



# PRISONER

INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN NEWSPAPER

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

(John 8:32)

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## MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR!



## CHRISTMAS

Believers and unbelievers have been celebrating the wonderful day of Christmas for generations. People prepare for this holiday in advance, buying goods and traveling everywhere. Most people hurry somewhere, rushing to buy gifts and alcohol. Others are getting ready to say the toast for Christmas. Everything happens as usual as the guests gather together around the table, preparing to say the toast: «Merry Christmas!» For so many people, Christmas is just another holiday, a time to relax and enjoy pleasures.

Praise God, other people approach this holiday differently. In celebrating Christmas we praise the Lord for the coming of the Saviour. For many Christians, December 25 and January 7 are very important dates. On those two dates, Christians across the world celebrate the Nativity of Jesus Christ. We do not know the reasons why those dates were chosen for this joyful commemoration of Christ's Nativity. Many believe Christ was born around those dates. And still there is historical uncertainty with respect to these dates having anything to do with the birth of Jesus Christ as the Son of God on earth (the readers of the «Prisoner» will turn to this topic in a while).

Now let us concentrate on the Nativity itself. God has sent His Son to the world for our salvation, and by doing so He expressed his infinite love: «For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life» (John 3:16).

The Nativity of Jesus Christ is the great plan of God the Father, so that all humankind would have an example for pious life. By coming down to earth, God showed us through Jesus Christ how to live as a believer, the priorities we should have in life, and the purpose of earthly life. Only through the life of Jesus Christ on earth are we enabled to know these deep truths that open the door to everlasting life. If God did not plan this great event — the birth of Christ in our world — we would not have the orienteer, the way to the Kingdom of Heaven. For all of us, Jesus Christ is

the only Way, Truth, and Life. He is the sole King of Kings and the Saviour of the world.

At the same time, let us emphasize that the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Virgin Mary was not his first birth, but the incarnation of God in human flesh: «The Word became flesh... the Only Begotten Son, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known» (John 1:14, 18).

We all know well that the Triune Godhead is Eternal from the Beginning. For this reason, the Son of God, Jesus Christ said about Himself, «Before Abraham was, I AM» (John 8:58). Thus, it is absurd to think of the Eternal God being born. Nevertheless, at Nativity we celebrate the incarnation of God. Unfortunately, we cannot point to the exact day of this grandiose event. But the believer has an opportunity to celebrate the Nativity of Jesus Christ in his heart every day. Indeed, when we wake up in the morning, let us think about our heart as the place of Christ's habitation.

Why do we commemorate and celebrate that holiday just once a year? Shall not that great event be remembered and celebrated more often? Similarly, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We do not know even why we proclaim «Christ is Risen!» only on Passover. Our faith is indeed founded on this proclamation (Romans 10:9). It would be great to celebrate the Nativity of Christ every day in our hearts, and to greet one another with the greeting: «Christ is Risen!» Then even the devil will flee from us, seeing our solid faith.

Dear brothers and sisters, and all readers of «Prisoner!»

I want to greet you from the bottom of my heart — Merry Christmas! May your homes and hearts be filled with God's peace and His love will transform other people!

«Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever» (Heb. 3:18).

I.GORIK.

## The History of Christmas

### The Origins

In the early Christian church, the Nativity of Christ was celebrated on January 6 (Epiphany, II-IV centuries). Clement of Alexandria (ca. 200 A.D.) refers to this early Christian practice.

The first references to the celebration of the Nativity on December 25 are dated to the fourth century, A.D. This date may be connected to the Christian Church wishing to uproot the Persian cult of Mitra in the Roman Empire.

### Dates for Christmas in Churches

Russian, Jerusalemite, Serbian, Georgian, Athon, Eastern and Western Catholic churches celebrate the Nativity on December 25, according to the Julian Calendar (the so called «old style»), which parallels the Gregorian Calendar (January 7).

Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Romanian, and some other Orthodox churches celebrate December 25 according to the New Julian Calendar and the contemporary Gregorian Calendar (the «new style»).

The Roman-Catholic Church and the majority of Protestant churches celebrate December 25 according to the con-

temporary Gregorian Calendar.

In the Armenian Church, the Nativity is celebrated on January 6 together with the Lord's Baptism under one name «Epiphany».

### THE EVENTS OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

#### Canonical Texts

Only the Evangelist Luke records the Nativity of Christ in detail: «And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn» (Luke 2:4-7).

Mary and Joseph went up to Bethlehem to be registered because of the decree issued by the Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1-2). Everyone was asked to be registered according to his own town. Mary and Joseph went up from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

(Conclusion on page 2)

## YOUR LETTERS

THE NATIVITY is an amazing holiday, in which the Great Mystery was revealed. Now every human being has the candle of hope, lit by Christ who was born into this world more than 2,000 years ago, lighting the way to the Great Creator of Universe!  
Luke 2:1-20.

«For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord» (Luke 2:11).

Merry Christmas!

Angelina MALTSEVA, Sacramento, USA

## The History of Christmas

(Continued from page 1)

After Jesus was born, the first people who came to kneel before Him were the shepherds; they were notified by angels of this great event. According to Matthew, there was a wonderful star in the sky which led wise men to baby Jesus. They presented him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. At that time the Holy Family may already have been living in a house (Mt. 2:1-11), or, perhaps, outside of the inn (Lk. 2:7).

When Herod found out about the Messiah's birth, he wanted to destroy the child. He ordered that all the children who were in Bethlehem, aged two years old and under, be killed (Mt. 2:16). But Christ was wonderfully saved: the angel of God appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to flee with Mary and baby Jesus into Egypt, where they lived until Herod's death (Mt. 2:13).

### THE ORIGIN OF THE DATE

#### Determining the date of Jesus' birth

While the birth year of Jesus is estimated among modern historians to have been between 7 and 5 BC, the exact month and day of his birth are unknown. Sextus Julius Africanus, in his chronicles dated 221 AD, was the first to propose December 25 as the date of Jesus' birth.

Different modern researches suggest that the date of Jesus' birth is somewhere between 12 BC (Halley's Comet, which might have been the Bethlehem star, was passing at that moment) and 7 AD, when the only taxing that is known today was made.

But the dates after 4 BC are questionable. First, according to gospel and apocryphal data, Jesus was born during times of Herod the Great, who died in 4 BC (other data suggest 1 BC as the date of his death). Second, if we accept more later dates, Jesus would be too young for his preaching and death.

Robert D. Meyers notes: *«The Biblical description of the birth of Jesus doesn't indicate the date. But Luke's message (Lk. 2:8): «there were shepherds... abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night», tells us that Jesus was born in summer or early fall. December in Judea is cold and rainy, so at night shepherds would likely seek shelter for their flocks.»*

#### Establishing the date of Christmas celebration

The first Christians were Jews and they didn't celebrate Christmas (according to Jewish faith, a person's birthday is the beginning of sorrow and pain, although, for example, the Jewish King Herod celebrated his birthday).

Thus, throughout the early years of Christianity nobody cared about the date of Jesus' birth. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ (now Easter) was more important for first Christians from the doctrinal point of view.

After Greeks (and other Hellenic peoples) were included in Christian churches, the celebration of Christmas began. It seems that there wasn't a common date for Christmas, but every church choose their own.

The ancient Christian holiday, Epiphany, which falls on January 6, combined Christmas and the baptism of Jesus, which later became separate holidays.

#### Winter Solstice

The day of the winter solstice had an important meaning in the culture and religion of many ancient nations, starting from at least the Neolithic era. This is proven by surviving archeological monuments like Stonehenge in England and New Grange in Ireland.

There was a religious celebration at the time of year when days start getting longer called the birth of god of the Sun. It was celebrated by a lot of religions: German pagans (called Jol), adherents of the cult of Mitra, and others.

In the Roman Empire, during early Christian times, there was a similar holiday — the birthday of the Unconquerable Sun (Latin, Dies natalis Solis Invicti). The fathers of the Christian Church established this date for Christmas celebration. The first mention of December 25 as the date of Christmas is found in a Roman almanac from the middle of the 4th century. First on the list of bishops and martyrs it says: December 25 — Jesus Christ of Bethlehem Judea is born (natus Christus in Betleem Judeae).

Source: Wikipedia.

# YOUR LETTERS

## Please accept our donation for the publication of «Prisoner»

May God's peace fill your hearts and your homes, our dear brothers and sisters in the Lord! Greetings with the love of the Lord Jesus Christ! Thank you for this wonderful newspaper that we receive.

The New Year 2014 is coming, and we ask you to accept a donation from our church, «Transformation», for the publication

of «Prisoner». We thank the Lord that its circulation has increased. In September a conference was held in Ternopol for prison ministers who minister to women prisoners. The conference was organized and led by the mission «Gospel Mercy» and the church «Love and Healing».



Sister Mary is in the headscarf on the left

Thanks to God's great mercy, I was very lucky to attend the conference. Praise the Lord! There were many sisters who had been in prison but now they worship our Heavenly Father in many different churches. They shared their experiences of miracles that God has done in their lives. We are especially thankful to the administration of the prison No.63 in Dobryvody in Zbarazhsk county. We had a great church service in a club on the campus of the prison. Many prisoners repented when they saw the lives of former prisoners who were now free and serving the Lord. This is God's great mercy! People felt

God's presence at the service. There was a wonderful time of prayer to the Lord. Praise God! Halleluiah!

We went back to our homes, but every person carried with him or her a bit of warmth. We are from different denominations; however, we are children of One Father, we are children of the Living God. We are from different cities, but we are united in the Spirit. I would like to take this opportunity to say hi to the following brothers in the prison in Vinitsa: Pendurov, Ischenko, Gusev, Stepanenko. Also I would like to say hi to the brothers in Russia: to Michael Ryhlov, Volodya Panov, and everybody who has been freed and who now serves the Lord. We remember you and we pray for you. Let our Lord Jesus Christ be our guiding star forever! Stay with God.

Сестра МАРИЯ, церковь «Преображение», с. Галициново, Украина.

## Take the Biblical commandments as your foundation

Good afternoon, dear brother Igor! Peace be to your house! May the Lord bless you and your surroundings.

Yesterday I came across your newspaper «Prisoner» and I liked it a lot. I would like to receive the newspaper and distribute it among the prisoners. It is very interesting and people need it, especially people need it in prisons. We prisoners react to the austere environment and lifestyle of prison in very different ways. Some prisoners become even worse — there are many such people. However,

there are people who respond wisely to the punishment and change. I regret that psychologists do not think to use the Biblical commandments as the foundation of their work. Because love inspires and saves the soul, but its absence leads generations to tough consequences. If there is no hope, then the commandment of salvation through repentance is broken.

Dear brother Igor, I thank you for the newspaper and your work. Let your heart be clear, kind and overflowing with love! Let your neighbor always find an unending

source of comfort, peace and light in your heart! Let your heart be a temple for the Creator and Savior Jesus Christ! May the Lord bless you with His mercy and grace and may He watch over you forever!

May Heaven be always open to protect, to save, and to bless you!

With Christ's love,

Елена НАУМОВА,  
Димитрова, 214, ДИК-34,  
10-100 бр., г. Днепродзержинск,  
Днепропетровской обл.,  
Украина, 51912.

## I wish God's blessing for you!

Good afternoon, friends! I wish you good health and well-being from God! I am Michelle Smith. I am 41. I have been in prison for more than 5 years. My sentence is until 2013. A few days ago I learned that my sentence would be shortened. I am in prison because I sold illegal drugs to support my family. Now I understand that there are different ways to make money without breaking the law. I know what I love and what I want. I have a son, he is 10. I dream and pray about being a good Christian woman. I barely get any letters. That is why I am very thankful for the newspaper «Prisoner». I think that God has sent it to me using you. I love God and His Word. My favorite verse is Jeremiah 29:11 «For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope».

I wish God's blessing for you! Please send me your newspaper.

With great thanks, Michelle SMITH.

Michelle Denise SMITH  
13436-040  
FCI Waseca P.O. Box 1731  
Waseca, MN, 56093.

## Believe and the Lord will care for you

Dear friends! I received your newspaper «Prisoner». Thank you so much! How are you? I hope you are doing well, with God's help. I am doing good. Thank God! I am practicing sports and taking classes about alcohol abuse and drug abuse. As soon as I complete this educational program, I am going to the Rehabilitation House in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and then home. I am curious, how did you find me? And I am very thankful that I received your newspaper. I am 28. I have a child of 6. I wish you all the best in the Lord! Keep your faith! May the Lord care for you and bless you!

Respectfully, yours truly, Bruce.

Bruce John JOHNSON  
15470-041  
FCI Schuylkill P.O. Box 759  
Minersville, PA, 17954-0759.

Greetings with the love of our God and Father, His Son and Holy Spirit, to you dear brothers and sisters and workers of the newspaper «Prisoner»! I wish you all the best!

For Christ's sake, forgive me for this letter. There was a time when I lived a life without God and His grace, and such lifestyle got me into court. Today I am 46, and I have been in prison for 30 years. I have nothing but great hope in Jesus Christ who became my own destiny. I have never regretted that I believed in God. My sentence is a life sentence. I rightfully deserve to be beaten, persecuted, hated and despised for everything that I

## I am forgiven because of the love of Jesus and His grace

have done. But praise God, because of the love of Jesus Christ and His grace, I am forgiven.

I am writing you, dear brothers and sisters, because I would like to testify that God is gracious and merciful! Christ will not leave anybody without hope if one calls on His Name.

If it is possible, through your newspaper, I would like to find friends in Christ to sincerely pray for each other with love, and for holy fellowship.

May the Lord protect you! May God's holy providence not be darkened!

Сергей КОПЫРНЁВ,  
ФКУ ИК-5, корпус 3, о. Огненный, п/о Либкнехта, 16,  
Белозерский р-н, Вологодская обл., Россия, 161222.

«I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture» (John 10:9).



«So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed»

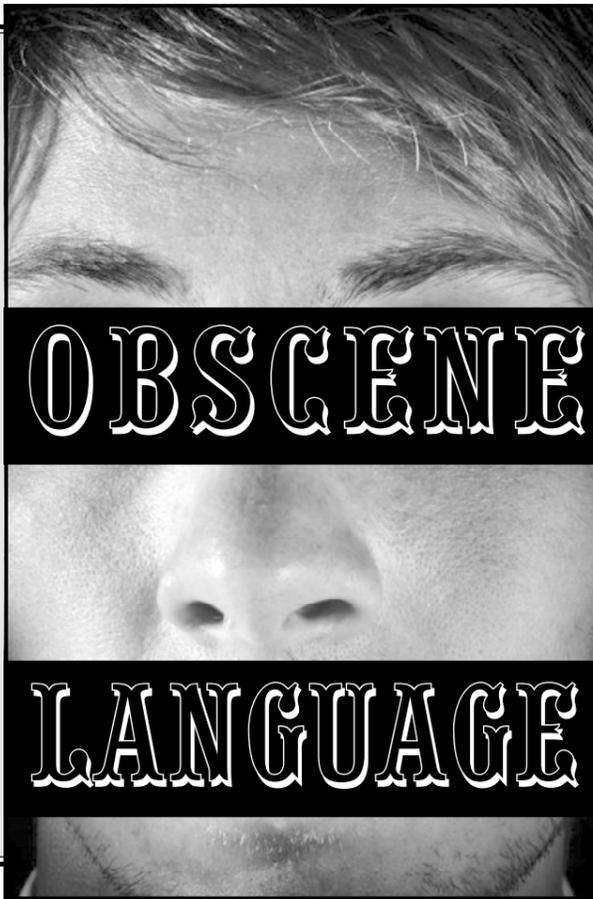
(John 8:36).

Автор Александр ПИЛЬКО,  
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«Lord, forgive me that I have to listen to this...»

I turn to God with these words whenever I hear people nearby using obscene language. When I meet someone for the first time, the one thing I cannot stand is when the person begins to use foul language. Nowadays foul language is spreading everywhere. Filthy words can be heard on the street, on public transportation, in stores, at the market, in schools, on television, and even in kindergartens, not to mention orphanages and prisons. Man unthinkingly utters words which will eventually cause not only his spiritual, but even his physical destruction. We all live in an information age, where everything is built or destroyed by our thoughts and words. Scripture says: «*Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world*» (Psalm 19:3-4). Probably many of you are already aware that our thoughts, which we express in words, materialize. Like builders, we construct our lives with our words. And more than this: «*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit*» (Proverbs 18:21).

Just think what a web of information fills our lives. And everything is in the control of the tongue. Sadly, it is truly said: «*The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our*



members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing» (James 3:6-10).

And so it happens that what a man sows every day, he later reaps. It is fearful to think that man himself, by using obscene words, is in fact recklessly destroying his own life. Holy Scripture admonishes us clearly: «*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth*» (Eph. 4:29). For in the Day of Judgment, as it is written, «*by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned*» (Matt. 12:37).

Lord, cleanse the hearts of people so that their mouths would not bring forth that corruption which defiles soul and body. Forgive us all for excessive and empty, vain speech. May Your words always ring in our ears for our instruction: «*For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men — as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God*» (1 Peter 2:15-16).

I. GORIK.

One of the signs of the spiritual and cultural catastrophe that has come upon us is foul language. In the past obscene language was primarily the special language of criminals, drunkards, and other wayward people, it now penetrates ever deeper into all classes and age levels of society. We are made to believe that the Russian language cannot be spoken without using obscene words.

We will try to show the historical roots of foul language, and debunk several myths about it.

We will begin by observing that obscene language is an ancient phenomenon, present among nearly all peoples. The Apostle Paul wrote about «*corrupt words*». In the 4th century, St. John Chrysostom said: «*Whoever curses with obscene words brings a curse upon himself in that day, inasmuch as he curses his mother and bitterly insults her. With such a person it is not fitting to eat or drink until he puts away obscene words*». Remember these words of this saint as we will return to them later.

What is this phenomenon of obscene language? Why do words, which are primarily anatomical terms, become obscene and profane when «translated» into the foul vocabulary of obscenity? Why are they even used at all, and often not in their original sense? In all languages and cultures, the vocabulary of obscenity has the same meaning. It comprises a relatively small group of words (a «*dirty dozen*», as they say in English). This group includes the names of certain body parts, particularly the genitals, and words describing bodily functions, including sexual intercourse, as well as derivative words.

Bishop Barnabas (Belyaev) writes that indecent language «*is a purely heathen inheritance. It is entirely rooted in the phallic cults of the Ancient East, beginning from the Satanic depths* (see Rev. 2:24) and dark abysses of depravity honoring Baal, Ashtoreth, and other gods, and ending with the classical descendants of Ham». The cults of ancient Babylon and Canaan, in which were practiced child sacrifice, debauchery, fornication, and ritual prostitution, produced a corresponding terminology of ritual incantations which served as the basis for obscene cursing.

A person who pronounces obscene words invokes (perhaps unwillingly) demonic powers and partakes in a barbaric cult. As is well known, the peoples who settled Canaan were conquered by the Hebrews and ruthlessly destroyed according to the commandment of God. And this is by no means unexplainable cruelty but rather the righteous wrath of God, the punishment for such monstrous depravity and worship of sin.

One widespread myth is that obscene language was brought to Russia by the Mongols and Tatars. It is ridiculous to suppose that once upon a time there lived pure and very moral Slavic tribes who didn't know anything about foul language, and some depraved Mongols came and taught them obscene words. No, the roots of foul language are heathen incantations, and these existed in Russia before the Mongols. In heathen times among the East Slavs, like other peoples, there existed a cult of fertility, and a belief in the mystic marriage of heaven and earth. At Russian heathen weddings they sang so-called «*scolding*» songs which consisted of ritualistic insults of the bridegroom, so that his bride would not have to scold him in their married life. With the help of obscene cursing, the heathen Slavs scared away evil powers, supposing that devils feared profane persons.

After the baptism of Russia (988) foul language was severely punished. A decree of Tsar Alexey Mikhailovich in 1648 disallowed foul language in wedding ceremonies, stating that «*at weddings devilish songs should not be sung and no obscene words spoken*». It also mentioned foul language on holidays: «*On Christmas Day, Vasilyev Day, and Epiphany, devilish*

songs should not be sung, nor should there be any obscene or inappropriate oaths». It was thought that obscene language offended Mary, one's own mother, and mother Earth.

There was also a belief that obscene cursing is punished by natural disasters, accidents and diseases. Even until the times of Tsars Mikhail Fedorovich and Alexey Mikhailovich, foul language was punished by flogging in the streets. The Criminal Code of the USSR prescribed 15 days arrest for using profanity in a public place.

We are responsible for every idle word we speak, and especially for foul words. Nothing is without consequences, such that when we insult another man's mother, or curse the man himself, we bring trouble upon ourselves. Let us recall the words of St. John Chrysostom: «*Whoever curses with obscene words brings a curse upon himself in that day*».

On account of foul language, God sends a man various troubles, misfortunes and illnesses. There is a type of psychological illness (not well-studied) where a person who perhaps never uses filthy language suffers from unexplainable attacks. The patient suddenly and involuntarily begins to spit out a stream of profanity, very often expertly. Sometimes he curses saints and God. For a Christian it is obvious what is happening. In spiritual experience this is known as possession or demon-possession. The demon in the person compels him to speak terrible profanity and verbal abuse. Experience shows that this type of possession can occur, with God's permission, even in children.

Very often people who are spiritually depressed hear voices speaking constant obscenities and blasphemy. It is not difficult to guess whose voices these are. Obscene and foul speech has from of old been called the language of devils.

Here is an example of how the so-called «*black word*» works (that is, an expression that mentions the devil).

A certain man loved to use this word, whether or not it was called for. One day he came home (there was a table in the middle of his room) and saw sitting under the table that one whose name he so often used. In terror the man asked, «*Why did you come?*» That one answered: «*You yourself are always calling me!*» And vanished. This isn't some kind of horror story, but truly happened.

As a priest I can relate more than a few similar incidents from my modest practice.

The devil, unfortunately, is not a fictional character in horror films, but a real power that exists in the world. And the man who uses obscenities, profanities and black words opens the door of his soul to this power.

A person who is accustomed to using foul language is already addicted to his harmful habit. As the apostle says, he who sins is the slave of sin. Whoever thinks he is not addicted to his habitual swearing, let him try to go to two days without cursing and he will see who is boss. To quit swearing is no easier than to quit smoking. Recently three female hairdressers were fired from a well-known beauty salon. The reason is that the owner forbade them to use obscene language on the job. The young women were not able to obey this instruction.

Besides the spiritual harm that foul language causes, it also impoverishes a person culturally. If you were to remove from the mouth of a swearing person all obscenities, which often have no other purpose than to connect other words, you would see how pitiful his vocabulary is. By using foul words, the swearing person often tries, unconsciously, to silence his conscience and sense of shame in order that he might more easily commit shameful deeds.

Obscene language defiles a man and kills his soul. Among persons who swear there develops a kind of false embarrassment to say a sincere, kind word. Such company not only mocks words like love, beauty, good, mercy, and compassion, it cuts off the possibility of an open and pure look.

Every young person who uses foul speech should ask himself this question: Will he like it when his young son or daughter begins to curse in front of him? Some American families have an interesting practice. When children bring home dirty words from the street and ask their parents what they mean, the parents will usually explain what they mean and then force the child to wash his mouth out with soap. After all, dirty words stain the mind, the soul, the hearing and the mouth that spoke them. It wouldn't be a bad idea for us to do the same with our children.

My wife and I once vacationed in a village near Moscow named Fenino. There we met a little boy who had just learned to talk. He was about three years old. And already in his meager vocabulary there were obscene words. What will happen with him later on?

Often young people swear in order to sound grown-up, manly, powerful. One joke goes like this. A lieutenant tells off a private, «*Why are you swearing like a child?*» In every joke is an element of truth.

The teenager, expertly swearing, hopes to hide his inner weakness and childishness. Rather than show by his conduct that he is already grown-up, he puts on the armor of rudeness and unapproachability. Look how cool I am — I swear, I smoke, and I drink! It looks ridiculous and childish. A person who is really strong does not feel obliged to prove it to the whole world. The truly independent person is not the one who follows the crowd. A strong person does not allow a harmful habit to rule him. If you swear in front of girls and you allow them to swear, too, then what sort of a man are you?

The tongue, speech — these are our weapons, our means of communication, our convictions. We must learn to control our tongue. But this is so difficult when our speech is full of garbage and impoverished. There are two types of swearing: one is affected, that is, in the moment of anger or irritation, and the other is simply as filler to connect words. People become so addicted to this second type that they can't do without it. It is sometimes very difficult to rid oneself of parasitic words («*like*», «*whatever*», «*you know*»), how much more profane words which make up for one's deficient vocabulary and outlook.

Do you think we hear a lot of obscene language on television these days? Not everything that is on TV is right and good. It definitely needs to be filtered. Modern television is commercial, and nothing appears there by accident. It's either an ad (open or hidden) or a funded program. Our head was given us not just so we could stuff an MP3 player into our ears, but so we might think and analyze, and not blindly follow others. Why should we dance to the tune of those who want to turn us into a dull, smoked-out flock of sheep who chew on the cud of pop culture?

When you meet a person who swears, you reflexively think to yourself: Is everything alright with him? Only a sick, sexually-obsessed individual could constantly mention genitals and the sex act in routine conversation.

Priest Pavel GUMEROV.

Don't Use  
Obscene  
Language!



## THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE AGREE

In the course of many years scientists were often mistaken about questions of science. But not the Holy Bible, which demonstrated its scientific accuracy. Although the Bible as a whole is not a science textbook, many scientific topics are mentioned in passing, and those that are mentioned are later proved accurate.

| What scientists used to think   | What Science tells us today   | What the Bible always said  |
|---|---|---|
| Throughout the universe only 1000-1200 stars exist  | Trillions and trillions of stars; Man is not able to count them   | <i>Jeremiah 33:22 «As the host of heaven cannot be numbered...»</i>   |
| The Earth is flat   | The Earth is round  | <i>Isaiah 40:22a «It is He who sits above the circle of earth...»</i>   |
| Light doesn't move, it just exists  | Light moves and has physical properties; light waves or photons   | <i>Job 38:19 «Where is the way to the dwelling of light?»</i>   |
| Theory of the stationary universe. Stars simply exist there   | Every star is unique and within constellations the energy of attraction is active   | <i>Job 38:31 «Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loose the belt of Orion?»</i>                            |
| To heal a person you have to drain their «bad» blood  | Blood is vitally necessary, and sometimes donors are needed to replenish the blood.   | <i>Leviticus 17:11 «For it is the blood that makes atonement for the soub»</i>                                      |
| Air does not have mass, it just exists  | Oxygen, nitrogen and carbon dioxide have appropriate nuclear weight, which can change   | <i>Job 28:25 «To establish a weight for the winds...»</i>   |
| The wind blows in a linear direction across the Earth   | Air moves in big spiral streams   | <i>Ecclesiastes 1:6 «The wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit»</i>                         |
| The earth's rests on someone's back   | The earth soars in space  | <i>Job 26:7 «He hangs the earth on nothing»</i>   |
| People just get sick; washing your hands is not important   | Most diseases are spread by physical contact. You should wash your hands in running water   | <i>Leviticus 15:13 «he shall ... wash his clothes, and bathe his body in running water; then he shall be clean»</i> |
| All stars are similar to each another   | Every star in its own way is unique   | <i>1 Corinthians 15:41 «for one star differs from another in glory»</i>   |
| Something happened without any cause. The model of the «Big Bang». Bang! and there was the universe | Every action triggers an equal reaction. This is real science. The law of cause and effect. To receive a result, there must be an input | <i>Genesis 1:1 «In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth»</i>   |

Although the Greek scholar Claudius Ptolemy (circa 150 A.D.) was intelligent, he erroneously taught that the rest of the universe rotates around earth. Not true. But scientists believed in this idea for more than a thousand years. Scientists affirmed that the rest of the universe rotates around earth and they convinced other educated people that this was true, including leaders of European churches and government leaders. (The Bible absolutely does not teach this.) This was actually a consensus by scientists who were wrong. Later scientists persuaded others to oppose Copernicus and Galileo, around 1400 A.D. Galileo demonstrated that the belief scientists had held for more than a thousand years was false. Galileo is not an example of a conflict between religion and science, but rather an example of how a consensus of scientists can be wrong and can convince others to believed the delusion.

**Religion can be good, when it brings us closer to the truth.**

**Science can also be good, when it brings us closer to the truth.**

Scientists, being human, sometimes are wrong, like scientists in the time of Galileo. Remember that it was precisely the scientists who were wrong, who convinced others that the rest of the universe rotates around earth.

Remember that scientists had a habit of mixing astrology with astronomy. And also they had a habit of mixing alchemy with chemistry, fooling a lot of people. So that while throughout the course of history scientists were often wrong about science, the Bible remains consistent and accurate. Today evolutionists mix their beliefs with the views of scientists, even though real science demonstrates that evolution cannot be true. But the Bible has always proclaimed the truth about our origin.

*Genesis 1:1 says, «In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth».*

Scientific evolutionists again are wrong about science; the Bible keeps demonstrating its accuracy and reality.

[www.creationism.org/russian/BibleSci\\_ru.htm](http://www.creationism.org/russian/BibleSci_ru.htm)



*The life of Jesus Christ. Was He the son of God? Here is a short survey of Christ's life, showing faith in Him is not «blind» faith.*

by Paul E. Little

## BEYOND BLIND FAITH

It is impossible for us to know conclusively whether God exists and what He is like unless He takes the initiative and reveals Himself. We must know what He is like and His attitude toward us. Suppose we knew He existed, but that He was like Adolf Hitler — capricious, vicious, prejudiced, and cruel. What a horrible realization that would be!

We must scan the horizon of history to see if there is any clue to God's revelation. There is one clear clue. In an obscure village in Palestine, almost 2,000 years ago, a Child was born in a stable. Today the entire world is still celebrating the birth of Jesus.

He lived in obscurity until He was thirty, and then began a public ministry that lasted three years. It was destined to change the course of history. He was a kindly person and we're told that «the common people heard Him gladly». And, **«He taught as One who had authority, and not as their teachers of the Law»** (Matthew 7:29).

### JESUS SAID HE WAS THE SON OF GOD

It soon became apparent, however, that He was making shocking and startling statements about Himself. He began to identify Himself as far more than a remarkable teacher or prophet. He began to say clearly that He was God. He made His identity the focal point of His teaching. The all-important question He put to those who followed Him was, **«Who do you say I am?»** When Peter answered and said, **«You are the Christ, the Son of the living God»** (Matthew 16:15-16), Jesus was not shocked, nor did He rebuke Peter. On the contrary, He commended him!

He made the claim explicitly, and His hearers got the full impact of His words. We are told, **«The Jews tried all the harder to kill Him; not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God»** (John 5:18).

On another occasion he said, **«I and My Father are One»**. Immediately the Jews wanted to stone Him. He asked them for which good work they wanted to kill Him. They replied, **«We are not stoning You for any of these but for blasphemy, because You, a mere man, claim to be God»** (John 5:18).

Jesus clearly claimed attributes which only God has. When a paralyzed man was let down through the roof wanting to be healed by Him, He said, **«Son, your sins are forgiven you»**. This caused a great to-do among the religious leaders, who said in their hearts, **«Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?»**

At the critical moment when His life was at stake, the high priest put the question to Him directly: **«Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?»**

**«I am»**, said Jesus. **«And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven»**.

The high priest tore his clothes. **«Why do we need any more witnesses?»** he asked. **«You have heard the blasphemy»** (Mark 14:61-64).

So close was His connection with God that He equated a person's attitude to Himself with the person's attitude toward God. Thus, to know Him was to know God (John 8:19; 14:7). To see Him was to see God (12:45; 14:9). To believe in Him was to believe in God (12:44; 14:1). To receive Him was to receive God (Mark 9:37). To hate Him was to hate God (John 15:23). And to honor Him was to honor God (5:23).

### ONLY FOUR POSSIBILITIES

As we face the claims of Christ, there are only four possibilities. He was either a liar, a lunatic, a legend, or the Truth. If we say He is not the Truth, we are automatically affirming one of the other three alternatives, whether we realize it or not.



(1) One possibility is that Jesus lied when He said He was God — that He knew He was not God, but deliberately deceived His hearers to lend authority to His teaching. Few, if any, seriously hold this position. Even those who deny His deity affirm that He was a great moral teacher. They fail to realize those two statements are a contradiction. Jesus could hardly be a great moral teacher if, on the most crucial point of His teaching — His identity — He was a deliberate liar.

(2) A kinder, though no less shocking possibility, is that He was sincere but self-deceived. We have a name for a person today who thinks he is God. That name is lunatic, and it certainly would apply to Christ if He were deceived on this all-important issue. But as we look at the life of Christ, we see no evidence of the abnormality and imbalance we find in a deranged person. Rather, we find the greatest composure under pressure.

(3) The third alternative is that all of the talk about His claiming to be God is a legend — that what actually happened was that His enthusiastic followers, in the third and fourth centuries, put words into His mouth He would have been shocked to hear. Were He to return, He would immediately repudiate them.

(Continued on page 5)

## CHRISTIAN NEWS

### The best boxer in the world is leaving the sport because of God's command

The best boxer in the world, Filipino Manny Pacquiao, announced that he wanted to end his career. According to Manny, God came into his dream and advised him to quit boxing. Correspondents reported this via a link on the portal [afmedia.ru](http://afmedia.ru)



At the same time, Manny did not specify how many fights he had left to hold. «You did enough. You were able to become famous, and that's pernicious», — said God in Manny's sleep.

According to the 33-year old boxer, he talks with God a lot. Earlier Manny said that God chose him purposely so he can spread faith around the world. The athlete already broke off his bad habits, and began spending more time with his family and deepening his study of the bible. In one interview, Manny admitted that boxing is not suitable with his serious and serene closeness to God. He accurately quoted places from the Bible chapter and verse, and also said that he'll do everything in his power to harm people less in the boxing ring and in his personal life.

### Pastor from America gives away his car in a lottery

Charles Bond, pastor of New Wine Church in Ohio, USA, is going to give away his Hummer H2 Limited Edition SUV to raise \$140,000 dollars. The pastor wants to donate the money to charity organizations in his city, to different countries that are fighting against slavery, and to orphanages in Congo.

As reported in Christian Post, Bond began a campaign called Passion Project. The origin of this

was a meeting between the pastor and a woman who had been kidnapped and forced to have sex for three years. After her release she spent time in a rehabilitation center in Ohio. Part of the church money will also be given to that center.



«I heard her story and I wanted to help her somehow. When I started my church, I said to our congregation that our words have to be confirmed by our actions, so I thought, what can I donate to help? So I decided to give away my car», — said Bond.

Bond noted that the car loan is fully paid off.

New Wine Church International was founded in March of last year. At first the congregation gathered in the pastor's house but now the church has about 150 people.

News CNL-NEWS by materials: [invictory.org](http://invictory.org)

# BEYOND BLIND FAITH

(Conclusion. Beginning on page 4)

The legend theory has been refuted by many discoveries of modern archeology. These have conclusively shown that the four biographies of Christ were written within the lifetime of Christ's contemporaries. According to Dr. William F. Albright, a world-famous archaeologist now retired from Johns Hopkins University, there is no reason to believe that any of the Gospels were written later than A.D. 70. For a mere legend about Christ, in the form of the Gospel, to have gained the circulation and to have had the impact it had, without one shred of basis in fact, is incredible.

For this to have happened would be as fantastic as for someone in our own time to write a biography of the late John F. Kennedy and in it say he claimed to be God, to forgive people's sins, and to have risen from the dead. Such a story is so wild it would never get off the ground because there are still too many people around who knew Kennedy. The legend theory does not hold water in the light of the early date of the Gospel manuscripts.

The only other alternative is that Jesus spoke the truth. From one point of view, however, claims don't mean much. Talk is cheap. Anyone can make claims. There have been others who have claimed to be God. I could claim to be God, and so could you, but we would have to bring credentials to substantiate our claim. In my case it wouldn't take you five minutes to disprove my claim. It probably wouldn't take too much more to dispose of yours. But when it comes to Jesus of Nazareth, it's not so simple. He had the credentials to back up His claim. He said, **«Even though you do not believe Me, believe the evidence of the miracles, that you may learn and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father»** (John 10:38).

## JESUS' CREDENTIALS

**First, His moral character coincided with His claims.** Many asylum inmates claim to be celebrities or deities. But their claims are belied by their characters. Not so with Christ. He is unique — as unique as God.

Jesus Christ was sinless. The caliber of His life was such that He was able to challenge His enemies with the question, **«Can any of you prove Me guilty of sin?»** (John 8:46). He was met by silence, even though He addressed those who would have liked to point out a flaw in His character.

We read of Jesus' temptations, but we never hear of a confession of sin on His part. He never asked for forgiveness, though He told His followers to do so.

This lack of any sense of moral failure on Jesus' part is astonishing in view of the fact that it is completely contrary to the experience of the saints and mystics in all ages. They are tormented by the feeling of self-imperfection.

The closer men and women draw to God, the more overwhelmed they are with their own failure, corruption, and shortcomings. The closer one is to a shining light, the more he realizes his need of a bath from the dirt. This is also true in the moral realm, for ordinary mortals.

It is also striking that John, Paul, and Peter, all of whom were trained from earliest childhood to believe in the universality of sin, all spoke of the sinlessness of Christ: **«He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth»** (1 Peter 2:22).

Pilate, no friend of Jesus, said, **«What evil has He done?»** He implicitly recognized Christ's innocence. And the Roman centurion who witnessed the death

of Christ said, **«Surely He was the Son of God»** (Matthew 27:54).

**Second, Christ demonstrated a power over natural forces which could belong only to God, the Author of these forces.**

He stilled a raging storm of wind and waves on the Sea of Galilee. In doing this He provoked from those in the boat the awestruck question, **«Who is this? Even the wind and waves obey Him!»** (Mark 4:41). He turned water into wine, fed 5,000 people from five loaves and two fish, raised from the dead a grieving widow's only son, and brought to life the dead daughter of a shattered father. To an old friend He said, **«Lazarus, come forth!»** and dramatically raised him from the dead. It is most significant that His enemies did not deny these miracles. Rather, they tried to kill Him. **«If we let Him go on like this»,** they said, **«everyone will believe in Him»** (John 11:48).

**Third, Jesus demonstrated the Creator's power over sickness and disease.** He made the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, and the blind to see. Some of His healings were of congenital problems not susceptible to psychosomatic cures. The most outstanding was that of the blind man whose case is recorded in John 9. Though the man couldn't answer his speculative questioners, his experience was enough to convince him to believe. **«One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!»** he declared. He was astounded that his friends didn't recognize this Healer as the Son of God. **«Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind»,** he said (John 9:25, 32). To him the evidence was obvious.

**Fourth, Jesus' supreme credential to authenticate His claim to deity was His resurrection from the dead.** Five times in the course of His life He predicted He would die. He also predicted how He would die and that three days later He would rise from the dead and appear to His disciples.

Surely this was the great test. It was a claim that was easy to disprove. It either happened or it didn't.

Both friends and enemies of the Christian faith have recognized the resurrection of Christ to be the foundation stone of the faith. Paul, the great apostle, wrote, **«If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith»** (1 Corinthians 15:14). Paul rested his whole case on the bodily resurrection of Christ. Either He did or He didn't rise from the dead. If He did, it was the most sensational event in all of history.

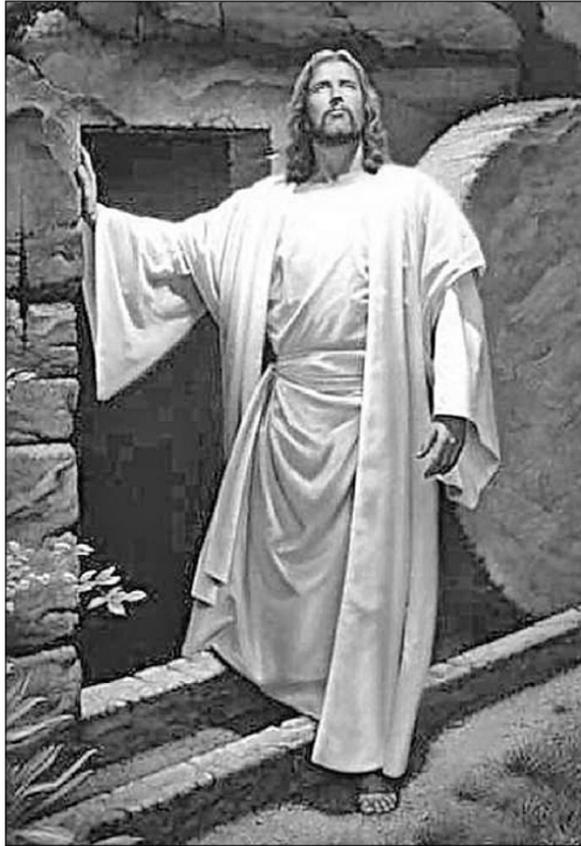
If Christ rose, we know with certainty that God exists, what He is like, and how we can personally communicate with Him. The universe takes on meaning and purpose, and it is possible to experience the living God in contemporary life.

## AN INTERESTING MUSEUM PIECE?

On the other hand, if Christ did not rise from the dead, Christianity is an interesting museum piece — nothing more. It has no objective validity or reality. Though it is a nice wishful thought, it certainly isn't worth getting steamed up about. The martyrs who, singing, went to the lions, and con-

temporary missionaries who have died in Ecuador and Congo while taking this message to others, have been poor deluded fools.

The attack on Christianity by its enemies has most often concentrated on the Resurrection because it has been clearly seen that this event is the crux of the matter. A remarkable attack was the one contemplated in the early '30s by a young British lawyer. He was convinced that the Resurrection was a mere fable and fantasy. Sensing that it was the foundation stone of the Christian faith, he decided to do



the world a favor by once and for all exposing this fraud and superstition. As a lawyer, he felt he had the critical faculties to rigidly sift evidence. He was not going to admit anything as evidence which did not meet the stiff criteria for admission into a modern law court.

However, while Frank Morrison was doing his research, a remarkable thing happened. The case was not nearly as easy as he had supposed. As a result, the first chapter in his book, *Who Moved the Stone?* is entitled, **«The Book That Refused to Be Written»**. In it he described how, as he examined the evidence, he became persuaded against his will, of the fact of the bodily resurrection of Christ.

## JESUS' DEATH AND BURIAL

Jesus' death was by public execution on a cross. The government said it was for blasphemy. Jesus said it was to pay for our sins. After being severely tortured, Jesus' wrists and feet were nailed to a cross where He hung, eventually dying of slow suffocation. A sword was thrust into His side to confirm His death.

The body of Jesus was wrapped into linens covered with approximately 100 pounds of gummy-wet spices. His body was placed in a solid rock tomb. A 1 1/2- 2 ton boulder was rolled by levers to secure the entrance. Because Jesus had publicly said He would rise from the dead in three days, a guard of trained Roman soldiers was stationed at the tomb. An official Roman seal was affixed to the tomb entrance declaring it government property.

In spite of all this, three days later the body was gone. Only the grave linens remained, in the form of the body, but caved in. The boulder formerly sealing the tomb was found up a slope, some distance away from the tomb.

## THE EMPTY TOMB

**The earliest explanation circulated was that the disciples stole the body.** In *Matthew 28:11-15*, we have the record of the reaction of the chief priests and the elders when the guards gave them the infuriating and mysterious news that the body was gone. They gave the soldiers money and told them to explain to everyone that the disciples had come at night and stolen the body while they were asleep. That story was so false that Matthew didn't even bother to refute it! What judge would listen to you if you said that while you were asleep your neighbor came into your house and stole your television set? Who knows what goes on while he's asleep? Testimony like this would be laughed at in any court.

Furthermore, we are faced with a psychological and ethical impossibility. Stealing the body of Christ is something totally foreign to the character of the disciples and all that we know of them. It would mean that they were perpetrators of a deliberate lie which was responsible for the deception and ultimate death of thousands of people. It is inconceivable that, even if a few of the disciples had conspired and pulled off this theft, they would never have told the others.

Each of the disciples faced the test of torture and martyrdom for his statements and beliefs. Men will die for what they believe to be true, though it may actually be false. They do not, however, die for what they know is a lie. If ever a man tells the truth, it is on his deathbed. And if the disciples had taken the body, and Christ was still dead, we would still have the problem of explaining His alleged appearances.

**A second hypothesis is that the authorities, Jewish or Roman, moved the body.** But for what? They had put guards at the tomb, so why would they steal the body? Also, what about the silence of the authorities in the face of the apostles' bold preaching in Jerusalem about the Resurrection? The ecclesiastical leaders were seething with rage, and did everything possible to prevent the spread of this message that Jesus rose from the dead. They arrested Peter and John and beat and threatened them, in an attempt to close their mouths.

But there was a very simple solution to their problem. If they had Christ's body, they could have paraded it through the streets of Jerusalem. In one fell swoop they would have successfully smothered Christianity in its cradle. That they did not do this bears eloquent testimony to the fact that they did not have the body.

**Another popular theory has been that the women, distraught and overcome by grief, missed their way in the dimness of the morning and went to the wrong tomb.** In their distress they decided Christ had risen because the tomb was empty. This theory, however, falls before the same fact that destroys the previous one. If the women went to the wrong tomb, why did the high priests and other enemies of the faith not go to the right tomb and show the body? Further, it is inconceivable that Peter and John would succumb to the same mistake, and certainly Joseph of

Arimathea, owner of the tomb, would have solved the problem. In addition, it must be remembered that this was a private burial ground, not a public cemetery. There was no other tomb nearby that would have allowed them to make this mistake.

The swoon theory has also been advanced to explain the empty tomb. In this view, Christ did not actually die. He was mistakenly reported to be dead, but had swooned from exhaustion, pain, and loss of blood. When He was laid in the coolness of the tomb, He revived. He came out of the tomb and appeared to His disciples, who mistakenly thought He had risen from the dead.

This is a theory of modern construction. It first appeared at the end of the eighteenth century. It is significant that this kind of suggestion did not arise in antiquity, when Christianity faced the severest attacks. Earlier, the death of Christ did not face doubt.

**But let us assume for a moment that Christ was buried alive. Is it possible to believe that He would have survived three days in a damp tomb without food, water or medical attention of any kind?** Would He have had the strength to extricate Himself from the grave clothes, push the heavy stone away from the mouth of the grave, overcome the Roman guards, and walk miles on feet that had been pierced with spikes? Such a belief is more fantastic than the simple fact of the Resurrection itself.

Even the German critic David Strauss, who by no means believes in the Resurrection, rejected this improbable idea. He said:

It is impossible that One who had just come forth from the grave half dead, who crept about weak and ill, who stood in the need of medical treatment, of bandaging, strengthening, and tender care, and who at last succumbed to suffering, could ever have given the disciples the impression that He was a conqueror over death and the grave; that He was the Prince of Life.

Finally, if this theory is correct, Christ Himself was involved in flagrant lies. His disciples believed and preached that He was dead but came alive again. Jesus did nothing to dispel this belief, but rather encouraged it.

The only theory that adequately explains the empty tomb is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

## A GOD WHO CAN BE KNOWN

If Jesus Christ rose from the dead, proving He is God, He is alive today. He is willing to be more than worshiped. He is willing to be known and to come into our lives.

Jesus said, **«Behold, I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me»** (Revelation 3:20).

The late Carl Gustav Jung said, **«The central neurosis of our time is emptiness»**. All of us have a deep longing for our life to have meaning and depth. Jesus offers us a more meaningful, abundant life, which comes through a relationship with Him. Jesus said, **«I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly»** (John 10:10).

Because Jesus died on the cross, taking with Him all of humankind's sin, He now offers us forgiveness, acceptance and a genuine relationship with Him.

Right now you can invite Jesus Christ into your life. You could say to Him something like, **«Jesus, thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I ask You to forgive me and to come into my life right now. Thank You for giving me a relationship with You»**.

Source: [mirstudentov.com](http://mirstudentov.com)

# TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

## My 28-year long journey to God

Peace be with you, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus!

My name is Alexander. I'm 36 years old. I was born and raised in Achinsk, in Krasnoyarsk Territory. My father raised me because my mother was deprived of her parental rights when I was three years old. My father worked and drank alcohol; in between those two activities he taught me how to live and what goals to pursue in life. After I turned 12, I started getting my education on the street. Instead of going to the army (it is mandatory in Russia) I got into jail for robbery. Fortunately or unfortunately, I got into a jail for a short term. All my efforts to be a lawful citizen after that were in vain.

Again and again I made the decision to live like «all normal people», but desires alone were not enough to accomplish it. I started to use drugs, drink booze, and steal. Repeated overdoses led me to the edge of life, to the brink of death. My life felt like a complete collapse and disappointment. Throughout this prison drama I was convicted six times and served five prison terms. In prison I found new «teachers» from which I thought I learned the meaning of life. At the same time I was losing friends, and failed in my attempts to reunite with my family.

I was at the mercy of my terrible sins but I was satisfied with this. Indulging all my desires seemed to me quite normal at that time. It was a very deep and stinking pit. I sat tightly in the bottom of this pit, pressed down by my grave sins, not seeing the open hand of the Lord outstretched to me. I knew there was a God, and I prayed sometimes, but personally I didn't know who He was, the Lord, or what I needed to do in order to gain freedom. I didn't feel that the life I was living was mine. I cried out to God with my question: «Where are you?» Now I understand that He was always there but I did not hear him.

For 28 years I was a toy in the hands of the devil and had to go like a bull to the slaughter, without resistance. In the depth of my soul I realized that it could not continue like that any longer. It's like I heard an inner voice whispering that I was someone different.

In 2005, God brought one Christian in my life who told me who Jesus Christ was. This brother testified that because of Jesus his life was changed. And then I decided to confess my sins to Jesus Christ. I went to a rehabilitation center, where I received Jesus into my heart as my Lord and Savior. The wave of inexplicable feeling inside me was replaced by a new, more powerful wave. I could not explain the reason for such change. I was mastered by some invisible power, which I fully trusted. Everything was changed before my eyes.

I remember it very vividly. That morning I was praying on my knees and cried, I muttered under my breath unintelligible words from the bottom of my heart, asking the Lord for forgiveness of my sinful soul. A feeling of freedom filled my soul and I never felt such joy. I did not understand what was happening to me because it was like a miracle. I thank my God for that. For giving me a sign that I still can be with Him, in spite of my «unclean clothes». For showing me that life can be completely different! I acknowledged all the sins in my life and realized that Jesus took them away on the cross when He was crucified. He did it for me, I just needed to let Him in my life and trust Him!

However, at that time I was wanted by the Russian police and was not able to finish my

rehabilitation. I did not understand then, and within my heart kept asking the Lord why I was destined to serve another term. Thank God, there was a man who was able to explain everything to me. The pastor that we had in the rehabilitation center said:

«Alexander, do not be upset at God, He is not the one to blame. What's happening is the result of the sin you sowed in your life. Now is the time to reap what you sow. But even in prison continue to seek God, pray, read the Bible and you will see that even in prison He has not left nor forsaken you».



\* \* \*

I accepted that pastor's words as if they were inspired by the Lord. I accepted them in my heart. That's what I did, and the Lord did not leave me. He was showing his miracles of healing to me. God showed his miracle, as promised, shortly after I was released from prison.

In 2009 my family was reunited, I got new loyal friends, and a church I love. All this thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Dear brothers and sisters who are still not free, believe, pray, repent of your sins, and accept the Lord as your Savior! This new life is beautiful! Today I am happy that I have the opportunity to live with Christ, to glorify Him and testify about Him to all people on Earth! About what he did for me — the real miracle of God!

God gave me a wonderful wife, Olesya, and we are serving the Lord together. I am a chaplain in the prison ministry. The Lord laid it on my heart to pray for prisoners and to preach the gospel in prisons and jails, because there is a way out of this curse. My wife, Olesya, works with orphans. She is now on maternity leave because our Lord has blessed us with a long-awaited child. Our little son, Bogdan, is 4 months old now. Life is a wonderful thing, we don't have to live it in vain!

Glory to our Lord Jesus Christ! God bless you!



Alexander PEKARSKIY  
Krasnoyarsk, Russia.



Peace to you, dear workers of the newspaper «Prisoner». Thank you very much for your work and this wonderful newspaper. It is pure spiritual food. Thanks to the testimonies, letters and materials in your newspaper, the prison's church now prays for the awakening of the prisoners on our campus. May the Lord greatly bless your lives and may your newspaper lighten the path for many souls and open the way to liberty in Jesus Christ. Be blessed! Thank you so much for the issue of «Prisoner» that was sent to me. Also accept thanks from the sisters in prison who received the newspaper.

## You will not believe it — God heals!

My name is Alexandra. I am 39. I am serving a life sentence for my life without God (20 years of abusing drugs). I have 4 daughters: Diana, 19; Sophie, 10; Catherine, 8; Valerie, 5. The oldest girls live with my parents, and the youngest, Valerie, has been adopted. In 2009, I received my sentence — 6 years in prison. At that moment, I was glad to be put into prison because it stopped me from falling completely. Because I could not help myself and I did not really want to stop using drugs. I felt such a great emptiness in my heart and I wished that the nightmare would stop. I would be glad to even die. In 2009, while already in prison, I started reading the Bible (I was in the prison hospital because I had tuberculosis). Later, when I was in the prison of Zbarazhsk IK-63, I started attending Christian worship services and studied the Bible in classes and individually. When I prayed, I would always ask the Holy Spirit to show me God's will for my life. Since that time, I have been following Jesus for 4 years already, and He is my Lord and King, my Savior and Comforter. All glory and praise be to Him, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

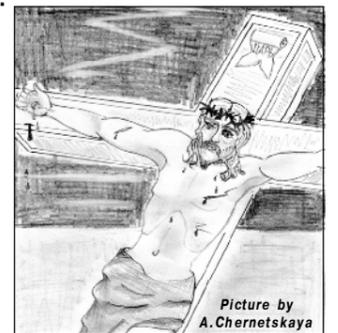
I would like to testify about the miracles that have happened in my life thanks to our wonderful Lord. I have been completely healed of tuberculosis, freed from smoking and using obscene language, and there have been many more miracles. My relationships with my mother and children are renovated. The Lord hears every single prayer and never leaves one unanswered. The most important thing is that there is God's peace in my heart and I know why I was given life. My life is not an existence without purpose. Before I was driven insane by the realization that my little lovely children would experience difficulties similar to mine in their lives. I did not know God at that time. And what could I give my children? How could I protect them? But now God is with me. He has given me freedom from my sins and broken my chains. My daughters whom I love have their hope in God. Today my challenge is to build a strong ship of faith which has Christ as its foundation. I love children and I would like to serve parentless children, children with disabilities, and all kids who need love. I will stop here. I will add just one more thing: my father, mother, and my three beautiful daughters are waiting for me.

God changed my life when I was 36, and I experienced a wonderful meeting with Jesus Christ. Now I am 39 and still in prison, but I am happy in Jesus Christ. The Lord is gracious!

With God's love for all, **Александра ЧЕРНЕЦКАЯ, ДИК-34, 7/71, ул. Димитрова, 214, г. Днепропетровск, Днепропетровская обл., Украина, 51912.**

### THANK YOU

*I thank you, Jesus, for your will  
That I be with the living still,  
And for your Spirit in my heart,  
Who shines the light when it is dark.  
For every breath and every ray,  
For wisdom in Your Word today.  
Your Spirit lives within my soul,  
I thank you, Lord, who made me whole.  
There are no doubts, no hurts, no wrongs,  
I'm a Christian, daughter of God,  
I thank you, Jesus, you're my song,  
I sing and praise You all day long!*



Picture by  
A. Chernetskaya



## God restored my life

I cannot recall the exact date when I began to smoke, but I do remember that by age 9 I smoked regularly and couldn't stop. At this age I also got drunk for the first time, and after that I began to drink mildly alcoholic drinks.

At the age of 15 I had my first experience with marijuana (weed) and Tramadol. At age 16 I developed a desire for thrills, and continued to experiment with newer, stronger, and more lethal substances, like methamphetamines and other homegrown drugs.

As a student I had exams, but they barely concerned me. I would come home in the morning and go to my exams after drinking some beer to sober up from the drugs. I was content with this routine. Tramadol soon consumed me, and I realized that I couldn't help longing for it at all times. To override the desire I began to consume hard liquors. I was able to get a job, but as soon as the money began coming in I did not hesitate to spend it on alcohol, drugs, women, and gambling machines. My family began to notice really drastic extremes in

my life. My dependency grew worse, so they threatened to kick me out of the house. They took me to rehab, to help me detoxify myself, and my sobriety lasted for two weeks. I collapsed and I went back to drinking, but in larger amounts than previously.

In the course of five years I drank, stole, used drugs, committed sexual sins, and continued to drink alcohol like water. I tried to visit church to ask God for help. I prayed to him at home, «Help me, please, because I do not know what I can do on my own to be rid of this dependency». Thank God! It seemed like He heard my prayer. I was reacquainted with a friend — Bogdan — from the past. I thought that he had been killed or incarcerated, or died from an overdose or something like that.

Bogdan explained to me that he no longer smokes, drinks or uses drugs. Above all he said that God helped him, and that he now serves him in church. After a few meetings, we said our goodbyes and I haven't see him for some time.

# TESTIMONIES OF BORN-AGAIN CHRISTIANS

## SINCERE REPENTANCE IS THE MAIN THING

Glory to Jesus Christ! I greet you with the love of our Lord, dear brothers and sisters of the newspaper «Prisoner»!

In my testimony I want to share and tell everyone about the true living God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, about His mercy and salvation which He revealed in my life to be a living witness of Jesus Christ to all people. «...The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death...» (Ps. 118:18).

I was born in an ordinary family, I had a father and mother. Honestly, in our family no one knew anything about God. Mom, of course, was trying her best to raise me right, teaching me goodness, honesty and all the positive traits that she wanted to see in me. During my upbringing, my father paid little attention to me. He often said that he was inexperienced, and that when I got older I would figure things out. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Basically, I was raised on the street and went headlong in defiance against every instruction and counsel of my parents.

From my childhood I loved stealing things, and as I got older this vice grew with me. I was imprisoned for theft for the first time when I was 17. Of course, for me this was a big shock, but there was nothing I could change about it. I had to accept it and somehow adapt to this life. As my mind and understanding has grown, I have often thought about my life, scrolling through and weighing it from all sides. It turns out that while you have money you will have friends and perhaps girlfriends, and everything will seem to be going perfectly in your life. But when the money runs out, then no one remains close to you. That's how it was with me when I was left alone, alone with my problems.

I took many things in life for granted, thoughtlessly, and that's why I suffered. But most importantly, I did not know or understand what sin and damnation are. I did not understand the strength or power of sin that enslaves, destroys and kills people physically and spiritually. While serving a two-and-a-half year sentence for theft in a medium-security prison, I thought about the point of my life for the first time. The Lord began knocking on my heart then, but I didn't know anything about Him.

In moments of despair, in the depths of my soul, I realized that my whole life was a closed-in vicious circle. Nevertheless, I did not know any other life nor I could understand it. To some extent I understood that such a life I could not continue to live, for I wanted something better, a kind and a bright future. However, to create such a life was for me an overwhelming problem. And again that closed-in vicious circle of stealing, drinking, prison. How can I live differently, what to aspire to, what to do? I still did not know.

Released from prison, for the first time I tried to live wisely. Unfortunately, it did not last long. Life again rolled down a steep slope: bad company, drinking, theft and murder, leading to a trial and prison with a death sentence. The consequences of my sinful life had made me to truly think and reevaluate here where I finally stood on the verge of life and death. I was so driven by this uncertainty into a corner that in desperation I asked myself: Was it really necessary for me to be born into this world, where I really did not understand its meaning, and to be sentenced to death at age 20? Why so? This was the cry of my soul, and God heard it, although back then I really didn't believe in him. Being in the «Death Cell», I was told by my cellmate that here among the guards there are believers. But I told him that it was already too late for me to believe in God, for such crimes neither man nor God would forgive.

After some time, a certain person told me how his wife came to believe, after which he also came to believe in God. I soon came to know the truth of God, which touched my heart. This truth is about forgiveness and how much God loves me. For my salvation He gave His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for sin. God wants me to be forgiven and be saved, if I confess and repent of my sins. That's when I first repented, as best I could, before God, revealing all my sins and crimes. Through heartfelt remorse I was washed in the holy blood of Jesus Christ, accepting Him as Lord and Savior, and being reconciled with God. The peace of God filled my heart, and I really felt His presence in me, as well as the joy of forgiveness and peace in my soul. From that moment on I began my new life in Jesus Christ. The main thing is sincere repentance. Since that day, fifteen years have passed. There have been many difficulties on the thorny path, as well as joys and sorrows, ups and downs, and frustration. But always there is One Who never left me. This loving Lord always supported and strengthened me on my path of life. And now we have an eternity ahead for the knowledge of God and His truths.

God's blessings to you all! With the love of Christ, your brother,

**Василий ПЕСОЦКИЙ,**  
УИИ № 8, ул. Ватутина, 172, г. Житомир, Украина, 10001.



## God restored my life



Some time passed and I met another friend of mine, Oleg. Oleg and I used to steal and do drugs in the past. While talking to him, I realized that he does not curse, does not smoke, and his actions are just different from what I recall. I showed puzzlement and interest, and just asked him what's his deal? Then Oleg answered that he repented and now is in a church, and he invited me to come with him. He encouraged me by telling me that God will help me, I just need to want Him to help me, I need to attend a rehabilitation center. I understood that I had no other option, and I agreed to enter the rehab center nearby.



At this moment I am a student in «The Spiritual Academy Institute of Joshua». I also work, helping in the prison ministry.

I would like to thank all of the ministers and church members for their compassion, understanding, and encouragement. My joy is overwhelming and my thanks to God will never stop, for He has granted me eternal life and freedom. Glory to Him for everything!

**Yevgeniy STEPANOV,**  
t. Vishnyoviy, Kievskiy region,  
Ukraine.

Specially for «Prisoner», Konstantin BOROVSNIKH has kindly agreed to give his testimony. Konstantin is a former convict, now pastor of Tree of Life Church, and a member of the city council of Tyumen.

## THIS WORLD OFFERS THE PRESENT, MY GOD — THE FUTURE

A warm April evening. The city is preparing to sleep after a day that filled people's lives in a special way. People fell in love, had a good time, some were disappointed and some upset. This fading day gave everyone something new. Through the open balcony door blows cool wind, full of life-giving aromas and bringing spring.

In the next room, softly snoring, my five-year old daughter, Viktoria, is already asleep. She's going to kindergarten tomorrow. From another room comes the sound of my wife whispering lullabies to another little blessing, by the name of Daniel, who will turn six months in several days. All is well, there is peace in the house and tranquility in the heart. Today I am my mother's beloved son, beloved brother for my sister, beloved husband for my wife, beloved father and daddy for my children. Also, I am a pastor in a church, a member of the city council of Tyumen, a student of the Academy of Petersburg, and simply a person who wants to live and be useful to society — that is today!!!

Yet the memory recalls the past, that which cannot be forgotten or thrown away because it happened. The trouble is not that the past exists, but that many people live in the past. I was able to escape, but I will present things in order.

I was born in 1971, in the city of Novosibirsk, in an average family whose well-being was measured by how many groceries were in the freezer. All responsibility and care for me and my younger sister rested on my mother, who in her turn tried with all her power to feed and clothe her children the best she could, while denying herself the best things. This mother, who always believed that her son would be the best! She believed, when she led me by my hand to preschool. She believed, when her son went to school. She believed, when I committed my first act of theft, when everyone said that nothing good will come out of him. Police, children's home, detention center, and only mother thought and believed that this will be over soon!

Prisons and prison camps changed, cities and people changed, but wherever I was, my mother remained the same, with her constant faith and words — «You can do it son, you will break out, God will help you!» And He did help.

Self-confident romantic ideas literally absorbed the youth of that time. «The Rakish 90's». How many



people, who didn't know the truth of life, lay under crosses, fulfilling someone else's dreams and desires. They were suffering and lost their health in the jail cells and isolation units for someone else's «hangover». No wonder they say «With whom you acquaint, from them you'll obtain». And all of that did not pass me by. Since there was no father in my life to raise me, I found him on the streets. He was an old ex-convict who had a certain authority or respect in the circles of that neighborhood, to which so many youth had been drawn, but from which it was so difficult to escape unharmed. In those circles in 1988 is where I tried «Poppy Tears» for the first time. Back then it seemed romantic, and even in 1989 when I first heard the verdict of imprisonment, it did not stop me. It possibly even egged me on and gave me a new milestone in my life, a life which is difficult to ponder now.

Empty cigarette boxes, Stolypin wagons, prisons, cells, zones, isolation units, drugs, hospitals, corpses, betrayal, intrigues, meanness, stupidity and imaginary courage — everything was lumped together by a malevolent hand.

Snatches of freedom spent in brothels, «kitchens» and «drug houses». Women as a kind of «traveling pennant» which goes to the winner, and the winner is the one who is on the loose today. And all of this is but for a brief moment. For once again you will take your place on the bunk, but only if death happens to pass you by this time. And at night or when no one is watching you scream at heaven: «God! Where is the exit? Is this is what I came to this earth for? I do not want to live like this; I don't want to die like this! Where are you, Lord?» But He is there, in the face of her who believes in you, with the words — You can do it, son!

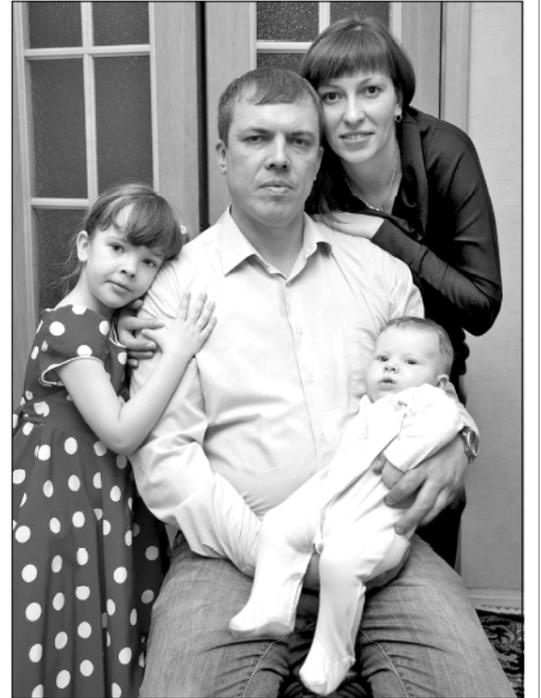
Until 2002, I ravaged my very own life. Once freed, I comforted myself with the illusion that I would begin to live a new life, while nevertheless returning by old ways to old friends.

Once again, entering the hospital for rehabilitation I thought that it would be the last time, but these were just wishes.

One time, a «smart friend» advised me to find a shaman, like he could help me somehow. Said, done. And that man in strange attire, with strange devices,

came into my apartment. But he did not know, strange man, that he couldn't free me. Seeing that his whispering and vapors of smoke did not bring about the desired effect, I was offered the most stupid thing to take, after which he quickly fled, without providing me the help I needed.

I searched for that escape route in other villages and other cities, since I still wanted to live, especially because I was still so young.



In the Bible there are good words: «As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool returns to his folly» (Proverbs 26:11). But where could I get any wisdom which would show me the way to the truth? Sometimes people step on a rake, but I kept jumping on one, enjoying the thud of the handle against my own head. How can I step off the rake? Fear in anticipation of death, no veins, groin blown out, the only question was, When? Ambulances, hospitals, doctors, for whom I was just a wasted life, brought in to be written off. In the end, the scariest verdict that I ever heard in my life: «Amputation needed... We won't do it... He won't live anyhow...» But I refused, I waved my hand, whatever is coming let it be. But there were still those who believed — you can do it, son!

After that I was in a fog. Then, unexpectedly, my good friend shows up, a guy with whom I repeatedly used drugs (now we serve together). He said simple words to me: there is a certain Jesus who died that you may live. He is capable of helping, but for this I would need to go into a rehabilitation center. I did not understand who this strange Jesus was, who died for me. I couldn't comprehend what kind of center this was, but there was hope, which I reached out and grabbed.

In the Bible it says:

**«For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence»** (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

Teachers at school drew their own conclusions about my life, the police made theirs, doctors pronounced their verdict, society, too — but there is One who controls them all, the One who was waiting for me and today waits for you with these words — you can do it, son! Indeed, to this day His voice proclaims:

**«Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light»** (Matthew 11:28-30).

Dear friend, trust in God and he will show you the way. Get off your «rake» and go through life with your head held high, for you are a man!

**P.S.** And now it is morning, rays from the sun shine through with their golden light, bringing a new day. The city of Tyumen slowly wakes up. One can hear the singing of the birds, full of joy. Here and there windows are lighting up. Life arises. In just a couple of hours the children will wake up, and our house will become a «big commotion». And it's just a little sad to think that somewhere there are people who are still deceived in their own mind and won't know any of this, or most importantly — the One who created it all.

## THE TESTIMONY OF A BORN-AGAIN WOMAN

# GOD IS ALWAYS ON TIME!

Greetings, editors of «Prisoner»! I am thankful to God for you and all those who take part in creating the newspaper. You have probably heard the phrase: «God is always on time». That's what happened to me. One sister in Christ gave me your newspaper and God uplifted my soul through the testimonies of those who are serving life sentences. Let me tell you a little bit about myself.

My name is Natasha, and I am 31 years old. I was born and grew up in a good family. My respectable parents worked a lot to give us children everything we needed. That's probably what led me to drugs. When I was only 12, I tried drugs, took them on weekends. When I saw «old addicts» with sores on their skin, I told myself that I had everything under control, that I and «the system» are incompatible. This continued for a long time.

In 2001, I met a person (my significant other), and as a result I stopped using drugs. I still occasionally used marijuana, but not too much, because my boyfriend, who later became my husband, didn't use any drugs, only moderate amounts of alcohol. It seemed like a happy life! But there was something ill-fated — we didn't have children. That is why my husband became an alcohol addict and I turned to drugs. Of course, our family collapsed in a short time. I began to abuse drugs but I could not fill the emptiness in my heart.

I want to add that I was born in Vinnitskaya Oblast, in the city of Kazatin. All of my relatives from father's side — parents, brothers and sisters — were Christians. In the past, they used to gather for worship in an attic, because in Soviet times people who confessed Jesus as their Savior were persecuted. But my father left the Lord and began to work for the Soviets. That affected us as his children because he gave up blessings from God, although he really wanted us to grow up to be respectable people.

In Vinnitsa there is a church called «Church of the Nazarene», pastored by Roman Lebedev. God bless him and his family! When he was himself still in a rehabilitation center in Kazan, my friends and I visited this church. We came there in winter times to drink tea with cookies. There was heat and comfort, and we liked to talk with other young people. I didn't understand then that the word of God was being planted in my heart. God was near me from my childhood, and I think also the prayers of my relatives had great effect.

I turned 25. And I was a drug addict, an alcoholic, and everything was destroyed. I think people who read this newspaper know what I am talking about. At that time I met some people that I used to do drugs with. To my surprise, they invited me to the church. I went with them and saw there people who had been total addicts before, singing with everyone else, and their eyes sparkled with life. I saw there one more person — the pastor of a Kazan church named «The House of Freedom». Although in the past we had done drugs together, there he was, walking with his two daughters, and his life had been changed completely.

When they started to sing «I have a God Who can do everything, everywhere, and at any time», something happened inside me. I cried a lot. I realized that I don't want to live that life anymore. Next morning I went to the rehabilitation center for women (it's in Vinnitskaya Oblast, and is called «Father's House»). God held me in His hands, He showed me that there is only a future with Him, and that I have hope. I was flying like a bird. But after some time I decided that I can manage myself and I left the center. Two weeks later I started to drink, smoke, and use drugs again. I visited my ex-husband, thinking that we could restore our family, but he already had his own life.

I returned to the rehabilitation center. There I found out that I was going to have a baby, but because of my stubbornness I left again. But a person cannot do anything without God, because a person who once has met with God will not be able to live without Him. Two months later, I found out that I have HIV. All this time I had an order to not leave the town, there were court hearings to attend. I prayed that my baby, that God was giving me, was healthy. And, thank the Lord, I gave birth to a healthy girl — Anastasia! All that time I felt the support of my brothers and sisters. I thank God for all the good people I met in my life. Despite all my wrong actions, good people helped me, which is possible only with Lord!

When my daughter was 1 year and 2 months old, after five and a half years of court hearings, I was sentenced to 8 years in prison. My heart was broken, but I could not do anything. I blamed everyone except myself. I didn't understand why God gave me a baby I could not raise. In a word, it was very hard for me. But I will always thank God for my close friends who prayed and cared about me, reminding me that God loves me very much. The appeals court decreased my term to 2 years and 10 months. God is great!

After I came to prison, I started to look for a church. I was placed in a group where I found a lot of sisters. God is everywhere, glory to Him. It is really horrible to live in such a place without hope, joy and love. But I have them. Our sinful flesh always infects our inner person, and even when we are perishing we cannot stop sinning. But the blood of Jesus can save us all. God doesn't care who we are, how old are we, whether we are convicts or free people, sick or healthy — He loves. Sadly, His paths are not always clear to us. I thank God that I am here, and that I have a future and hope. I know for sure that only in Him I am free and good!

One more time I want to give thanks to God for this newspaper. We are praying for you to our Lord Jesus Christ. God is great and his works are great! Let God strengthen you, and give you more strength and patience! Be blessed!

Наталья ПИЛИПЮК-МИХОВА,  
ул. Димитрова, 214, ДИК-34, 7/70,  
г. Днепродзержинск,  
Днепропетровская обл., Украина, 51912.

For the first time, in the Christmas and New Year's edition of our newspaper, we print a word from legendary Murph the Surf. This name became known to a lot of readers in the former Soviet Union in the 1990s through his book «Jewels for the Journey». This book changed thousands of souls, who repented and came to Jesus Christ.

The real name of Murph the Surf is **Jack Roland Murphy**. Jack Murph the Surf was a surfing champion, a musician, an artist, and also a convicted thief and murderer. He was sentenced to life in prison. After serving 21 years of his term in New York and Florida prisons, he

was released from prison. He came to God and that changed his life. For more than 20 years, brother Jack Roland Murphy has been working with inmates in the field of prison ministry. He is one of the most famous ministers in this field.

His open story, which he described in his book, changed a lot of people's lives. In the next edition of our newspaper we will present the story of Jack's life for those who didn't have the chance to read his book. And now through our newspaper, our famous and legendary brother, Jack Murphy, speaks to all brothers and sisters who read it.

From the Editor.

## «IF THE SON THEREFORE SHALL MAKE YOU FREE, YE SHALL BE FREE INDEED»

JOHN 8:36

I greet all my brothers and sisters in Russian and Ukrainian prisons. My name is Jack Murphy. I am from the USA.

With love, I want to say Merry Christmas to you!

When I visited American prisons, I saw the joy in Christ that was in the hearts of a lot of convicts. I prayed and pray always that the blessings and the anointing from God would be in the lives and families of my brothers and sisters all around the world. The Bible says that if we receive Jesus into our heart, he will take us to the height of heaven.

I encourage you this Christmas to be especially God's men and women. Tell about Him to everyone and give Him glory. And the lives of people around you will change. May God abundantly bless you!

I want also to thank all my brothers and sisters in Russian and Ukrainian prisons for the great response to the book which I wrote and sent to your prisons through brother Sergey Taranenko.

Finally, I want to say that it is a great honor and blessing that a lot of you read it and shared its message with



others, and received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. And what happened in my life now happens in yours — we are all free in Christ. The Bible says: «If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed».

It's a great honor and blessing for me to be a part of this mission in the lives of

people in Russia, Ukraine, and other countries, where the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ are doing real miracles.

Jack MURPHY.

## CHRISTIAN NEWS

### Ohio city holds early Christmas for boy battling aggressive cancer

Christmas has come two months early for an Ohio boy whose community has rallied around him in his fight against an aggressive form of brain cancer, according to Fox News.

Devin Kohlman, 13, returned home from a Cincinnati hospital Sunday and was greeted by well-wishers at his home. He has been battling brain cancer for more than a year, and his family was told he may not survive beyond next month. Devin said that he wants to spend his last days at his home with friends and family, and hopes to live to see Christmas. The community answered his wish, throwing a celebration with hundreds decorating the city and filling the streets with Christmas spirit.

«We saw police cars and fire trucks, and people with flashlights» — said Alexis Kohlman, the boy's mother, to local news reporters after they returned from the hospital. The next day, hundreds of residents gathered outside Devin's home. They decorated trees with lights, placed inflatable

snowmen and released hundreds of balloons with best wishes for the boy.

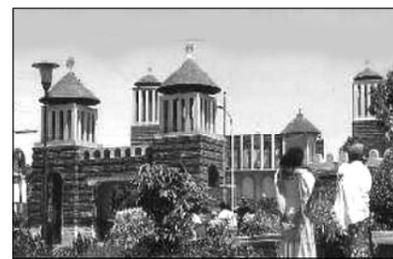
«We want to support the parents, to tell them they are not alone» — said the mayor of Port Clinton, Vincent Leone.

### 150 Christians arrested in Eritrea

Eritrean security forces recently raided yet another prayer meeting, arresting about 150 Christians in a suburb of Asmara, Maitemenay, the African nation's capital. The Christians — members of an underground fellowship — were arrested at their prayer service, according to *asmarino.com*

This group is a part of a network of underground churches that sprang up in Eritrea after 2002, when the government banned all religious groups.

There is no exact information where in Maitemenay those arrested are being held. Friends and family assume that they are in the 4th police station in Edag-Hamus.



Source:  
Information  
Agency CNL-  
NEWS via Ria  
News.

Dear readers of «Prisoner» who are currently in custody! The editors want to inform you that among the large number of letters which the editorial office receives, some, unfortunately, contain plagiarism (plagiarism is the deliberate stealing of others' works of authorship of science or art, technical solutions or inventions). The fact of the matter is that every letter that arrives in our office goes through an editorial process, in which every letter is read from beginning to end. And it is not difficult to detect plagiarism in the text being read. Everyone has a different style of writing, and therefore it is enough to read just a few sentences belonging to the author to immediately see certain content which produces an uncomfortable feeling. It's one thing when a person quotes someone else's idea and specifies the name of the author. It's something

interest, I read the newspaper in one breath, so to speak. Every person has their own destiny. Someone leads an exemplary way of life, someone not quite. But life has its own way, everything drastically changes, and fate determines its own course, for example, ending up in jail. But the Lord through His love has given us a chance for salvation. He urged all of us to come to Him, and showed the true path by which we must follow. Thereby He united us. «How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together». And indeed it is that way. If you stumble, a true brother will certainly stretch his hand and help you up. This is love for one's neighbor, as stated in one of the main commandments: «Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself». God Himself speaks to us through his word, the Bible. In it you can find the answers to all situations in life: things you can, cannot, and must do according to the Word. Of course, the first time it is difficult to understand, but the more we read, we are enlightened by new concepts that we did not notice before. Indeed, it is an inexhaustible source

curses, anger, suffering and death are all the consequences of this first catastrophe. The greatest of all evils is the rejection of the knowledge of fallen man and his sinfulness.

The first step to spiritual recovery is to make the correct diagnosis and to recognize that we are hopelessly, spiritually sick with sin. Evil lives in every one of us. We are sinners, we are lost sinners.

The destroyer of human souls, the devil, brought man into sin and thought that a Just and Holy God would destroy the crown of His creation. But God is love. He has not abandoned us to the control of Satan and He did not leave us alone with our tragedy. God from eternity provided the plan of salvation. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, came into the human family, and became our brother, our Savior. He took upon himself our guilt. Our sins nailed Him to the cross. The crucified Christ is the proof of God's love for us. God paid the wages of sin, putting His sinless Son to death for the sins of the world.

# WARNING: PLAGIARISM!

«For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light» (Mark 4:22).

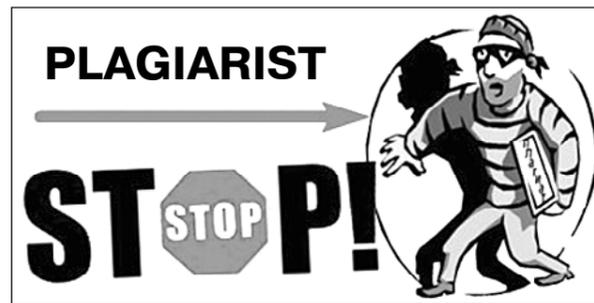
completely different and not Christian when a person puts his name on someone else's ideas. Today we publish one of these letters, without specifying the name of the person who sent this letter to us. We are not judges to judge this individual publicly. But we must, however, specify the exact source from where the content was taken. The thoughts of the author written in the letter are very good, but one cannot take credit for that work which does not really belong to him or her. We hope that the person who sent us this material will decide not to plagiarize anymore. We also turn to all the readers of «Prisoner» with a request to cite all excerpts from articles or poems with the real name of the author, or to refer to the source from which the quote is being taken. Let us be honest, first of all, not only to each other, but to Him, Who is our Truth and Righteousness.

**For clarification purposes**, the material in the letter was taken from a Christian journal named «Messenger of Truth», published in 1999 by the Union of Baptist Churches and printed in Moscow by a printshop named «Christian».

**Here is the author's letter published without editing:**

<<Negligence of one's salvation is foolish because there is no other salvation. «For there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved». Salvation is only in Christ and in no other.

Greetings, dear brothers and sisters! Peace to all of you and to your souls. I will be sincerely glad to find you all in good health, strength of faith and spirit. I hasten to inform you that I have received the latest issue of the newspaper «Prisoner», and thank you greatly. I also thank the Lord who gives you the opportunity to show me your consideration. With great



of knowledge. Of course, it is very difficult to understand it all; even a lifetime will not be enough.

«And many other things Jesus did, that if every one of them should be written, I think the world could not contain the books today». I understood four major truths. «In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. The earth was barren and empty, darkness was over the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters». The Bible begins with these words: God created the world beautiful and gave it to man. Who, breath taken, cannot enjoy the splendor of the sky? Whose soul is not breath taken by the beauty of the mountains, fragrant flower meadows, and vast menacing ocean? How majestic and unique was the primeval world! And the author of this ideal harmonious work is God. From His side, the Almighty has done everything for people to be happy.

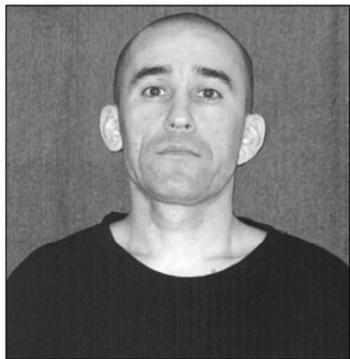
«For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God». All of the great disturbances occurring in the world are only an echo, only a ricochet of the disaster, which occurred early in the life of mankind. It is called the Fall of Man. This disaster was not extremely loud, but its destructive power was very high. Man neglected God's warning and His commandments, ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and became mortally ill. Since then, sin as leprosy, destroys the soul and spreads endlessly. Tears, blood, groans,

Completing the salvation of mankind from sin, Christ paved the way towards God and eternal life. «I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me». There are only two ways. One is a wide and broad path of unbelief and sin, the path leading around Calvary and leading to eternal darkness. There are many going by it. The other path is narrow. This is the path of repentance and reconciliation with God. It is a clear path with glorious goals and radiant joy. And few walk this path. But these few are saved and gain eternal life. A person must himself make a decision, to stay on the broad way, or follow the narrow path. He will be responsible for the consequences of his choice.

Receiving forgiveness from sins is paradise. The path to this happiness is through faith in Jesus Christ. No person was able to accomplish this, but a loving God did by sending his son Jesus Christ to suffer and die for our sins. Christ gives his righteousness, forgiving the remorseful, and in this righteousness we are accepted by God. I thank the Lord that I realized these four major truths. I sincerely wish you all health, love, joy, patience, strength and God's help in all your work. Grace, mercy and peace be with all of you in our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you. With sincere respect and prayer for you, your brother in Christ, Nicholas.>>

We ask all readers of «Prisoner» not to even consider judging this man. But let each aspiring author conclude that it is better to let everything be written simply, rather than beautifully but stolen. And let all your testimonies or sincere letters for publication correspond to your true image. For through the newspaper, «Prisoner», God calls us all to speak the truth to the world, not to look for ways to gain something for ourselves. If we really want to change this foolish world for the better, then let's, first of all, start with ourselves.

Editors of «Prisoner».



passing away in the summer of 2012, at the age of 57. If the Lord will give you the desire to publish this material, then let it be credited to Yuri Kudlaev.

<<In the book of Acts one can read about the local church in

property has no value, and the property of Christians for them is the same as property in the prison. Therefore, after conversion to Christianity, it is critical to learn to work with one's own hands and not live at the expense of others. **«Let him that stole steal no more, but**

common» in the context of our time means to live by the rules of a family, where everyone works to the best of their abilities and their work satisfies all of their personal needs. Initially, the local churches have to help, for the mercy and love of Christ, the released prisoners, who are

another verse states it this way, **«Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelth; and thy want as an armed man»** (Proverbs 24:33-34).

Let God be your benefactor

## WHAT ROLE DOES WORK PLAY IN THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE?

Greetings and God's peace to you, dear brothers and sisters! I thank my Heavenly Father for the spiritual food which He sends me through the newspaper «Prisoner»! This is in response to a request to write an article on the topic: «What role does work play in the life of a Christian?» Here is an extract from a book, «Christ Can Change Your Life», written by Yuri Kudlaev, my spiritual mentor (pastor of Evangelical Christians), which addresses the proposed theme.

Brother Yuri Kudlaev managed to publish this book for convicted prisoners before

Jerusalem, where all believers were in constant fellowship and had everything in common (Acts 2:42, 44-47).

«Everyone had everything in common». This was a time when the Lord's second coming was expected any day. Today, combining all property in the church is unjustified extremism. It may tempt Christians who do not have anything to live at the expense of others. This is especially true for those who became believers in prisons. Such people, before becoming Christians, always wanted to live at the expense of others. This led them to commit crimes. For that prisoner who has never built his own personal wealth, others'

**rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to the needy»** (Eph. 4:28).

This topic is very important because many believers who were converted in prison immediately, after their release, rush to «find a calling», or to serve in a ministry in order to obtain sponsors or other opportunities to avoid working with their own hands. They want to serve God at the expense of others, but first one needs to learn to serve God using his hands. The Church of God is not only the Church of love, but also the Church of order, justice and judgment.

«Everyone had everything in

their brothers and sisters. But only initially, because every Christian freed from prison must establish his or her finances with the help of God, so that no one should depend on others and become a burden.

Furthermore, God worked six days, creating all things, and He still continues to work. The Lord worked, completing the will of his Heavenly Father. The apostle Paul, despite his ministry, labored physically by making tents.

The Bible teaches that work is a blessing from the Creator. The Lord said through his servant, the apostle Paul: **«...he who does not want to work, neither should he eat»**, and

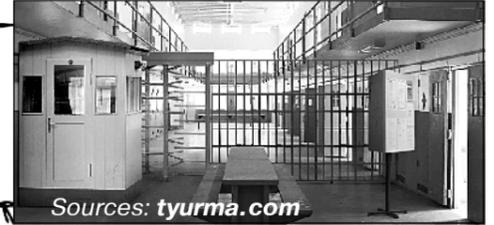
and let His faithful servants remember His covenant. May God give you all a heart to honor Him and do His will with all your heart and with a willing soul! May He open your hearts to His law and commandments, and grant you His peace! May the Lord hear your prayers, and be gracious to you, and not leave you in times of disaster!>>

(Excerpts from the book by Yuri Kudlaev).

With love in the Lord Jesus Christ to all of you, brother

**Богдан УЗЬНОВ,**  
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# PRISONS OF THE WORLD



Sources: tyurma.com

## The prison of Bucharest



The prison of Bucharest is one of the most famous prisons in the Balkans. In the 20th century, some of its prisoners were very famous persons, e.g. Marshal Ion Antonescu; General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, Nicolae Ceausescu; the famous Russian singer, Peter Leschenko; as well as thousands of other people whom the world does not know.

In 1940, Marshal Ion Antonescu was appointed head of the Romanian government. The country experienced a wave of political assassinations and terror. The supporters of the Marshal, the legionaries, created the so-called

«Iron Guard». They sneaked into the prisons where the members of the political opposition, police officers, and members of old government were held, and killed them with cruelty. In the prison of Bucharest, over a thousand prisoners whom the legionaries considered their enemies were shot.

These actions were supported by the political leaders of Nazi Germany. Hitler needed stability in Romania and so he supported Marshal Ion Antonescu. The troops of the 11th German Army were sent to Romania. Ion Antonescu declared himself the Führer of Romania and made an alliance with Nazi Germany. The marshal took advantage of the Romanian people's very strong anti-Soviet attitude to justify support for the German hostilities against the USSR under the following slogan, «A Sacred War for National Reunification!»

Romanian troops joined the German offensive on July 1, 1941, and later participated in the occupation of Moldova, Ukraine and the North Caucasus, where they committed many war crimes against civilians and Soviet prisoners-of-war. Romanian divisions were routed near Stalingrad.

On March 24, 1944, Soviet soldiers crossed into Romanian territory. On August 23, 1944, Antonescu was taken

to the palace of King Michael I and arrested. Antonescu was then handed over to the Soviet command and sent to the USSR.

After World War II ended, Antonescu was delivered to the Romanian Communist government and put in the prison of Bucharest. On May 17, 1946, Antonescu was sentenced to death as a war criminal and was shot in the prison.

Another noteworthy prisoner at Bucharest after the war was a famous singer, an immigrant named Peter Leschenko. In the 1930s, he lived in Romania. He opened a restaurant in Odessa during World War II. The city was occupied by Romanian troops. Opening the restaurant was regarded as collaboration with the occupiers and treason. After the war ended, Peter Leschenko was arrested and sent for some period of time to the prison of Bucharest. On July 16, 1954, he was shot. However, there is conflicting information about his death: some documents say that he died in the prison's hospital in Tyrgu-Okna, due to the poor conditions in the prison.

Another one of the inhabitants of the sinister dungeons of the prison of Bucharest was Nicolae Ceausescu, the last leader of socialist Romania. When

he worked in the communist underground, he was arrested many times and held in the prison of Bucharest. However, some researchers believe that Ceausescu was a minor felon and decided to become a communist in order to build a successful career.

Ceausescu became the head of Romania in 1965. As soon as he became the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, he focused on anti-Soviet politics. With no permission given from the USSR, he recognized the Federal Republic of Germany. He did not support the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and established very close ties with Albania and China as well as with the countries of the Euro-zone. In 1974, Ceausescu proclaimed himself president for life and set up a regime of personal dictatorship in the state.

Ceausescu ruled Romania for more than 20 years. He was ousted in a coup in 1989. He tried to flee from the country; however, he and his wife were caught and arrested in Targoviste. A hastily-organized military tribunal sentenced the Ceausescus to death and confiscation of all property. On December 25, 1989, the meeting of the military tribunal was shown on Romanian television. Right after that, the Ceausescus were shot on the territory of the military unit.

## European «Siberia»

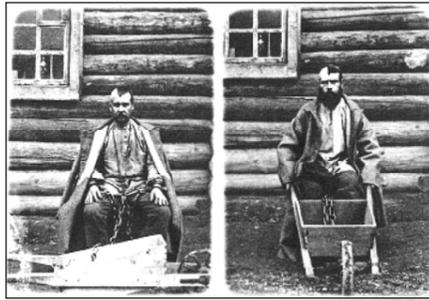
One and a half century ago the Volga region became a place for exiled Russians. The Secretary of the Ministry of Interior Affairs of the Russian Empire on November 20th, 1868, identified some regions of European Russia where courts could send Russians who were sentenced to live in exile. Some of the regions were provinces of the Middle Volga. In the middle of the 1860s, persons who had served their prison sentences for various crimes but were deemed politically unreliable were exiled to Samara and Saratov provinces. These

people were sent to four counties: Buguruslanskiy, Buzulukskiy, Nikolayevskiy and Novouzenskiy.

In 1870, there were 9,656 people (male and female) in all the prisons of Samara province, of which 5,325 were exiles. The exiles took up a lot of space in the district prisons, so the provincial administration renewed the practice of contracting for prison space in district cities.

There were 9 prisons by 1873.

There were two prisons each in Samara and Buguruslan, and one in every other district. The prisoners



were separated into two groups: temporary (those who were under investigation) and permanent (those who had already been sentenced). In Samara and Buguruslan, there were special prison campuses for those people who were serving their sentences. And when there were many new arrestees coming in, the administration would

have to direct them either to Samara county prison or to Buguruslan county prison. Usually prisoners coming from Stavropol, Nikolaevsk and Novouzensk would be directed into Samara county prison, and prisoners from Bugulma and Buzuluk would be sent to Buguruslan county prison.

After May 14, 1896, when the great amnesty was announced in Russia upon the inauguration of Tsar Nicholas II, the number of prisoners in the Volga region dropped to 729 people. Then, finally, the prison administration was able to provide services to prisoners in keeping with the law, that is, maintain appropriate sanitary conditions and separate the prisoners based on the severity of crimes committed.

## The prison of Lvov



Anyone who has ever visited Lvov, no doubt, was amazed by the beauty of the city. There are many brilliant architectural ensembles, ancient palaces, monuments, sculptures, and monasteries. Even the prisons of Lvov were built in perfect style and looked like museums from the outside. Sadly, the great appearance of the buildings was hiding the ugly history of the prisons.

In the end of the 19th century, Lvov was a part of Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1889 and 1890, a house of the

Austro-Hungarian gendarmerie was built on the corner of the streets of Leona Sapiehy and Copernicus. However, the building was used as a prison only in the Polish period starting in 1919. At that time, Poland regained its independence and added the territories of West Ukraine to the state. In 1920, another campus of the prison was built on Lontsky street, and the complex got its name in the Polish tradition — the Lontsky St. Prison.

This was the prison where in 1936 the famous trial of Lvov took place, in which the following people were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment: the Ukrainian nationalists Stepan Bandera, Yaroslav Stezko, Nickolay Lebed and others of their party. They served their first years of imprisonment here, in the central prison of Lvov.

After the defeat of Poland in 1939, the territories of West Ukraine were annexed to the USSR. Lontsky St. Prison was now under the control of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR. Many Poles, including high-ranking officials of the gendarmerie, police officers, and army officers, were imprisoned in it.

The majority of the prisoners in the Lvov prison before World War II were Poles, Ukrainian nationalists, anti-

Soviets, and felons. After Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the officers of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR shot hundreds of the prisoners. According to archives published in the 1990s, 924 people were shot and 615 people were released. Only minor felons were pardoned and released.

The shooting of these political prisoners was used by the Nazis as propaganda to promote anti-Semitism and pogroms. Several dozen Jews were taken to the prison of Lvov and forced to dig out dead bodies using their bare hands. Then they were shot on the spot. From 1941 to 1944, the building on Lontsky was the Gestapo investigative prison and a house for the punitive Einsatzgruppen.

When the Soviet army liberated Lvov in the spring of 1944, the prison on Lontsky was brought under the control of the Soviet Ministry of State Security. As is well-known, in the post-war period in Western Ukraine there was a fierce struggle against Ukrainian nationalists. Many units of Bandera's army were active in Western Ukraine with help of underground fighters in the cities. This is why the Ministry of State Security of the USSR decided to use the prison on Lontsky for Ukrainian nationalists and other political prisoners only; not very

far away another prison was built for felons and run by the police.

The new prison was located in a building that had been an Old Roman Catholic monastery of the female Order of Saint Bridget (Bridgettine Order). This is why people named the prison «Brygidki». Later the campus became the main prison of Lvov. It was the place where death sentences for felons assigned by the county court were carried out until the end of the 1980s.

The prison in Lvov had a very poor reputation among prisoners. First of all, the prisoners did not observe the laws of thieves, and chaos reigned there. One of the reasons was that in the 1940s, the so-called Polish thieves — professional felons from Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia — refused to recognize the authority of Russian thieves and started a brutal fight with them. Over time, the conflicts would get smoothed out; however, its special place among Western Ukrainian prisons remained. Secondly, the administration of the prison in Lvov would always strictly control the prison and would not show the prisoners even the slightest leniency.

In 2009, the Lontsky St. Prison was closed and turned into a museum. The creators of the museum were the Security Service of Ukraine and the National Memorial Center.

### 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!

**Ecc. 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.

Work contributes to the overall development of the whole person. Physical labor strengthens muscles, coordination of movement and strengthens the cardiovascular system. Creative tasks aid brain development. People who stop performing physical labor lose muscle

## A WORD OF A PASTOR

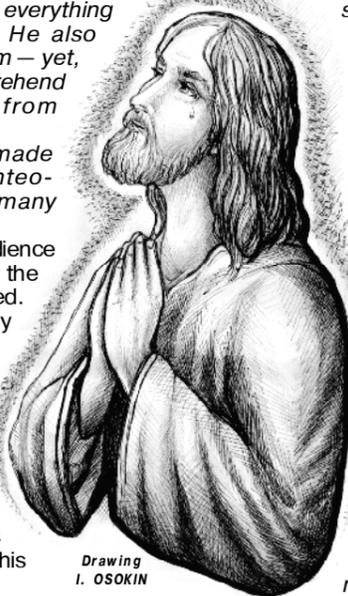


they received fulfillment through labor.

**Ecc. 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.

**Ecc. 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.



Drawing  
I. OSOKIN

**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 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.

**Mat. 10:10** ...the laborer is worthy of his food.

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

# The Christian Attitude Towards Work

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

**Ecc. 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, did you feel 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 IS THE RESULT OF THE FALL

The first humans were in harmony with God and one another. They had peace in their hearts and pure minds, and as a result

**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 is 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, by 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 a life-saving tool for humans...

### POSITIVE INFLUENCES OF LABOR ON MAN

#### 1. Promotes humility.

A proverb says: «Idleness is the devil's workshop». 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.

#### 4. Is a means of serving people and the Lord.

It is harder to find a better means to prove one's love towards his neighbor than to see 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.

**Ecc. 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.

**5. Helps prepare the man for eternity.**  
The Bible is full of good promises for faithful and conscientious workers.

**Mat. 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:** 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 one's 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 serving God and people. This scripture text can be attributed to both 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 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, bearing 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 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, the majority of suicides stem from the person's lack of will to work on himself in order to change. Suicide is a sin because before God it makes no difference whose life you took, someone else's or your own. Persons who commit suicide reject the means which lead to happiness, and with it their only chance to obtain 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» (Ecc. 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 is it 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 your 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).

Aleksander BORISENKO.

## We are seeking fellowship with Christians

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## ATTENTION!

Dear Readers, «Prisoner» is currently published in two languages, Russian and English, and printed in both the Ukraine and the USA. This newspaper is published and distributed exclusively from voluntary financial contributions. Those who wish to offer their «widow's mite» in support of «Prisoner» will find details on the last page of each issue. For American Christians who wish to support «Prisoner» and the prison ministry, we have added a tear-off card to indicate the amount of your financial assistance and for which specific need it is designated. May God bless you!

Основное направление миссии «Надежда на Свободу» – это работа с заключенными в тюрьмах.

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

Надежда на Свободу  
Hope of Freedom



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

Сказать узникам: «выходите», и тем, которые во тьме: «покажитесь...» (Ис. 49:9).

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We are now a federally-recognized 501(c)3 organization, so you can deduct your donations to us from your taxes!

## A NOTE TO PARENTS

### Three widespread mistakes of parents whose children later end up in prison

#### 1. Absence of gratefulness to God.

Often it is in answer to the prayers of parents for their disobedient children that God changes the circumstances surrounding their children. One ends up in the hospital, another in prison. In either case there is a change in circumstances, isolation from questionable friends, and an abundance of time for thought that have the potential to have a beneficial effect on them. This is something for which to thank God, since He has begun to answer, but most importantly continue to pray that the Holy Spirit would act in the hearts of those children and bring them to the recognition and necessity of a complete change of direction in life.

#### 2. Looking to man for help.

A widespread reaction of parents not completely dedicated to God is to seek help from people in difficult situations. Often they think that if they don't try every door, then it is as if they are signing a death sentence for their child. The energy that they could pour into earnest prayer to God, Who is powerful to do much more than all the lawyers in the world together, they spend in search of help from people, and more often than not they are left in disgrace.

#### 3. They spend money in vain.

Money that is not consecrated to God will be snatched away by Satan. Before parents have a chance to give it up voluntarily, Satan works on their minds, sending them all sorts of panicky thoughts such as, «Your son will die in prison (although more often the opposite happens and he gets saved), but all you are worried about is the money. Hire the best lawyer».

Often, to parents who have strayed from the path of faith, the best lawyer seems to be the one that takes the most money for his services. As a result such parents themselves end up in debt, with broken hearts and without the desired result. And even if they succeed in getting their unrepentant children out of trouble, then often the next time those children end up in a much worse situation. Would it not be better to send them a Bible and point them to the Lord Himself?

May God help parents get through this difficult period and understand how they need to act in relation to their children who have ended up in prison, so as not to interfere with His saving them.

**A. BORISENKO.**  
Worker in the ministry  
«Hope of Freedom».

## Dear readers of «Prisoner»!

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

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

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

## PRISONER

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