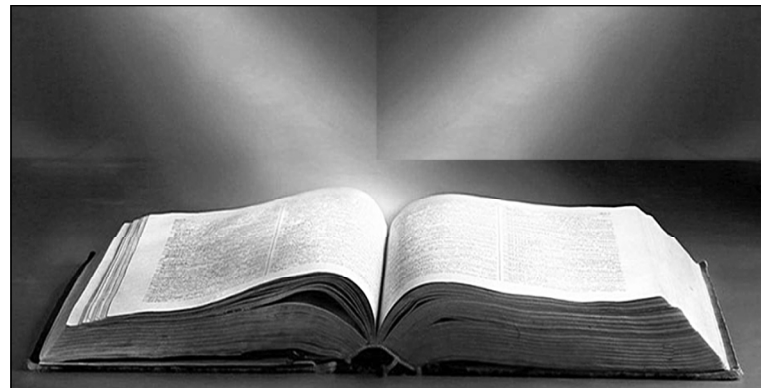
I recently ended some courses *Being a Christian* through «Light in the East». With your permission, I want to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart who is a part of the wonderful magazine «Faith & Life», and all those who partake in producing other great spiritual-based literature of which gets transferred to us along with other goodies and spiritual and materialistic support; and most importantly I'm grateful for the light that pierces the darkness of our lost souls. I'm grateful to God that I met the respected editor in chief of the Christian magazine «Faith & Life» W. Zorn and V. Davidyuk. A separate thank you to the passionate Christian and wonderful woman who always supports me with wise counsel and gives me the answers to all of my questions — Alla Adamovna Davidyuk. May the Lord protect you and bless you for your ministry in His glory!

Respected Igor and the rest of the editorial staff! You won't believe it but I came across your newspaper by God's will. I personally really liked it and I'm certain I'm not the only one who enjoyed it. The newspaper «Prisoner» is rich in content, interesting, and is read in one sitting. It contains the many answers for the various spiritual questions, the testimonies that

touch the depths of one's soul — long story short, it is the real deal! This means that it is blessed by God. At one point, it stopped coming to us. I thought it was because of the events happening on the east side of our country. Yet, the ways of God are mysterious. I am certain that only by God's will, «Prisoner» came to our hands once again. After we received the newspaper again, God's providence came around once again and we saw brother Igor on television. I was always

through such people and gives others joy that lasts to the end of their life!

I'd like to go back to share about myself. Currently, I'm studying at a Bible College «Emmaus» under the mentorship of a wonderful person and instructor for the learning process — Lyudmila Nikolayevna Moseyko. I'm so grateful to her for the spiritual literature, advice, guidance and attention that she gives me and other students. May God bless her days and may her



interested how the newspaper came about and I got my answer!

«Prisoner» came to my hands in the most remarkable way! A group of Christians were visiting us in prison from an organization «The Embassy of Life». This time they came with a guitar and songs that captured our spirit and made tears to flow down our cheeks. And I'm not exaggerating. Sister Larisa Melnichenko was amongst this group of visitors who gave out your newspaper with the story that was printed in issue 4 for 2017.

I want to take advantage of this opportunity to express heartfelt gratitude to all the brothers and sisters who volunteer for the group «The Embassy of Life». Their actions and deeds are definitely noteworthy! I plea for God to be merciful to them and so that He would multiply His endless love in their hearts. Glory to Jesus Christ that He works

students be diligent and passionate Christians.

Ever since I turned to the Lord, he miraculously helped me overcome my tobacco addiction that I've been struggling with for 30 years — it's frightening to think that I've used tobacco for so long. Instead of using tobacco, I started writing poetry. I've been testing my skills in poetry. Since you have a great creative column «Literature & Art», I've been sending over some of my «work of art» over to you with great joy. I hope something works out.

Once again, thank you so much for such a great newspaper. I will be happy to have fellowship with whoever wants to write to me. I will respond to any letter with great joy.

With genuine respect,



Ruslan SHKARUPA,
Temnivka, Ukraine.

My substance was not hidden from thee, when I was made in secret, and in the depths of the womb. Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were written all The days that were ordained for me, when none of them had not yet been (Ps. 138:15-16).

How sad and unfortunate that the majority of people who come into this world, have no clue that prior to their birth they have long been known to Him Who created the entire universe. Unfortunately few people realize that their birth was known in advance to God. People come into this world and believe that it is a merit of only their parents, that thanks to them, they came into this world. However, Scripture reveals to all a deep mystery, when it says: **...written in your book are all the days assigned for me, when none of them have yet been.** So it turns out that God not only knows the day of our birth, but also how many years on earth will be given to a particular person.

Yes, we are born into the world thanks to our mother and father, but this fact is not an accident. God knows very well when and who will come into this world. Perhaps that is why He reunites the necessary people together (men and women), regardless of where they live. After all, it does not always have to be that children are born only because their parents lived nearby: one street over, or in a neighbor city or in a next door village, and so on. Most often the parents do not know anything about each other until a certain time. But God knows that from these two people, a new one will appear at a certain time, regardless of where these people live: in different cities or far away countries... In a

time ordained by God, these two people (male and female) must meet so a particular new person is born. Of the fact that we are born, there is no chance or some set rule. To all this there is only the will of God for the person to come into this world. The birth of each one of us is known to God,

even if not all of us know Him as the Creator of all things. All people without exception, (good or bad) are God's creation. All originally came into this world for good, as it says: **For we — His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God hath before ordained that we should do** (Eph. 2:10). In other words, every person is originally born for good and may in the future be a member of God's family, inheriting eternal life. But why many do not inherit eternal life is due to the fall of our ancestors Adam and Eve — when they sinned in the garden of Eden. We are all born with a sinful nature, which often enslaves many people.

We all come into this world only by the will of God, but at the same time God gives each one of us a free choice of life, that is, to live with Him or without Him. If a person is born in a family of believers, the percentage or probability that he will make the right choice is significantly higher than that of the child who was born in a family who does not know God. But in either case, all human beings are creatures of God, and everyone has a chance to inherit eternal life. The main thing we must not forget is that we are always and everywhere in the presence of God because God is omnipresent and everywhere. He who lives with faith in

God, Scripture clearly says, **...for the Lord's eyes run to and fro throughout the earth to strengthen those whose heart is loyal to Him** (2 Chron. 16:9). Moreover, the psalmist David clearly says that God knows absolutely everything about us: **O Lord, you have searched me and**

sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, «Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,» even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. For you formed

omissions are known to God, but also what we think. God knew all about us even before our birth. He knew about us when we were not in our mother's womb yet. God knew our parents and our conception.

When we finally begin to realize all of this, then for the

EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW!



known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the

my inward parts you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well (Ps. 138:1-14).

From the inspired revelation of David it is clearly seen that God knows everything about us. It turns out that any of our wrong or good behavior in life, God knows. If He literally knows everything, then every one of our unrighteous actions only upsets and hurts Him. Perhaps if everyone realized that we are always in sight of God, perhaps less sins would be committed, including those committed in the mind only. For not only our actions or

first time do we begin to truly bow and tremble before the greatness of our God. Our minds have a hard time processing this: **Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.**

And if someone now was able to imagine such a thing and understand, imagine how God looks at a fetus, which He already intimately and utterly knows from beginning to end, is subjected to abortion! After all, in fact, a miracle happened: a new life was born by the will of God, but contrary to His will, man is destroying this new life. What could be worse than this?!

I'd love to have all the people of the world at least once read the inspirational 139th Psalm and penetrate into the depths of this biblical truth. Everyone needs to know this — not only women but also men. For it is not just words, left to us by ancient people — it itself is a revelation from God. the person who penetrates into the depths of the words, will never send a woman to have an abortion, and the woman herself would never do that. For an echo in the heart of each will be given from the words left to us in the Bible: **Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.**

I. GORIK.

Forbidden Archeology. Deluge

The Bible accurately tells us about the Flood that destroyed all mankind except for Noah and his family (Genesis, chapters 6-8). In more than a hundred nations across the world, there are stories about the huge catastrophic flood that covered the whole earth: the Greeks pass Deucalion story of the flood; the indigenous inhabitants of the American continent long before the time of Columbus, kept alive the memory of a great flood through many stories. Even today, the stories of the flood are still passed down from generation to generation: in Australia, India, Polynesia, Tibet, Kashmir and Lithuania and many other countries.

In addition to these historical accounts, we need to consider the following as arguments in favor of the flood: in the mountains, you can find numerous fossils of shells and fish (such as shark teeth were found in the Carpathian Mountains in Central Europe, as well as fossils of fish near the summit of Mount Everest).

Another incredible fact is what is found in all caves (almost always on a hill). Caves are literally stuffed with skeletons of unusual mixture of animals that climbed the mountains, seeking refuge from the advancing water.

Dendrolits — trees that extend upward from the roots through many coal strata. How can we explain that the life expectancy of a tree only a few decades can be positioned vertically through coal deposits, which presumably evolved slowly over millions of years? Plants carried by the flood were placed under tremendous pressure and heat and were turned into coal in a short time. Nowadays, you can reproduce this process in the laboratory, where coal is produced from plant matter in a few minutes due to the effect of heat and pressure.

More than 71% of the surface of the Earth is covered by water. It is well known fact that in the past, huge bodies of saltwater covered large areas of North American and African plains. For many centuries, various sources told about the visits of Noah's Ark, and Josephus the famous Jewish historian (who lived around 90 B.C.),

said: «Residents until today can see the remains of the ark».

He was quoting Berosus the Chaldean (who lived around 290 BC), who said that tourists would take home pieces of the ark to make themselves good-luck charms.

In September 1960, Life Magazine published a magazine photo of a «shiplike appearing» object on the mountains of Ararat. American archaeologist Ronald Eldon Wyatt went to this place in 1977 and during his subsequent 24 trips he found many objects that suggest that this is the real Noah's ark.

The following is some of Wyatt's descriptions. The object found has the shape of a boat with a pointed bow and rounded stern, and it is not natural stone or lava formation.

It is exactly the same length as stated in the Biblical description: 515 feet (157 meters. — Ed.), or 300 Egyptian cubits (Genesis 6:15).

It is located in eastern Turkey on the mountains of Ararat, just as the Bible says (Genesis 8:4). The ark has transverse vertical beams on the sides that make up the skeleton of the boat. Radar scans show uniform structure of horizontal and vertical beams supporting the deck, and can even determine where the door is located. Scanning also revealed that a large number of metal fittings and rivet were used in order to secure the massive logs.

Some of them were made of complex metal alloys. It is

intertwined with the biblical story that metal works school existed long before the Flood (Genesis 4:22).

18-inch pieces of petrified deck beams were found, consisting of three separate layers of laminated wood. This is the only place on earth where you can find fossilized laminated wood.

Within this structure «coprolites» were found (fossilized animal droppings), as well as fossilized antlers and animal hair. Near this place, in the elevation at 6500 feet (1981 meters. — Ed.), huge stones, anchors have been found! They hung from the back of the boat to stabilize it in the churning waves and turbulent water of the flood.

The name of a nearby village inhabited by the ancient (Kazan) translates as «Village of Eight» (there were eight people in the ark).

Near the ancient potter's wheel, which depicts Noah, ravens and fish were found. In ancient times, the villagers created these

handicrafts and sold them to people who came to see the ark. The ark was a tourist attraction in ancient times and continues to be so today. the Turkish government has constructed a tourist center at the location of Noah's ark, bearing testament that the flood did happen, and it sculpted the earth into being what we see today, not billions of years but one cataclysmic event.



Reading the story of the fall of Adam and Eve in the third chapter of Genesis, we encounter a serpent. What kind of creature was it? Was it really a snake? Some believe that since animals cannot speak, the biblical story of the fall of mankind is just an allegory in which each character is a specific spiritual symbol.

So, who is this mysterious individual hiding masked as a snake? Who is this mysterious individual who not only spoke with Eve in human language, but also pushed her to disobey God Almighty?

Let's use the golden rule of Scripture interpretation, which is: The Bible interprets the Bible. So let us turn to the Word of God to find out what it says on this matter, let's also find out what else the Bible says about the serpent.

I. WHAT JESUS CHRIST SAID ABOUT SATAN

Once, while addressing the Pharisees who tried to kill Him, Jesus said: *You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it* (John 8:44, NKJV).

What does Jesus say here? What events of the past where the devil plotting murder and lies was Jesus referring to?

In our opinion, the temptation of Eve is quite suitable for this description. And these events fully correspond to the expression Jesus used «from the beginning», because the history of the fall of man is the first record of events after the creation of the world. The serpent lied to Eve, saying to her: «No, you will not die». This was the first lie, a record of which was preserved in the Holy Scripture. And the title «father of lies» accurately describes an individual caught in the first lie in the world.

A biblical theologian of the 8th century Matthew Henry commented on this passage: *Satan is a great propagandist of all kinds of lies. He is a liar and tempter who calls evil good, good evil, and promises freedom through sin.*

Because of the lies of the serpent, as we know, not only Adam and Eve were harmed but the whole of humanity. Death entered the world through the first sin and now reigns in all people. The title of «murderer», which Jesus bestowed upon Satan, suits the person who tempted Eve at the beginning of time.

Thus, we see that the description of Satan given by Jesus Christ in John 8:44 is an accurate description of the evil work performed by the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Moreover in ancient history there is not one case that would better fit this description of the devil than the temptation of Eve by the serpent recorded in Genesis 3.

A closer relationship between Satan (the devil) and the serpent in the Book of Genesis can be seen in Revelation 12:9 (So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him) and in Revelation 20:2 (He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years).

The word «Satan» means «foe» or «enemy»: first, with respect to God and, secondly, with respect to man. The term «devil» means «slanderer» or «accuser»: Satan slanders against man to God, and against God to man.

II. WHO WAS THE SERPENT?

Does this mean that the serpent described in Genesis 3 was Satan?

The Bible says that ...Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light... (2 Corinthians 11:14). Satan likes to disguise himself as an angel of light. But in this case, it seems to us the situation is somewhat different because we are talking about a serpent.

We do not think that the word «serpent» was just a symbolic description of Satan. We also do not believe that Satan became a snake.

We believe that the serpent was a tool in the hands of Satan. This can be seen in the following places:

☉ from the description of the reptile given in Genesis 3:1 (Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made);

☉ from the curse that God cursed the serpent in Genesis 3:14 (You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life).

The Bible also records that before Judas Iscariot left the room where the Last Supper was held and went to betray Jesus, Satan entered him. Jesus answered, «It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it». And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him (John 13:26-27).

TOPIC FOR REFLECTION

WHO WAS THE SERPENT?

Similarly, in certain conditions, demons can enter the bodies of people and animals. Example: when Jesus exorcised a legion of demons from a man. What happened to them after that? They entered a herd of pigs grazing nearby, which then rushed off the cliff into the sea and drowned (Mark 5:1-13).

This once again confirms our suspicions that Satan took possession of the serpent's body and used it to carry out his vicious plan; deceiving Eve.

Also, think about the fact that the serpent is a symbol of evil and Satan. This is not without reason. The roots of this symbolism go back centuries — to the history of the temptation of Eve by the serpent in the Garden of Eden. This meeting of Eve with the serpent is as plausible as the temptation of Jesus in the desert.

Now, after we found out that the serpent was an instrument of Satan, there is one more question: is Satan really able to speak out loud?

III. CAN SATAN SPEAK?

When Satan tempted Jesus, he did it with words. Jesus Christ answered him also in a human language. This dialogue is recorded in the two Gospels (Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13). And although we know the whole conversation, the Bible does not tell us how Satan looked during the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.

Satan is a real individual. One time his appearance was so real to Martin Luther that he threw an inkwell at Satan.

Returning to the history of the fall of mankind, I want to quote the words of the Christian writer Oswald Sanders, who said: *Let me draw a line between the serpent and the donkey of Balaam: the speaking donkey was a divine miracle, while the talking serpent was a satanic miracle.*

IV. WHERE DID SATAN COME FROM?

God decided not to tell us too many details about the origin and fall of Satan. From the Bible we know the following:

1. Satan was a beautiful angel of God — a cherub

Ezekiel 28:13-15 — *You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created. «You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you».*

2. Satan is the head of the fallen angels now demons and unclean spirits

Matthew 25:41 — *Then He will*

also say to those on the left hand, «Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels...»

Revelation 12:9 — *So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

2 Peter 2:4 — *For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.*

3. Satan is the enemy of God and man

Job 1:6-12 and Job 2:1-6 describes Satan's desire to destroy Job.

1 Peter 5:8 — *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

4. The fall of Satan was due to his pride

Ezekiel 28:15-17 — *You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. «By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones. «Your heart was lifted up (proud) because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you».*

1 Timothy 3:6 — [The bishop must be] *not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.*

5. Time of the fall of Satan and the fallen angels

☉ After six days of creation. After all, all that the Lord God created was beautiful: Genesis 1:31 — *Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

☉ Before the fall of man, described in Genesis 3.



6. The role of Satan in our world

☉ Some mistakenly think that Satan is the «ruler of hell.» Such an understanding of the role and personality of Satan is erroneous and unbiblical.

☉ Jesus calls Satan «the prince of this world»:

John 12:31 (NIV) — *Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.*

John 14:30 — *I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me.*

John 16:11 (NKJV) — *...the ruler of this world is judged.*

☉ The Bible also calls Satan «the god of this age»:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 — *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds...*

☉ The Bible also calls Satan «prince of the air»:

Ephesians 2:2 — *in which you once walked according to the course*

of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience

☉ The Bible says that he wanders the earth and plans machinations:

Job 2:2 — *And the Lord said to Satan, «From where do you come?» Satan answered the Lord and said, «From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it».*

1 Peter 5:8 — *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

Ephesians 6:11 — *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

Satan knows that he is already condemned to eternal death but wants to drag as many human souls as possible with him to hell.

V. WHY DID GOD CREATE SATAN?

Question No. 1: Why did God create Satan?

Answer. First of all, God did not create Satan, just like God did not create Adam as a sinful person. The Lord created a beautiful angel — «guardian cherub» as the Bible describes in Ezekiel 28:13-17. Satan was an angel of light until he got pride in his heart which is lawlessness. This was the beginning of his fall, now it is an angel of darkness or an unclean spirit.

Question No. 2: If the Lord God knew that Satan would tempt man and Adam and Eve would sin, then why did He not interfere in the course of events and change them for the better?

Answer. God gave Adam (and all mankind) free will and the right to choose. God never violates His laws and never abuses the free will of man. He gives the right to choose and only advises which choice is better. In this case, man chose sin and is now reaping the fruits of his choice.

We can also draw more conclusions based on what we know about the sin and the fall of man.

1. God allowed sin to enter the world, although he knew, (1) the nature of sin, (2) the consequences of sin His creation will expect and (3) what He will have to go through in order to rid the world of sin.

2. God planned to eradicate sin once and for all.

God had His reasons why He allowed the appearance of sin in the world, but He is going to eradicate it once and for all.

3. God planned and prepared salvation from sin for people, which is given to us through the blood and death of Jesus Christ:

Hebrews 9:14 — *... the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death,[a] so that we may serve the living God!*

1 Peter 1:18-21 — *... not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but*

with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

1 John 1:7 — *...if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin*

1 John 4:8-10 — *Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

4. God planned to completely destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8 — *The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work*) and proclaim His righteousness and justice through the Great and dreadful Judgment and the punishment of the wicked: Acts 17:31 — *For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.*

5. God planned to send Satan into the lake of fire (hell), which He prepared for the devil and the fallen angels:

Matthew 25:41 — *Then he will say to those on his left, «Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...»*

Revelation 20:10 — *The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

6. All those who rebelled against God and who did not receive the gift of salvation will also be condemned and cast into the lake of fire:

John 3:18 — *He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

Revelation 20:11-15 — *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

In light of this, I want to recall that the invitation of God is still in force. He calls on everyone to give up their sins and reconcile with their Creator through the blood of Jesus Christ!

John 3:16-17 — *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. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

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

Material for the newspaper «Prisoner» kindly provided by Biblical discussion club, Montreal, Canada <http://cogmtl.net/Articles/082.htm>

Is the Bible relevant today?

ANSWER: In **Hebrews 4:12** it is written: *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* Although the Bible was written by more than 40 authors for over 1500 years, its accuracy and relevance in our time remains unchanged. The Bible is the only objective source of all the revelations given by God about Himself and His plan for humanity.

The Bible contains a huge array of information about the surrounding world, confirmed by scientific observations and research. Some of these texts include **Lev. 17:11; Eccl. 1:6-7; Job 36:27-29; Ps. 103:25-27** and **Col. 1:16-17**. Many different characters are vividly described in the process of revealing the biblical revelation of the Divine plan for the redemption of mankind. Through this, the Bible provides extensive information about human behavior and its inclinations. Our own daily experience shows that this information is more accurate and clearer than any textbook on psychology. In addition, many of the historical facts mentioned in the Bible have been confirmed by non-biblical sources. Often historical studies show a striking similarity between the biblical reports of certain events and messages of secular origin. And in many cases the Bible is considered more accurate historically.

Nevertheless, the Bible is neither a historical book nor a psychological study, nor a scientific protocol. The Bible is the Divine description of God Himself, His desires and plans for humanity. The most important part of this revelation is the story of our separation from God because of sin and the renewal of the relationship that He provided through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross. Our need for redemption does not change, just as the Divine desire to reconcile us with Him is unchanged.

The Bible contains a lot of accurate and up-to-date information. The most important message of the Bible is redemption that is universal and eternally applicable to humanity. God's Word will never become obsolete and will not change. Culture and laws change, generations come and go, but it is just as relevant today as it was at the time of writing. It is not necessary that the entire Bible relates directly to us today, but it contains truths that we can and should apply in our life today.

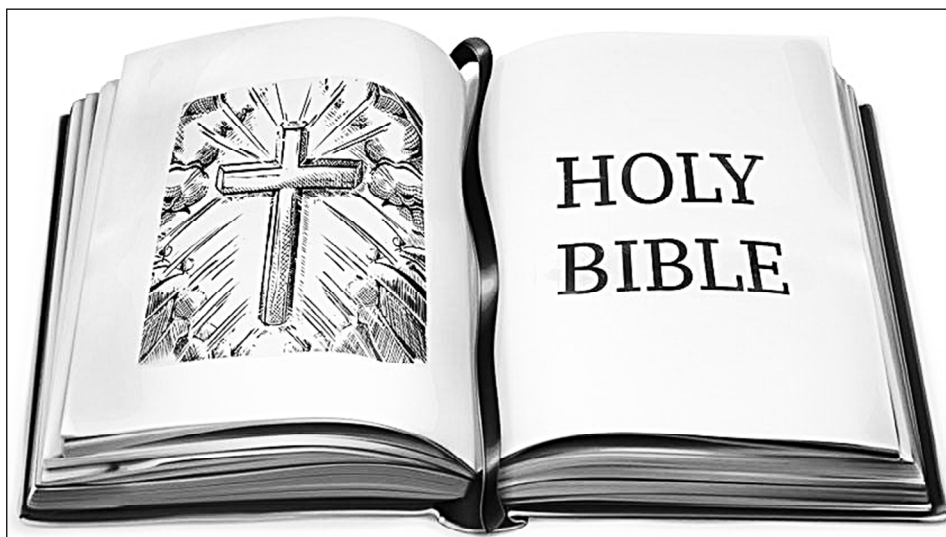
How and when was the canon of the Bible composed?

ANSWER: In this case, the term «canon» is used to describe books whose authors were inspired from above and who were thus part of the Bible. The difficulty in determining the biblical canon is that the Bible does not offer us a list of books that relate to it. The definition of the canon is a process carried out first by Jewish rabbis and scribes, and then by early Christians. Of course, it was God who determined which books should be included in the biblical canon. The Bible belonged to the canon from the very moment when God inspired the author of this book to write it. God simply revealed to His followers which books were to be included in the Bible.

In comparison with the New Testament concerning the Old Testament canon, the debate was insignificant. Jewish believers recognized God's messengers and accepted their writings as inspired. Undoubtedly, there were some disputes about the canon of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, until 250 AD there was almost an universal agreement on the canon of «Jewish writings». The only remaining question is the apocryphal books, about which discussions are held and are still held today. The overwhelming majority of Jewish theologians considered them to be good historical and religious documents, but not on the same level as «Jewish writings».

Concerning the New Testament, the process of recognition and compilation began in the first centuries of the Christian church. Some books of the New Testament were recognized from the very beginning. Paul viewed the writings of Luke as authoritative as the Old Testament (**1 Tim. 5:18**; see also **Deuter. 25:4** and **Luke 10:7**). Peter considered the scriptures of Paul to be the Holy Scripture (**2 Pet. 3:15-16**). Some of the books of the New Testament were distributed among the churches (**Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27**). Clement of Rome (95 CE) mentioned at least eight books of the New

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Testament. Ignatius of Antioch (115 AD) recognized about seven books. Polycarp (108 AD), a disciple of the Apostle John, recognized 15 books. Later, Irenaeus (185 AD) mentioned 21 books. Ippolit (170-235 AD) admitted 22 books. The New Testament books that caused the most animated discussions were the book of Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, and the 2nd and 3rd book of John. The first canon was the Muratorian Canon, compiled in 170 AD. It contained all the books of the New Testament, except for the book of Hebrews, book of James and 3rd John. In 363, the Laodicean Council determined that only the Old Testament (along with the apocryphal books), as well as the 27 books of the New Testament, were to be read in the churches. Cathedrals in Ippo (393) and Carthage (397) also approved the authority of the same 27 books.

In determining the truth of whether the author inspired the Holy Spirit to write the New Testament, these cathedrals followed such principles:

1. Was the author an apostle or had a close relationship with the apostle?
2. Is the book accepted for the most part by the Body of Christ?
3. Did the book correspond to doctrine and traditional teaching?
4. Did the book carry evidence of high moral and spiritual values ??that reflect the work of the Holy Spirit?

Again, we absolutely need to remember that neither the church nor the early church councils defined the canon. God, and only Him, determined which books were to be part of the Bible. God simply persuaded His followers to do what He had already decided. The human process of collecting the books of the Bible contained errors, but God, in His omniscience and despite our ignorance and stubbornness, brought the Early Church to the recognition of books, the writing of which inspired their authors.

What is the canon of the Bible?

ANSWER: The word «canon» comes from the rule used in determining whether the book conformed to the standard or not. It is important to remember that the books of Holy Scripture were canonical at the time they were written. The Holy Scripture became such when the pen touched the parchment. This moment is very important, since Christianity does not begin with the definition of God, Jesus Christ or salvation. The foundation of Christianity is based on the authority of Holy Scripture. If we cannot determine what Scripture is, then we cannot properly separate theological truth from error.

What measures or standards were used to determine whether a particular book could be classified as part of the Scriptures? A key text to understand this process and its purpose, and, perhaps, the time frame for writing the Bible is recorded in the book of **Jude 1:3**, where it is stated that faith was given to Christians once and for all (modern translation). If our faith is determined by Scripture, then, according to Judah, Scripture was given to all Christians. Is not it wonderful to realize that there are no hidden or lost manuscripts that still need to be found, there are no secret books known only to the

elect, and there are no people who have a special revelation that requires our migration to the Himalayan mountains to gain enlightenment?! We can be sure that God did not leave us without a testimony. The great divine power that was used to create the Word was also applied to its preservation.

Ps. 119:160 asserts that the foundation of the Word is true. Based on this statement, we can compare individual books within the accepted canon of Scripture to make sure that they stand the test. For example, the Bible claims that Jesus Christ is God (**Isa. 9:6-7; Matt. 1:22-23; John 1:1-2, 14, 20:28; Acts 16:31, 34; 2 Pet. 1:1; Phil. 2:5-6; Col. 2:9; Tit. 2:13; Hebr. 1:8**). At the same time, many non-biblical texts claiming canonicity deny the deity of Christ. Therefore, when there are unequivocal contradictions, it is necessary to trust the generally accepted canon, leaving other works outside the Scripture.

In the era of the Early Church, Christians were sometimes put to death for possessing passages of Scripture. Because of these persecutions, soon the question arose: «For what books is it worth dying for?» Some books could contain the statements of Jesus, but were they inspired, as stated in **2 Tim. 3:16**? Church councils played a key role in publicly recognizing the canon of Scripture, but quite often individual churches or groups of churches recognized the book as inspired (for example, **Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27**). During the first centuries of the church's existence, discussions were held about only a few books, and their list was approved essentially until 303 AD.

In considering the Old Testament, three important facts were taken into account:

- 1) The New Testament quotes or references all but two books of the Old Testament.
- 2) As recorded in **Matt. 23:35**, Jesus supported the Jewish canon, citing one of the first narratives in the Scriptures of His day, as well as one of its last texts.
- 3) The Jews approached the preservation of the Old Testament writings with great care, and they had little doubt about which part belongs to the canon and which does not.

The Roman Catholic apocrypha does not correspond to these points, therefore they were never accepted by the Jews.

A significant part of the questions about belonging to the canon of the Bible was related to books written in the time of Christ or later. The Early Church had some rather specific criteria for considering books in terms of belonging to the New Testament. They included such questions: was the book written by an «eyewitness» of Jesus Christ? Did the book «test the truth», that is, does it contradict other already approved books? The New Testament books they accepted after that passed the test of time, after which, in spite of previous doubts, the Christian public accepted them.

Recognition of certain books was based on the testimonies of people who lived in the first century and who were the primary sources in terms of reliability. Moreover, the theme of the last time in Revelation and the prohibition of adding anything to its words (**Rev. 22:18**) are indisputable arguments that the canon was closed after the writing of this book (95 CE).

There is an important theological point that should not be overlooked. God used His

Word for millennia for one purpose — to reveal Himself to humanity. Eventually, the church councils did not decide whether the book belongs to the Scriptures or not; it was decided when the human author was chosen by God to write it. In order to achieve the end result, including the preservation of the Word throughout the centuries, God directed the early church councils in the process of approving the canon.

Knowledge of such things as the true nature of God, the origin of the universe and life, the purpose and meaning of life, the miracles of salvation and the events of the future (including the fate of mankind) are beyond the natural observational and cognitive abilities of man. God's Word prepared for us, valued and personally applied by Christians for centuries, is sufficient to explain everything that we need to know about Christ (**John 5:18; Acts 18:28; Gal. 3:22; 2 Tim. 3:15**), and also teach us, correct and instruct in righteousness (**2 Tim. 3:16**).

Who were the authors of the books of the Bible?

ANSWER: The Bible was written by God with the help of human authors. **2 Tim. 3:16** tells us that God inspired people to write the Bible. Despite the fact that the people used by God owned different styles of writing and personal qualities, under His guidance they recorded exactly what He prescribed. The Bible was not written under the dictation of God, but under His wonderful guidance and complete inspiration.

In terms of human categories, the Bible was written by approximately 40 people of various origins over 1500 years. Isaiah was a prophet, Ezra a priest, Matthew a tax collector, John a fisherman, Paul was a tentmaker, Moses a shepherd, and Luke a doctor. Despite this, the Bible does not have contradictions between books and there is not a single mistake. All the authors presented different perspectives, but every single one proclaimed God and the truth that the only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12**). Some books of the Bible specify their authors, others do not. Here are the books of the Bible with the names of those who, according to most theologians, could be their author, as well as the approximate dates of their writing:

- ✦ Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy — Moses (1400 BC).
- ✦ Joshua — Joshua (1350 BC).
- ✦ Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel — Samuel, Nathan, Gad (1000-900 BC).
- ✦ 1st and 2nd Kings — Jeremiah (600 BC.).
- ✦ 1st and 2nd Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah — Ezra (450 BC).
- ✦ Esther — Mordecai (400 BC).
- ✦ Job — Moses (1400 BC).
- ✦ Psalms — several different authors, mostly David (1000-400 BC).
- ✦ Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs — Solomon (900 BC).
- ✦ Isaiah — Isaiah (700 BC).
- ✦ Jeremiah, Lamentations — Jeremiah (600 BC).
- ✦ Ezekiel — Ezekiel (550 BC).
- ✦ Daniel — Daniel (550 BC).
- ✦ Hosea — Hosea (750 BC).
- ✦ Joel — Joel (850 BC).
- ✦ Amos — Amos (750 BC).
- ✦ Obadiah — Obadiah (600 BC).
- ✦ Jonah — Jonah (700 BC).
- ✦ Micah — Micah (700 BC).
- ✦ Nahum — Nahum (650 BC).
- ✦ Habakkuk — Habakkuk (600 BC).
- ✦ Zephaniah — Zephaniah (650 BC).
- ✦ Haggai — Haggai (520 BC).
- ✦ Zechariah — Zechariah (500 BC).
- ✦ Malachi — Malachi (430 BC).
- ✦ The Gospel of Matthew — Matthew (55 AD).
- ✦ The Gospel of Mark — John Mark (50 AD).
- ✦ The Gospel of Luke — Luke (60 AD).
- ✦ The Gospel of John — John (90 AD).
- ✦ Acts of the Apostles — Luke (65 AD).
- ✦ The Epistle of James — Jacob (45 AD).
- ✦ 1st and 2nd Epistle of Peter — Peter (60 AD).
- ✦ 1st, 2nd and 3rd Epistle of John — John (90 AD).
- ✦ The Epistle of Judah — Judah (60 AD).
- ✦ Epistle to the Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1st and 2nd to the Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Titus, Philemon — Paul (50-70 AD).
- ✦ Author of Hebrews is unknown, most likely Paul, Luke, Barnabas or Apollos (65 AD).
- ✦ Revelation — John (90 AD).

TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

Hello, brothers and sisters and everyone else who now reads the newspaper «Prisoner»! Peace be with you and blessings from our Lord Jesus Christ! We have all read different stories in the «Prisoner» about how God changed the lives of those who accepted Jesus Christ into their hearts. I also decided to send in my story. Today I know that life without the Lord Jesus Christ leads only to death. Without Him it is filled with chaos and turmoil. Where situational illusory joy only momentarily masks emptiness and disappointment which often leads to depression. The devil tries to plant



How I came God

illusions into a person that he is powerful and can do anything he wants but in fact what this prideful self-sufficient person does is only destroy themselves and their life eventually.

There is nothing much I can say about my childhood. My life growing up was like millions of other Soviet children: School, after school technical college, then service in the army. Same as everyone else. I grew up in the family of a teacher and an engineer. My parents were resolute and unshakeable people, so I was brought up in the «Soviet Spirit» ambitious, daring, and aspiring to reach tops of the career ladder.

I started my career as an electric specialist in one of the quarries of the central mining and processing plant of Kryvyi Rih and finished my career being the main electrical engineer of the quarry of the same combine. I was married but life without God led to the unfortunate break-up of my family. Now I understand that much of the break-up was due to my pride. That was a huge stressful period in my life but unfortunately, I was not one to wonder and introspect as to why it happened to me. I did not pay attention to the fact that the Lord had already noticed me and had been calling me back then through the various Christians who appeared in my life. They preached to me God's word and testified about miracles that only the Creator can do. In my mind I knew that I needed to change something, but I had no faith and I got used to the way my life was going.

After my divorce I had started drinking regularly on the weekends. I got with a group of single buddies and we became a good company of friends that would often spend our leisure time fishing, visiting cafes in the evenings, but always accompanied by alcohol. Some of these buddies would say that if they were married they would not

have been in taverns and in the prodigal places. But don't even many married people live in alcohol and fornication? As I understand now, it is the destiny of all who do not know God! There is a Russian saying, «the further you go in the woods, the more firewood». That is how it happened to me: the more I lived in immorality, the deeper it dragged me into the sinful swamp. My journey deeper into the immoral swamp ended with serious sin: a double murder during a tipsy fight, something that I never imagined could possibly turn into something so evil.

Because of the murder, I was imprisoned for life. After that it seemed like everything died around me. All my achievements in life: position in society, career and the like, everything collapsed. Even my friends and classmates turned away from me. But what can I expect from my friends if even my own brothers disowned me. «This is the end!» I thought. The meaning of life was lost, everything got dim, and nothing brought me joy. To distract myself from the sad and worthless reality, I would draw with a pen on fabric (I drew very skillfully since childhood), but this comforted only while I was in the process of drawing. There I continued in senseless existence until I met Igor Trubitsin.

Igor told me his story of how he got the death sentence but was able to exchange it for a sentence of life imprisonment. He also shared with me how he came to the Lord. In our times together I started paying attention to how he lived in prison and what he did. He was the first Christian I met in prison and looking at him I began to realize that my life was not over! That only God can give strength to live in a new way. The only thing left for me to do was to repent and enter into a covenant with Him as it says in 2 Cor. 5:19, «that God was reconciling the

world to Himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation».

Since then a seed was planted in my heart that began to fill my life with something new, something that helped me acquire meaning in my existence through the beginning of living a holier life. However, somewhere somehow these thoughts of doubts and disbelief would try to overcome my mind and moments where the devil wanted to steal the holiness that just started working in my life.

In 2009, I conveyed to a Romny correctional colony (No. 56) from the Kirovohrad remand centre. In this institution I met Christians who had accepted Jesus while in custody but in my life a struggle continued. The seed sown by brother Igor had started sprouting but still needed watering. In 2013, I was sent to a prison hospital in Lviv and there I met Georgy Suvorin, who was a follower of the Lord for many years. Meeting with this brother helped me strengthen my faith. When I returned to the colony after the treatment, I was convinced that I wanted to enter covenant with the Lord and to accept water baptism.

Today, my life is filled with many things I have never understood or seen before. Having entrusted my life to the creator, I have gained calmness and peace in my heart. Now I have a huge family Christians who will never turn away from me and always support if necessary. I have a favorite pastime to serve the Lord through the gift he gave me which is drawing. I draw paintings for the children's Christian fund, and for brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

Today I know that life without the Lord Jesus Christ leads only to death. Without Him it is filled with chaos and turmoil. To walk with Jesus is a life in which our Lord who cares for us, keeps us in purity and holiness in which we receive real joy, love and peace in the heart. Thank God that now I have this in my life! When it seemed that no one and nothing could ever change me, God showed His great strength and glory in my life! Glory be to Him forever!

I thank the Lord for all the brothers and sisters who have helped me in my search for God. Those who support and sustain me with their own stories today and thank God for all those who have repented or are on their way to repentance. Thank God for all the Christians through whom the Lord continues to show His glory! Hallelujah!

Konstantin BELYAEV, Perekhrestivka, Ukraine.



meets at my home. I thank the Lord for giving me freedom in Christ Jesus, for a new heart, new thinking, a new character, for new friends, and my precious family of God's children. I am a happy man and I share my joy with you and say that God is blessed. All glory to our Lord Jesus Christ!

Igor TSYBULSKY, Vinnytsia, Ukraine, <http://rankova-zirka.com>

I Can be Useful to Society

Vyacheslav Bochkaryov spent twenty-three years in prison. For a person who has been cut off from a normal life for a long time it is very difficult to start all over again. Perhaps no one would ever have heard him, had it not been for the Lord who gave him the strength to begin a new life from scratch.

Three and a half years ago I didn't think I could live like all the good people. There was a time where I gave up on destiny and went into the criminal world. Back then I never thought about the fact that my ill and lonely mother needed help. Besides me she had no one but friends and entertainment were more important than my mother.

The first time I went to jail was in 1980 when I was sixteen years old. I wasn't an avid criminal at the time, but I found that I actually liked it in prison. There the inmates treated me like a little brother because I was the youngest and offered me drugs and alcohol. This prison was in Central Asia where these kinds of things were easily available back then.

Four years later my term ended, and I was released. My mother helped me with all necessities and I was able to get a job. However, less than six months passed before I again I was detained and imprisoned for seven years. Leaving, I knew that it was not likely that I would see my mother again. I was transported from one colony to another throughout the Soviet Union. I could not coexist in one place for more than three months: I created fights and broke all order. My childhood was over; I understood that it was time to fight for survival.

I was almost killed twice, but, thank God I survived. My mom didn't make it to see me by just a few years and died in 1990 at the age of fifty-seven years.

In 1991, when the USSR collapsed, all imprisoned were taken back to their regions. I was brought home to Tajikistan where there was a civil war going on. Militants attacked the prison colony I was in from helicopters, and then captured all the prisoners and took them to their base in the mountains. They offered us a friendship and automatic weapons. I didn't want to fight because I was not on anyone's side, so they let me go (seven months before the end of my sentence).

Returning home, I found that my house where my mother had lived was sold by distant relatives who then divided the profit amongst themselves. It turns out that I was not the only one who gave up on myself all my relatives turned away from me too. I was twenty-seven years old and I didn't know where to go or how to live: the Earth was pulled out from under my feet.

It was not long before I got myself into trouble again, another arrest with a sentence of ten years. The state of my health drastically fell and I found out that I was ill with tuberculosis. My condition kept worsening and two years of treatment did not give positive results. I thought that maybe my life came to an end. Looking back and at my present life there was nothing good: no family, no friends, no future.

One day we got visitors in the prison hospital from a local church. They made me realize how selfish and egotistical I was and that I made everything revolve around myself. They shared about God, how Jesus Christ died on the cross for all sinners as well as for murderers and robbers. The visitors told me that Jesus gave His life for me. They gifted us a Bible and said that we need to reconcile with God and read His word. That was when I realized why I hadn't done anything good in my whole life and why there was no meaning, everything has been only about me.

This was my first time seeing and holding a Bible, so I read it day and night. I started noticing that my health was improving and was soon discharged from the hospital. There were only three years left to my release and in those three years I did not part from the Bible. My personality started changing, many bad habits disappeared (no more fights) and most of all: I was gaining a sense in life. I thank God that he saved me at that terrible time.

After the release the first place where I expected to find understanding and help was the monastery. I came there, but there was no place for me and they sent me to a hostel. While looking for rooming, I confused the streets and instead of Dzerzhinsky Street came to Ordzhonikidze Street, where a church called «New Testament» was located. God had been leading my steps.

I felt like I was taken out of hell and straight to heaven. They offered to help me undergo rehabilitation at the center for the formerly convicted. After that I went to study at Bible School. Now I have a lot of good friends, a wonderful family in God, and work. God even gave me a fellow Christian wife that I met at the church. But the most important thing is that I now have a purpose to be useful for this society doing good works that I have never done before. I participate in the Prison outreach service of our church which performs works in many of the colonies I used to sit it. I am already in the fourth year of my freedom and very happy because I decided to devote my life to God.

Look at me and believe that your life can change too. God helped me, He wants to help you. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

Vyacheslav BOCHKARYOV, Russia, <https://novizavet.ru>

If God is in Your Heart Then He Will Help

My name is Igor, I am fifty years old. Today I stand in freedom and serve the Lord, but it has not always been so. I want to tell you how the Lord Jesus Christ came into my heart.

At six years old I had starting smoking and stealing. By the time I was twelve I was registered with the police as a lawbreaker and at sixteen had my first prison sentence. I began to live under the laws of the criminal world and support the unlawful life. After my second trial, I gotten caught up in what became an ever growing drug addiction, and since 1984 (16 years), I have systematically started using opiates. I was a criminal and was dedicated to drugs. For me it was not difficult to solve any problems and with the best of my «friends» we solved these problems using a knife and automatic weapons. In combined total, before I came to God, I had been in prison for twenty-three and a half years and had been using drugs, drinking and smoking for

over twenty years. During these years I lost all that I had: relatives, family, house, and health.

I held onto one hope the hope of God, and at forty six years I called to Him in despair and He answered by putting a desire on my heart to give my life to Him and repent. In 2010 I got an opportunity to go to a rehabilitation center where I successfully passed a course of rehabilitation from drug and alcohol addiction, and today I have a great privilege from the Lord to be his servant instead of a servant to drugs and alcohol. Also in 2010 with the team of ministers we started the Ministry of Rehabilitation from Drugs and Alcohol in Khmilnyk Vinnytsia region. Today God restored all of me that was lost during my sinful life but the most important thing is that I can now serve Him in purity and holiness.

Currently I am a mentor in the rehabilitation center in Khmilnyk and participate in the Temple Ministry of the Church leading a group that

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I know that You are with me

Today Vladimir is a father of three children: two sons Refat and Emmanuel and one daughter Ruth. All children were given biblical names. This family lives by the grace of the Lord. Vladimir is HIV-positive, but he has many friends, brothers and sisters who support him and love him. Listening to the songs that he writes and performs with the singing group «Mahanaim», many hold their breath, for in those songs there is the truth, life, and thanksgiving to the Almighty.

At school Vladimir was an excellent student. When he was in high school, his mother married for the second time and the family moved from Vyshhorod (near Kyiv) to another city. There Vladimir and his younger brother Lyonya had very different interests in life.

«By the example set by the «bad kids», we sniffed glue, smoked marijuana, looked for other problems», Vladimir recalls. «After completing school I did not go to college as my grandmother insisted, but returned to my native city and got a construction job. One day my brother came to visit me and offered to inject drugs. He himself was a drug user as early as 14 years of age. I refused his offer for almost a year. And when I agreed, I had to pay for my decision very quickly».

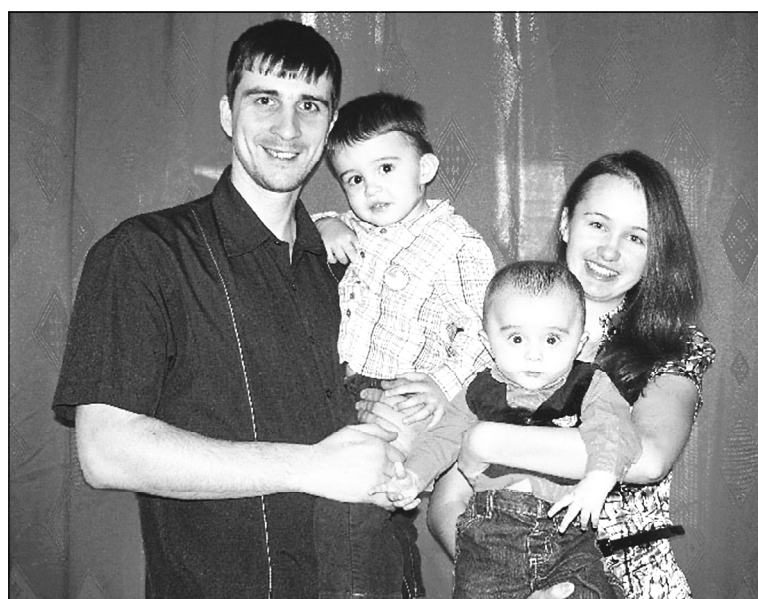
The first breakdown Vladimir experienced in a month. And after a while he lost everything: work, his girlfriend, and respect. The apartment was turned into a narcotic production where it was cooked and sold. As a result, four criminal cases were brought against Vladimir for robbery and drug selling. He started running. He hid in a friend's place in the same neighborhood.

Once Vladimir injected a drug with a dirty needle which caused his leg to hurt and swell.

«I remember how I barely got out of the house and asked my neighbors to call an ambulance», continues Vladimir. «In the hospital I woke up in a special room for prisoners (the prosecutor's office issued a warrant for my arrest). I quickly realized that I'm chained to the bed: my legs are bounded, and

my hands are handcuffed. I lie on that hospital bed like a crucifix! I cannot get out or move. I was 22 years old and inside I was crying. How could I have reached such a life? I used to try to kill myself. I attempted to cut my veins, hung myself, but people saved me every time. Then, in the hospital, I again wanted everything to end once and for all. I pulled out a thermometer from under my armpit with my teeth and was about to bite it and swallow the mercury in it, when I suddenly heard a voice, a simple phrase «And I know that You are with me».

Where did this voice come from Vladimir did not know then, but this changed his mind about taking his life. Vladimir went through medical operation and was put into jail where he met one criminal whose mother was a believer. That criminal drew his attention to Vladimir and seemed very excited to preach the gospel to him and tell him about God. And when Vladimir was put to prison (he was given four years in a strict-security prison in the



village of Martusivka), the criminal confidently said, «You will see, you will still praise God for His mercy». In response, Vladimir promised to go to church services in the prison.

«I spent half a year in an idle

unit, and I completely forgot about my promise. I was sick of doing nothing, and I asked to go work in the industrial zone. Once on a smoke break I heard loud voices in the dryer, which came from somewhere in the yard. I asked,



«What is this?» Someone answered, «It's the Pentecostals praying!» I suddenly remembered the words of that person from jail and started to go to the church meetings. Soon I began to glorify the Lord by playing the guitar, and my life started to change little by little.

After serving two years and nine months in the prison, Vladimir fell under an amnesty. He came to the rehabilitation center, and his life changed completely.

«I watched how the brothers took care of me. Some took off their last set of clothes to dress me after the prison. They shared each other's feelings, supported me as best they could», says Vladimir. «The first few days it touched me so much that I went down to the basement of the prayer house (where other services were gathered) and loudly cried out to God, «Why me? After all, I'm not worthy... How can I receive such kindness?»

But even more surprising moments were awaiting Vladimir. He knew that before the operation on his leg, his blood test was HIV-positive. With such a diagnosis, it is hopeless to want a happy family life. But in the church he met a wonderful girl Anna and they liked each other.

«I told her everything as is and suggested to do a final blood analysis, and if the diagnosis is confirmed to be unchanged then they will remain as friends. The HIV test was positive. I reported this to Anna by phone, and she suddenly answered that, despite the illness, she is ready to join her life with mine. On the way from the blood center I walked and cried with joy and sang loudly to the Lord in the Holy Spirit!»

They married. Soon Anna became pregnant and went to do blood tests. This was a great test for this young family, but praise the Lord, Anna and all three children, Refat, Emmanuel and Ruth, are absolutely healthy.

«I believe that I will never stop thanking the Almighty for His mercy», Vladimir says with a smile.

Vladimir BRAGARNIK,
Ukraine,
www.skinia.org.ua

Everyone has a chance to start over

honesty, and decency. Marijuana, tranquilizers, opium, heroin and, of course, vodka (nothing could replace vodka) destroyed my life and the life of my family and people close to me. And as a consequence of such life: theft, divorce, a son without a father, prison, and illness. And this lasted not a year or five, but twenty-seven years of terrible and useless life.

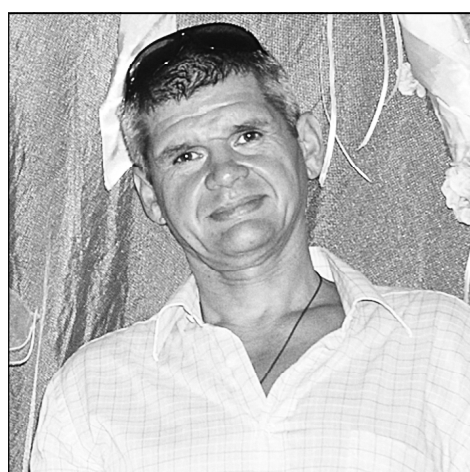
The Lord began to knock into my life unobtrusively, through believers. One of such many meetings was with a close friend of mine with whom we grew up together and whom I believed. He told me that he had been rehabilitated in Christian rehabilitation center, and others went through this center that I knew of very well. I did not believe that such people could change, but it was true. God changed their lives! My life consisted of only black lines.

Once again I was in search for something, exhausted by fears, drugs and alcohol, lost in time, I came to Victor's home. It was Sunday the day of service, although I did not even know about it. Victor took me to his church service. Coming out to the altar for repentance, I was so shattered that I did not really understand anything. But only after living in the rehabilitation center I started to learn how to pray, read the Bible, and learn the truth. When I consciously accepted the covenant of water baptism, a month later the police came to detain and judge me for

the past. I was already a believer and I was not afraid of anything. I was convicted but I continued to pray daily and trust in God. And a miracle happened! I was convicted and released. God gave me a chance to start over. I returned to my church, to my big family, where everyone was waiting for me and praying for me. I was accepted, and now I have the great privilege given to

me by the great grace to serve God by worship singing! And most importantly, I have eternal life and a great commission from the Lord Jesus Himself, to preach the gospel in every place about His love, salvation and eternal life.

Igor ZAVARZIN,
Vinnytsia, Ukraine,
<http://rankova-zirka.com>



My name is Igor. I'm fifty-five years old. I was born in Alma-Ata, but from the age of twelve I lived in Vinnytsia. I grew up in an unbelieving family and in an unbelieving environment. I really did not want to go to school or work.

At sixteen years of age I had seen success in sports such as swimming, boxing, wrestling, and I even competed at the level of the city and in the region. This brought some respect from my peers towards me. It was fashionable to be defiant, arrogant, strong, and independent. Vodka, drugs and other things such as that began to come into my life, and these actions made me feel above the rest. Oh, I did not realize then that this is the beginning of a complete destruction of my life. Since 1981 (I was eighteen years old), drugs have become more and more regular in my life, driving out love for people,

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Glory to God who loved us! Grace, joy and peace to all who seek and love Him!

With this testimony I want to glorify the name of God so that in reading it someone could strengthen himself. I pray for someone to have the faith to see that God has a path out of what seems like a hopeless situation and to call for the help of our Savior Jesus Christ. I myself in reading this newsletter «Prisoner» am encouraged, strengthened and filled with praises and joy for our God about the stories of renewed Christians and their new lives.

My life before I came to Christ was evil and sin in all its manifestations. I have caused so much evil, so many tears, so many people suffered because of my crimes — God only knows. I wish I could blot all this from memory,

Jesus found me and gave me a new life. However, I was still half in sins and could not fully overcome. Whenever there was an opportunity to drink, I drank, when people brought drugs, I could not refuse them. I knew it was wrong but then repented, got up and continued walking. God kept pulling me toward Himself and did not let me out of His loving Father's hand. The Scripture says: *Many, LORD my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us. None can compare with you; were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare (Psalm 40:5).*

Perhaps this whole entire issue will not have enough space to write about all the favors and miracles of God in my life. I know of His generosity,

share something that is very important to me.

Over the years my life has changed dramatically. In search of happiness, I wandered abroad. And as a result, all my travels ended unsuccessfully. Nothing satisfied me, the soul was a hollow emptiness, and no joy from life.

One day I went to a small church where I heard a sermon about Jesus Christ. At that moment it seemed to me that God Himself had invited me to this meeting. I heard that Jesus Christ came to this earth for me and for all people who are on earth and those who will still be born. That Jesus was crucified for our sins and rose again for our justification. Jesus took all our sins on Himself to free us from the power of sin and grant us salvation.

disappointed that I could not deliver the gospel to you. All I could do was pray for your salvation. For seven years I prayed for you, but I did not know anything. And one day I asked God questions: «Maybe my prayers are in vain? Maybe Igor believed for a long time, and I beat the air with empty words?» And then I poured out all my doubts to the Lord. Literally three days later I received a response from God. It seemed incredible, but true.

On the Internet, I was looking through the Kyiv newspaper «Segodnya», and suddenly I saw in it your photo, name and surname, and found out everything that happened to you. But the main thing that I read — you really spoke about God.

Heavenly Father is great! He can respond to prayers both through the Internet and across the ocean, for there

Georgy SUVORIN:

«God's Miracle Connects Across Oceans and Borders»

but I can't. It's like a thorn in my flesh — a reminder to remember what darkness the Lord has brought me from, how much I was forgiven, to understand the great mercy, grace, and love of God. God forgives what cannot be forgiven, loves those who cannot be loved, and accepts all who come to Him in repentance. God's love is indeed beyond all human understanding. I take my imprisonment not as punishment but as one of the countless loves of God to me. Here in prison the Lord has found me, renewed me, gave me a new life. It was here in prison that God made me a truly free person and happy person.

When I was imprisoned in 2001 I did not want to live at all, I was only sorry for my children and ashamed of my insane actions. For three years while being under investigation and trial I had a suicide plan. Although I did not take concrete action on that plan I stopped caring about anything. Three times inmates and doctors had to pump my stomach from overdoses because I used drugs and alcohol to suppress my depression. Two or three years after my arrest, my friends stopped helping me, my wife became an alcoholic and my children began to grow up in need and with no supervision. I could not reconcile with this and live; I had no hope; there was no way out.

To be honest, I was looking for God even before I was imprisoned. I went to the orthodox church, kissed icons, placed candles, gave offerings, read the lives of saints and the Bible. But after the arrest I blamed God and did not want to pray. Only after the verdict, when I was in a cell for life imprisonment, I read something in the bible and quietly fell asleep. When I woke up the next morning I woke up with peace and joy in my heart. At first, I did not understand what was happening but began to read the Bible constantly after that. God began speaking to me through His word: «You need this, take a look». I started reading more and gradually began to understand who Christ really is and what is written in the gospel. This led me to start praying and asking questions, thoughts of suicide never visited me again. It woke me up and my sanity seemed to reappear. I began to understand everything differently and see with different eyes. One day, when I read the Word of God, I saw not only everything around me, but myself with other eyes; my real self, not what I tried to present myself as. I saw that I had been lying to myself. Instead of the hero, true friend, or a decent prisoner I liked to portray myself as, I was a coward, a scoundrel and a traitor. My heart was very corrupt. I did not want to remain like that, so I began to confess and repent for my whole sinful and criminal life before the Lord. That is the moment I consider as the beginning of my repentance and conversion to Jesus Christ. For I, as stated in the Gospel, was dead and came alive, was lost and now am found (Luke 15:24).



mercy, and power not just from the written but from personal experience. God responded in surprising and miraculous ways to my petitions and prayers, showing that He hears and participates in my life. God personally came to me on a supernatural level, showing that He is alive, existing, that God is love, the Father, the Comforter. In detail I will tell only about one amazing story — but the most important and amazing — about the mercy of God.

Before prison I got married at a very young age to a girl Larisa. We very much loved each other, worked together, and relaxed together. We always had good times together. We were young, reckless and did not know God and slowly sin came into my life. When I was put into prison in 1980, Larisa did not quit on me and would come often for long visits. One day I asked her to bring me drugs and she refused to see me. Seeing that I was not going to change she wrote a farewell letter and later sent divorce papers. When I was released, we met several times, Larisa suggested starting all over again, but I refused. I considered her guilty in everything, I did not blame myself but was angry at her and wanted revenge. Then Larisa left to a different country and my criminal life took me for a whirlwind. For the next twenty years I knew nothing about Larisa and then I received a letter from her which you all can read below:

Lord, give this letter to Suvorin Georgy Mikhailovich.

Hello, Igor! Let me address you to by this name. I called you by this name thirty-two years ago, when I was your first wife. Perhaps it will seem strange that I am writing to you, but I want to

The words so impressed me that I voluntarily opened the door of my heart and invited Jesus to become the Lord of my life. My way of life has changed gradually. Since that moment my priorities have become the Lord, His Word, His laws and my personal relationship with Him.

I came to Christ in 1996 in New York, on the first of October I took water baptism in the Atlantic Ocean. From that moment on, the church has become a big family to me. Every new day I thank God and glorify His name.

I can not say that everything is going smoothly, no. The Lord works through different circumstances. It is difficult, but I know that I will overcome everything with Jesus, because He turns everything for good.

Now I want to tell you how God invested in my heart to pray for you. This happened in August 2000. At first I did not quite understand how to pray for you, but the Holy Spirit himself put a petition for you into my spirit. Sometimes prayers were with tears, I myself was surprised at the strength of these prayers. I appealed to the Lord that He would not allow the death of your soul, but have mercy on you. I had the impression that the tears rolling down my cheeks in fervent prayer for you were not my own but His, God's.

In 2001, I was planning to travel to Ukraine from our church to visit orphanages we were helping in Kyiv and Ternopil. On the fourteenth of May I came to Kyiv; it was in my thoughts to find you and tell you about the living God. Two times I came to your house, but no one opened the door, the neighbors also did not respond. I tried to call, but alas I couldn't call you nor find out anything about you. When I returned to New York, I was

are no barriers to Him. There were three articles written about you. That's how I got answers to my questions. God is faithful, and this was a strong confirmation for me.

Igor, from those articles, I realized that I had a brother in Christ in you. Believe me, the most precious thing on earth is the Lord; everything else is secondary, perishable. The Lord says: «...whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven» (Matthew 18:18). As long as we live on earth, this is only a rehearsal before eternity, and real life awaits us in heaven. Thank God that Jesus came to us, living on earth, as an Advocate. In heaven, He appears for each of us in the guise of a holy Judge.

Igor, let the light of the Lord burn in your heart and light your neighbors. Let your mind be saturated with the word of God, so that you can bear the Good News for the lost.

«...God bless you and save you! Let the LORD make his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! May the Lord turn his face against you and give you peace!» (Numbers 6:24-26).

I also want to ask you to forgive me Igor. Forgive me please, for all the evil that I caused to you, forgive me for infidelity, for lies and treason, forgive me for not saving your child's life, but pronouncing him a death sentence, forgive me for not making you happy, forgive me, please, for everything. Sister in Christ Jesus Larisa.

When I received Larisa's letter in (2010) I had already been a Christian for seven years. This letter from Larisa has cleared much for me. It turns out she prayed for me with many tears for a long time. God saved me through these prayers, kept me alive and guided me towards Himself. It was a miracle that I was still alive and that my hardened heart was able to make the choice to follow God. Three years ago, Larisa and I renewed our vows. We are now more in love than we ever were in our youth. This is because we know what love is by knowing true love of Christ. The Scripture says *...only I know the intentions that I have for you, says the Lord, intentions for good, and not for evil, to give you a future and hope (Jeremiah 29:11).*

On the eve of sending this letter to the editor, a man hung himself in our prison (he was here for investigation). I think it is very likely that his thoughts were similar to what mine were seventeen years ago, no way out, no future, and no hope. But God wants to give us so much, to everyone who comes to Him; He has so many blessings for each of us. What a pity that most people do not get the knowledge to understand firsthand what happiness it is to live with Jesus Christ. The devil comes into a person's life in order to steal, kill and destroy. But Christ came to give us life and abundant life!

With the love of Christ,
Georgy SUVORIN, Lviv, Ukraine.

THE BIBLE ON DISAGREEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Definition

Dictionary: lack of consensus or approval due to dissimilarity in views, opinions and beliefs.
Synonyms: contradiction, discord, dissonance, difference, dissimilarity, variance, discrepancy, disparity, divergence.

I. DISAGREEMENTS

We know that disagreements between people arise on completely different occasions: on important and unimportant, on principled and unprincipled issues. They arise both between friends and between enemies, both between intimate and unfamiliar people, between believers and between non-believers. This is because each of us has our own opinion, our worldview, our habits and preferences.

Reading the Bible, we find something interesting. According to the teachings of the New Testament disagreements are, **first**, a sign of inadequate spirituality: **1 Corinthians 3:3-11** — *For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, «I am of Paul», and another, «I am of Apollos», are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

Secondly, unlike the fruit of the Holy Spirit, disagreements are called in the Bible by the works of the flesh: **Galatians 5:19-21** — *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Does this mean that any disagreement is a sign of lack of spirituality?*

Most likely no, because another place in the Holy Scriptures asserts that *...For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you (1 Corinthians 11:19).*

It turns out that the differences of disagreement are different. And if this is so, then the question arises: what kind of disagreement does the Bible call the works of the flesh?

This is not a simple question. But nevertheless we will try to answer it.

II. WHAT DISAGREEMENTS ARE CONSIDERED THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

To answer this question we turn to the passage from Galatians where the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit are written: **Galatians 5:19-26** — *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the*

kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Pay attention to the deeds of the flesh that accompany carnal disagreements, especially on enmity, quarrels, envy, anger, strife, heresy, hatred and murder.

How is this manifested?

- Heresy breeds disagreements.
- There are disputes and arguments.
- The quarrel easily escalates into a fight.
- Non-reconciliation after a quarrel grows into a chronic form — enmity.

— At the same time, the warring parties experience anger, envy, hatred.

— In the end, all this can result in murder.

Thus, any disagreement that is accompanied by at least one of the listed symptoms is a fleshly disagreement.

III. EXAMPLES OF DISAGREEMENTS IN THE BIBLE

The Bible gives many examples of disagreements of all different kind, like those that are the works of the flesh, and those that are not.

1. Examples of disagreements that are the works of the flesh

A. Disagreement between the Pharisees and the Sadducees

As you know, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, or in the angels, or in the spirits. The Pharisees believed in all this. The apostle Paul at his time wisely took advantage of this disagreement during the trial: **Acts 23:6-10** — *But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, «Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!» And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, «We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.» Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks. This example demonstrates how disagreement turns into strife, strife and enmity.*

B. Between the Disciples of Christ

Luke 22:24 — *Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. This disagreement refers to the affairs of the flesh, as it was accompanied by envy. But Jesus at once suppressed this disagreement, not allowing it to grow into a quarrel, fight or enmity: **Luke 22:25-27** — And He said to them, «The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called «benefactors». But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. Notice*

how Jesus explained to the disciples that such disagreements are the works of the flesh: *...kings exercise lordship over them... But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger.* In other words, Jesus said: «You should not behave in a fleshly way, as earthly, carnal kings behave... behave spiritually serving each other in meekness and love».

C. Disagreement between Stephen and the Pharisees

Acts 6:9 — *Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians,*



*Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen... Details of what happened are described in the 6th and 7th chapters. This disagreement pertains to the affairs of the flesh, as it was accompanied by anger and hatred from the Pharisees and ended with the murder of Stephen: **Acts 7:54, 57-58** — *When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. <...> Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. The Pharisees and lawyers showed themselves in this conflict from the carnal side, showing their spirituality and the deeds of the flesh. Stephen, to the last breath, manifested the fruit of the Spirit imploring the Lord for the forgiveness of his offenders and persecutors: **Acts 7:59-60** — *...And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, «Lord Jesus, receive my spirit». Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, «Lord, do not charge them with this sin». And when he had said this, he fell asleep.***

D. Disagreements between Jesus and the Pharisees, Jesus and the Sadducees

Four Gospels are full of examples of disagreements that the Pharisees and Sadducees had with Jesus. Reading about them, it is not difficult to see that they were accompanied by the works of the flesh from the side of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who constantly wanted to seize Jesus Christ and stone him, condemn and deliver him to death: **Mark 3:6** — *Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him; **Mark 14:1** — After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death; **Matthew 26:59** — Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death; **John 11:53** — Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.*

The disagreements between Jesus Christ and the lawyers and Pharisees grew into enmity and reached their peak when Jesus was condemned without guilt and crucified as a robber on the cross.

This behavior of the Pharisees and legalists is an example of the affairs of the flesh and their complete lack of spirituality.

2. Examples of disagreements that are not the works of the flesh

A. Disagreement about circumcision of believers from the Gentiles

Acts 15:1-2 — *And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, «Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved». Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. And further to the 31st verse it is told how this disagreement was resolved peacefully without manifestations.*

B. Disagreement about Mark

Acts 15:35-41 — *Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, «Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing». Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.*

Who was John Mark and why did a disagreement happen because of him?

He was a relative of Barnabas: **Colossians 4:10** — *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him)...* The house of Mary, Mark's mother, the place where the church of Jerusalem assembled and where Peter came to after liberation from his prison cell. **Acts 12:12** — *So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. Departing on the first missionary journey, Barnabas and Paul took John Mark with them: **Acts 12:24-25** — But the word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark; **Acts 13:4-5** — So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant; **Acts 13:13** — Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and, John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.*

Despite this, Barnabas wanted to take Mark and on the second missionary journey but Paul opposed this choosing Silas as the companion. After this, Mark accompanied Barnabas to his homeland Cyprus (**Acts 4:36** — *And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus).*

This disagreement was not accompanied by the deeds of the flesh and did not develop into enmity. Subsequently, good relations were established between Paul and Mark:

⊗ At the first confinement of Paul, Mark was with him in Rome:

Colossians 4:10 — *Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him); **Philemon 1:23-24** — Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. In the last passage, Paul calls John Mark his collaborator and companion in missionary work.*

⊗ After the second arrest Paul insisted, through Timothy, that Mark come to him: **2 Timothy 4:11** — *Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.*

⊗ Later Mark became an associate of Peter, who called him «his son», which indicates that Mark was brought to faith by Peter: **1 Peter 5:13** — *She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son. Subsequently, John Mark became the author of the Gospel of Mark.*

Conclusion:

The Bible calls us not to disagree, but to agree and have mutual understanding. The Word of God teaches us the following:

⊗ **First, that we are in agreement with the Lord and His teaching: **Titus 1:7-9** — For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict; **Titus 2:1** — But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine...**

⊗ **Secondly, that we should be of one mind and have agreement: **Romans 15:5-6** — Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; **1 Peter 3:8** — Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; **Romans 12:16** — Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion; **2 Corinthians 13:11** — Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you; **Philippians 2:2** — ...fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.**

In addition, there are many places in the New Testament calling us to unity:

⊗ **Jesus Christ** prayed for the unity of His disciples (Christians): **John 17:20-23** — *I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.*

⊗ **The apostles** called Christians to unity in spirit: **Ephesians 4:1-6** — *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. This is also the subject of the 12th chapter of First Corinthians.*

Material for the newspaper «Prisoner» kindly provided by Biblical discussion club, Montreal, Canada

<http://cogmtl.net/Articles/136.htm>

Was the Bible distorted, changed, corrected or falsified?

ANSWER: The books of the Old Testament were written approximately between 1400 and 400 B.C. while the books of the New Testament — from 40 to 90 AD. Therefore, 3,400 to 1,900 years passed from the time the Bible was written. During that time, the original manuscripts were lost, it is likely that they no longer exist. In addition, parts of the Bible were copied over and over, Copies were copied from copies. Taking in consideration this information; question arises if we can still trust the Bible?

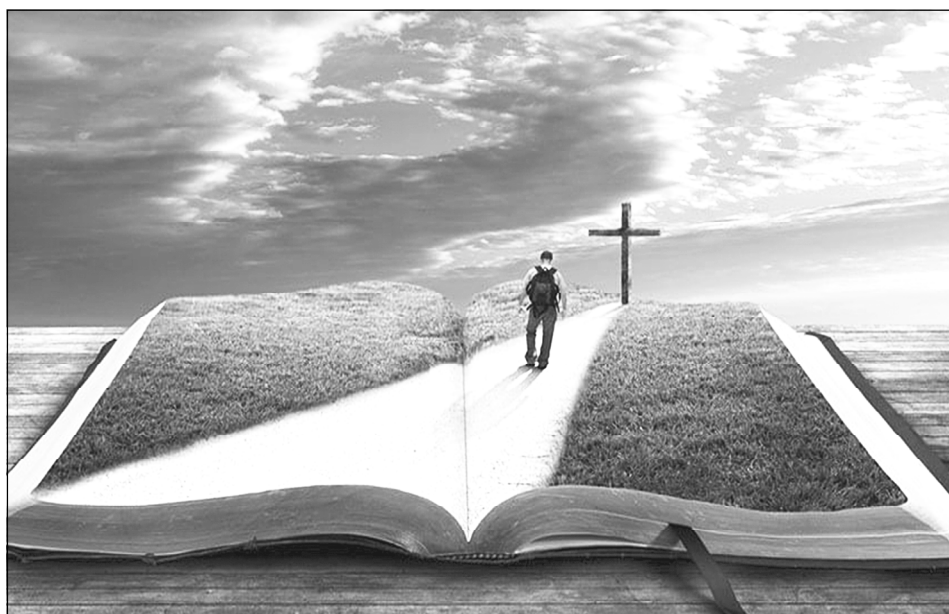
As the Bible says, when God originally inspired people to write His Word, it was inspired and unblemished (2 Tim. 3:16-17; John 17:17). Nevertheless, the Bible never speaks of copies of the original manuscripts. No matter how carefully the copyists work, no one is impeccable. As a result, minor inconsistencies arose between the various copies of the Scriptures. No similarity was found between many thousands of Greek and Jewish manuscripts that have survived to this day until typewriter was invented in the 16th century.

Nevertheless, any impartial researcher of documents will agree that over the centuries the Bible has been preserved in an exceptional way. By the content, copies of the Bible dated from the 14th century AD are almost identical to copies from the 3rd century AD. When the Dead Sea scrolls were found, the researchers were amazed to see how similar they were to other copies of the Old Testament although found scrolls were hundreds of years older than any earlier document. Many hardened skeptics and critics of the Bible admit that it was transmitted through the centuries much more accurately than any other ancient document.

There is absolutely no evidence that the Bible was corrected, altered or falsified in any systematic way. With the help of an array of biblical manuscripts, it is quite easy to find out any attempts of distortion of the Holy Scripture. No doctrine of the Bible suffers nor questioned because of the minor differences between the manuscripts.

Again, the question if we can trust the Bible? Absolutely! God kept His

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Word despite the unconscious errors and deliberate attacks of human beings. We can be completely sure that the Bible we have today is the same Bible written originally. The Bible is God's Word, and we can trust it (2 Tim. 3:16; Matt. 5:18).

What books of the Bible have been lost?

ANSWER: There are no books that are lost or removed from the Bible. There are many legends and rumors about the lost books, but these stories are wrong. Each book, the writing of which God inspired her author and which he planned to become part of the Bible, is there. There are literally hundreds of religious books that were written in the same time period as the books of the Bible. Some of them contain true descriptions of the events that actually took place (for example, the First Book of Maccabees). Others are useful spiritual teachings (for example, Wisdom of Solomon). Nevertheless, the authors of these books were not inspired by God. If we read any of these books, for example apocryphal books, then we should

consider them as historical books in which mistakes are possible, and not as God's inspired, infallible Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

For example, The Gospel of Thomas was a falsification written in the third or fourth century AD. It was not written by the apostle Thomas. Almost all the fathers of the Early Church rejected this book as heretical. It contains many false and heretical facts that Jesus supposedly spoke and did. None of this (or at best a little of it) is true. The Epistle of Barnabas was not written by the Barnabas but by an impostor. The same can be said about the Gospel of Philip, the Revelation of Peter and so on.

There is one God. The Bible has one Creator. This is One book. It has one plan of grace written from the beginning of creation to the end. From destiny to glorification, the Bible is the story of God's redemption of His chosen people.

In the process of revealing God's plan in the Scripture, there were themes that are constantly repeated and emphasized: the character of God, the condemnation of sin and disobedience, the blessing for faith and obedience, the Lord Savior who suffered for sin as well as theme of the coming kingdom and glory.

It was God's intention that we should

learn and understand these five topics because our life and eternal destiny depend on them. In this regard, it is unacceptable to consider that God would allow to be lost anything from this important information in any way. The Bible is complete so that anyone who reads and understands it can be perfect, «equipped for every good work» (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Can other books be added to the Bible?

ANSWER: There is no reason to believe that God will give further revelations in addition to His Word. The Bible begins from the very beginning of the existence of man (Genesis) and ends in the last days of mankind (Revelation). All that is between the first and the last book is for the benefit of believers so they can be equipped with God's truth for daily life. We know this from 2 Tim. 3:16-17: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for [a]instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

If you allow the possibility of supplementing the Bible with other books, this equals the statement that today's Bible is incomplete and that it does not report everything we need to know. Although, this is primarily related to the Revelation. In Rev. 22:18-19 an important truth is written about adding something to the Word of God: *For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

All that we need, we have in sixty six books of the Bible. Every life situation is mentioned one way or another in the Scriptures. What started in Genesis comes to a conclusion in Revelation. The Bible is absolutely complete and sufficient. Can God add anything to the Bible? Of course! Nevertheless, there is no biblical or theological reason to believe that He is going to do so or that there is a need for Him to do it.

<https://www.gotquestions.org>

YOUR LETTERS

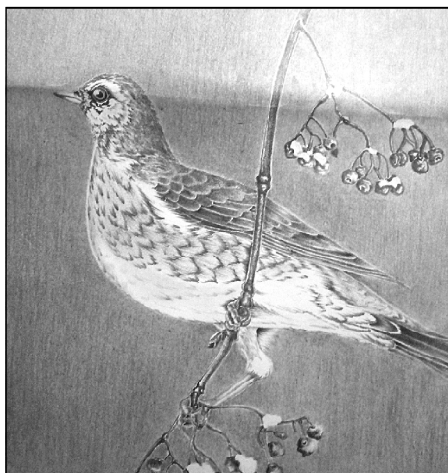
I draw and I want to communicate with someone by letters

Hello, dear editorial staff of the newsletter «Prisoner»! May God give all your employees peace and prosperity!

Not knowing your names, I have to write to all of you who take part in the release of the newspaper so necessary for us! I sent you one of my sketches made in pencil. Maybe there will be somewhere to publish this picture.

I have a very important request for you, although I understand that the volume of appeals to you on such issues is simply enormous.

But nevertheless I ask for you to please print in your newspaper my ad with the heading «Looking for spiritual fellowship with Christians». I'm all alone now. It so happened that in current times, being in prison, I fully realize the loneliness and the depth of despair. My only hope is your newspaper. Maybe with



the help of an ad I'll be able to find with who I would be able to communicate through correspondence so I will not die from loneliness.

I myself, as you see, is a self-taught artist, and my general specialty is a cabinetmaker. I cut wood and I can do the design of cabinet and upholstered furniture. I

cut veneer, and I can also make pictures for embroidery with a Bulgarian cross. But I cannot put my abilities to good use, more precisely, I implement it with a periodic sequence, when a technical possibility appears. So I ask you to please type briefly about the interests for which we could communicate with those who would like to respond to my appeal through your newspaper. I will answer absolutely to anyone without exception. I'm open for communication. I'm fifty-one years

old and am imprisoned for life, I've been sitting since 1995. I will wait and hope that with the help of the newspaper I will be fortunate enough to break this circle of despair, despair and loneliness.

With respect,

Vasily BANNIKOV,
Sol-Iletsk, Russia

PROVERB

The man had two buckets, and in one of them there was a crack. For two years he was carrying water home, but one bucket was always full and the other bucket was half empty, because the water was

TWO BUCKETS

seeping through the crack along the road. The bucket without the crack was very proud of its integrity and was proud before the cracked bucket. A bucket with a crack was ashamed that it could hold only half the water along the road. Full of shame, the bucket spoke to the water-carrier, «I am a loser. I'm inept, my existence is ridiculous and pointless. Because of the crack, I cannot hold water. Why don't you throw me away?»

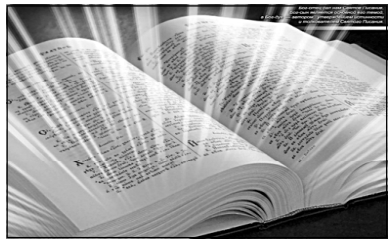
But the man answered the cracked bucket, «Did you see the flowers by the side of the road, along which I carry water? They grow only on the side where water is

spilled. But the other side of the road is just full of dust. You did not know that I deliberately planted the flower seeds on the road, knowing about your crack. For two years now I am decorating these dwellings with flowers for the joy of my beloved».

P. S. Do your duties diligently no matter what you do, either carry water, comfort, clean, or distribute. And in general, it does not matter what you do but remember that with your deeds He decorates His dwelling, in which we all will soon arrive.

https://www.pintaram.com/u/vera_ot_slyshaniia





THE ABILITY AND OPPORTUNITY TO WORK IS A GREAT PRIVILEGE

God created man in His Own image. One of the important characteristics of God is His ability to create that which has not yet existed. God has also given this ability to mankind. Just as God received satisfaction creating, thus it is normal for mankind to feel good when achieving good results.

Gen. 1:31 — *Now God saw all that he had made, and indeed, it was very good!*

Eccl. 2:10 — *...for my heart rejoiced because of all my labor; and this was my portion from all my labor.*

Studying the Bible we can discover that God meant for man to work. The task given to the first man was to work in and guard the Garden of Eden. In other words, to continue working on God's project upon which God had worked himself. It was entrusted to man by God himself and was a great privilege.

Gen. 2:15 — *The LORD God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden in order to have him work it and guard it.*

Participation in the work contributes to the overall development of the whole person. Physical labor strengthens musculature, coordination of movement and strengthens the cardiovascular system. Creative tasks aid brain development. People who stop performing physical labor lose muscle tissue and get weak. Labor changes things from the natural state to the state desired.

Prov. 14:23 — *In hard work there is always profit, but too much chattering leads to poverty.*

BIBLE VERSES THAT ENCOURAGE WORK

Eccl. 3:12-13 — *I have concluded that the only worthwhile thing for them is to take pleasure in doing good in life; moreover, every person should eat, drink, and enjoy the benefits of everything that he undertakes, since it is a gift from God.*

Jer. 31:16 — *This is what the LORD says: «...for there is a reward for your work», declares the LORD.*

1 Thes. 2:9 — *Brothers, you remember our labor and toil. We worked night and day so that we would not become a burden to any of you while we proclaimed the gospel of God to you.*

1 Thes. 4:11 — *Also, make it your goal to live quietly, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we instructed you.*

2 Thes. 3:10 — *While we were with you, we gave this order: «If anyone doesn't want to work, he shouldn't eat».*

2 Thes. 3:12 — *We order and encourage such people by the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.*

Acts. 20:35 — *In every way I showed you that by working hard like this we should help the weak and remember the words that the Lord Jesus himself said, «It is more blessed to give than to receive».*

1 Cor. 15:58 — *Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, unmovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that the work that you do for the Lord isn't wasted.*

Having read these texts have you felt how positive they are towards work? Therefore, the biblical view of a worker:

☉ **Respectful:** **1 Thes. 5:12-13** — *Brothers, we ask you to show your appreciation for those who work among you, set an example for you in the Lord, and instruct you. Hold them in the highest regard, loving them because of their work. Live in peace with each other.*

☉ **Approving:** **1 Thes. 4:10-12** — *...we urge you, brothers, to keep on doing this even more.*

Also, make it your goal to live quietly, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we instructed you, so that you may win the respect of outsiders, and have need of nothing.

☉ **Implying Reward:** **Jer. 31:16** — *...there is a reward for your work, declares the LORD.*

1 Cor. 15:58 — *...the work that you do for the Lord isn't wasted.*

CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS WORK SINCE THE FALL OF MAN

The first humans were in harmony with God and themselves. They had peace in their hearts and pure minds, and as a result they received fulfillment through labor.

Eccl. 3:11 — *He made everything appropriate in its time. He also placed eternity within them — yet, no person can fully comprehend what God is doing from beginning to end.*

Eccl. 7:29 — *...God made human beings for righteousness, but they seek many alternatives.*

Later, after their disobedience to God and obedience to the enemy, everything changed. Man became directly dependent on the devil and inherited from him a sinful, selfish nature, which manifests itself in every person from childhood. The natural state of man's attitude towards any labor became the unwillingness to do anything. We call this state laziness.

Prov. 26:15 — *The lazy person buries his hand in the dish, but he's too tired to bring it to his mouth again.*

Therefore, people giving into their selfish nature do not like to strain themselves or sacrifice something for others. Their main goal has become to satisfy themselves; physical labor seen as unnecessary.

After the first people sinned, God said: **Gen. 3:17-19** — *He told the man, «Because you have listened to what your wife said, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, «You must not eat from it», cursed is the ground because of you. You'll eat from it through pain-filled labor for the rest of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you'll eat the plants from the meadows. You will eat food by the sweat of your brow until you're buried in the ground...»*

Indeed, giving earth the ability to sprout weeds, God increased the amount of labor man would have to do, as evidenced by the following words of the Lord: «In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread». Often it is seen as God's curse on man, but it is absolutely not so. This increase in labor, which seems like a punishment, is potentially life-saving tool for humans...

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POSITIVE INFLUENCES OF LABOR ON MAN

1. Promotes humility

A proverb says: «Idleness is the workshop of the devil». A tired laborer wants to rest and recuperate. He is not up for the whims of the flesh, which also require energy. Thus, labor, protects humans from stupid actions by depriving them of energy.

Everyone knows that children and adolescents who are not busy working or studying start crossing boundaries and often become

lawbreakers. Parents need wisdom in order to keep children busy with activities which develop in them a good work ethic. The more responsibilities a child has, the less their inclination to sin. God Himself used this method for the discipline of his chosen people, as it is written in the Bible.

Ps. 106:12 — *Therefore he brought down their heart with labor...*

2. Promotes the development of self-discipline and character formation

Everyone likes self-disciplined, reliable people. Such people are needed everywhere: at work, at church and in heaven. But in order to become such, one needs constant work in overcoming natural laziness, lethargy and other vices. No wonder the Apostle Paul said: *...I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected (1 Cor. 9:27).*

Spiritually mature Christians are highly disciplined people, as they are accustomed to disciplining themselves not only in actions but in thoughts and feelings.

Prov. 20:11 — *Even a child maketh himself known by his doings, Whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.*

Prov. 31:13, 20 — *She seeketh wool and flax, And worketh willingly with her hands. <...> She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.*

3. Is a commandment given by God to man

God's people who have fulfilled His commandments will feel

5. Helps prepare the man for eternity

The Bible is full of good promises for faithful and conscientious workers.

Matt. 25:23 — *His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

1 Tim. 5:18 — *...The laborer is worthy of his hire.*

1 Tim. 6:17-19 — *Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed.*

Rev. 14:13 — *And I heard the voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.*

There is a relationship between ones attitude towards physical labor and spiritual labor. If a person is lazy and not disciplined in physical labor, it is often so in spiritual labor as well — in the serving God and people. This scripture text can be attributed to both the physical and spiritual labor.

Prov. 6:9-11 — *How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep: So*

to bring joy to those around us, we are filled with joy ourselves. A person, who lives for himself, will never be happy, and will lose what he had. In this case, work and self-denial is necessary.

In order to raise a careless and lazy child, we do not need to do much, but in order to raise a polite, respectful and hard-working child, we need to exert a lot of work and effort. Likewise, in order to achieve spiritual growth in ourselves, work is needed. Who do we want to be? What personal qualities do we want to possess? No effort is needed to be envious, lustful, self-seeking, and quarrelsome. These qualities are an end-result of not putting in effort to better oneself. Effort in striving to better ourselves is necessary in order to be a blessing and a joy to others.

Why do people end their lives by suicide? Though some may do it because they want to prove something to someone, however, the majority of suicides stem from the person's lack of will to work on himself in order to change. Suicide is a sin as before God there is no difference in whose life you took, someone else's or your own. They reject the means which lead to happiness and with it their only chance to obtaining a good life. Why do they do it? They did not realize that the achievement of happiness without putting forth any effort is impossible. Happiness and toil come hand in hand; the greater the amount of work and struggle, the greater the joy and glory. **All things are full of labor (Eccl. 1:8).**

ANXIETY IN LABOR

Farmers' work and the work of private entrepreneurs are often risky. Will it rain on time? Will business prosper or fail?

How should a Christian react to the risks? In such cases a Christian farmer or entrepreneur needs to ask God for wisdom and rely on His leading. In order to achieve this, it is necessary that all must be according to biblical principles: high integrity, honesty, and God's guidance. Only through trusting in God's guidance, it is possible for us to remain completely calm and achieve success. Many Christians, including the author of this article, experience the leadership of the Holy Spirit in all spheres of their life, even in insignificant and minor daily details and problems. It is awesome

when we realize and understand that the Creator of the entire universe cares about our minor insignificant problems and worries.

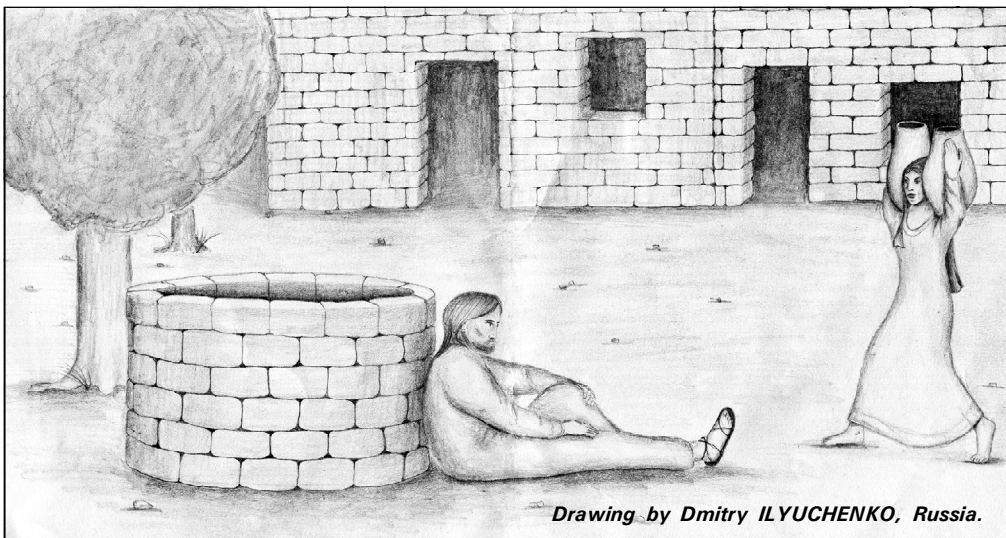
LASTLY...

Even the people deprived of the ability to work, either those who are disabled, paralyzed, or imprisoned, still have the capacity to do great work. The great work potential is within one's inner world and mind. For example, it is tiring labor to defeat and expel distracting thoughts and feelings and be completely willing to be used by God. Work through putting great effort into prayer life; great deeds can be performed through your prayers! The labors of a motionless disabled person are extremely valuable to God and can bring results far greater than many healthy people's cumulative labors.

Cast aside gloom and depression through making the decision to work knowing that your labor is valuable.

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that the reward of the Lord ye shall receive the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ (Col. 3:23-24).

Aleksandr BORISENKO.



Drawing by Dmitry ILYUCHENKO, Russia.

satisfied answering for their life on judgment day. One of those commandments is to work: **Eph. 4:28** — *...rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.*

Matt. 10:10 — *...the laborer is worthy of his food.*

2 Thes. 3:10 — *...If any will not work, neither let him eat.*

4. Is a means of serving people and the Lord

It is harder to find a better means to prove ones love towards their neighbor than to show him in action. By helping others we serve God. As Jesus said, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me.*

1 John 3:18 — *My Little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.*

Eccl. 1:8 — *All things are full of labour.*

Eph. 4:28 — *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

Phil. 2:4 — *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

shall thy poverty come as a robber, And thy want as an armed man.

Prov. 24:30-34 — *I went by the field of the sluggard, And by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, The face thereof was covered with nettles, And the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I beheld, and considered well; I saw, and received instruction: Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep; So shall thy poverty come as a robber, And thy want as an armed man.*

Since the fall of mankind, the law of self-destruction is evident, the Bible refers to it as the law of sin and death. We are faced with it every day. For example, take the best and most well-kept orchard, bringing many fragrant and delicious fruit. If we were to leave it without care then come back in ten years we'll see some trees withered, others may bear fruit but the fruit would be reduced in size and lack flavor. We would then call these trees alienated or wild.

Similarly, this may occur in all areas of our lives. To have a happy family, one needs to invest time, health, and attention. While trying

I want to testify what the Lord has done for me

I'm a former drug addict. Subsequently, I became an alcoholic and was registered at the narcological dispensary, which is located on Peredovaya Street. Repeatedly, I was paying fines for drinking. I spent many days in jail. I also spent some time for drug use in Poland.

After coming back to Minsk, I began to drink heavily. My family collapsed. Parents, figuratively speaking, were «hanging»: they did not know what to do with me. The situation in our home was out of control. I was diagnosed with a bunch of diseases including hepatitis C (chronic), mental disorder, coordination disorder and so on and so forth. Therefore, I received physical and mental d. I could not find a job. I was rolling down like a rock from a mountain. The store became my second... no, to be exact — my first house.

Trying to get out, I was admitted many times in the thirty-seventh branch of Navinki dispensary. I was also treated several times in a dispensary on Peredovaya Street. I was also coded from alcohol. Three times I was treated in various rehabilitation centers, including the Catholic center in Poland. It was all useless: I left the center and the next day took the same route.

Everything radically changed when I came with my uncle to the «New Life» church. Uncle was also a former alcoholic. I repented and was accepted by God. I believed in Him as a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the «New Life» church, I actually got a new life without drinking, drugs, and fornication.

Now I do not merely exist, but rather live a full life. My parents glow with happiness. I found an excellent job: I work as a dispatcher in a meat warehouse. I am still under supervision of the police but soon they will take me off the list. For this, it is necessary to take tests once in two months. I had already passed this analysis for the first time.

Moreover, the narcologist offered me a job in the Belarusian public association «Positive Movement». I refused it because I already have a job.

Now, I can confidently say that I will not return to the old life for any price. I have a new life because I am with God!

Now my home is the church «New Life», not a store. Here I have found all the joy of life.

Sergey MURAVITSKY,
Belarus.

The romance of criminal life attracted Andrey Povarnitsyn more than anything else. After leaving his family and job, he left to Izhevsk where he joined a criminal group that was engaged in the theft of spare parts from the car factory. He quickly felt the taste of easy money. However, after this followed first arrest and first conviction.

After three and a half years of imprisonment, Andrey hardened. The first unfortunate experience did not stop him. When he became free, he decided to put together his thief group. His group made armed attacks on firm shops, pavilions. They also robbed large businessmen. His conscience did not

answer for their sins in front of God. «You just need to repent and call Him into your life», — Sergey wrote. He also wrote about God's love and about the need to forgive debtors all their debt.

Soon Andrey received the New Testament. In each letter, Sergey confirmed his thoughts with verses from the Scriptures. Sergey did not quote, but only wrote the title of the book, the number of the chapter and the verse. In order to find out what is written there, Andrey had to open the New Testament. A few months later, Andrey read it completely.

Andrey remembered the most one of the days. We can say that the events of that day turned

FORMER ROBBER PREACHING GOSPEL



judge him for these actions, he believed he was doing a good deed: robbing the rich to help his relatives in poverty. In fact, all the money went to a life of racket.

Andrey was quite satisfied with this way of life, although it was required certain hardship. He understood that dirty money would never fill the emptiness of the soul, but he did not intend to stop. He did not seriously think about believing in God, although from the childhood he considered himself to be a believer. In order to prove his faith, he wore a cross on his neck. He went to church when before some «important matter». Andrey believed that he would be lucky if he puts a candle at the icon of the Mother of God.

It is not known how his future life would have developed if had it not been the second arrest. One morning the capture police group burst in the apartment where he was sitting with his friends. Andrey was seized and taken to the detention center (cell of pre-trial detention, now a temporary detention facility). The court gave him nine years of imprisonment. However, the term did not frighten him.

Andrey and his two brothers were in prison at the same time. He was looking forward to the release of his brother Sergey. He wanted his brother to deal with the debtors who remained free. However, the incredible thing happened. Sergey began sending him letters, in which he was telling about God. He wrote that Jesus Christ took the punishment that they deserved. Now they do not have to

his life around. This happened on the Christmas Eve of the 2001. At that time, he began adhere to thieves' traditions in the zone less an less. He began to think more about the meaning of life. Soon, Andrey went into the industrial zone where they made furniture for special orders. He went to the breakroom when there was an opportunity just to be alone and read the New Testament. On that day, he read chapters from the Gospel of Matthew, which described the last hours of the life of Jesus Christ. He imagined the picture of the execution of the Son of God. Andrey saw clearly how He, wounded, was led to Calvary. Then the crucifix and the cry of the crowd: «Crucify Him!» Everyone cursed Jesus and laughed at Him. These were the people whom He had been feeding, healed, and taught the Word of God a few days before. But Jesus did not answer those who blathered him. Overcoming the pain, He prayed for them to His Father. Ungratefulness of people shocked Andrey. He was indignant: «Jesus, what are they doing to You, ungrateful creatures?» Suddenly in this crowd, Andrey saw... himself. He also shouted evil words toward Jesus. Then he realized that his actions led Jesus to the cross. The Lord died for him! Andrey knelt down and began to ask God's forgiveness. Tears streamed down his face, which made his eyes begin to feel uncomfortable. His heart, full of anger and hatred before, was lamented for the first time.

One fellow told Andrey that there are people who repent and live according to the Bible in their prison, but they are not allowed to get together. Soon he met his brothers in Christ. They began to study the Word of God together and pray. Andrey heard someone pray for him for the first time.

Two years passed. Andrey and fifteen other people from the colony visited the services regularly. The life of all the guys changed. Andrey began to see everything around in another way: joyous and peaceful instead of severe and oppressed. In addition, some of the diseases that he had during his imprisonment, completely disappeared. When the question of early release arose, their detachment testified to the judge that all these guys do not smoke and there is not one offender of the regime among them. Andrey did not expect such a turn of fate, but he was released two years ahead of schedule.

Now Andrey visits prisons and preaches to the same people as he was once, lost and alone. God restored his life. Andrey is ready to tell everyone who has not yet learned the power of God.

Russia,
<https://novizavet.ru>

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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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