

How God builds our lives?

One of the many Christians...

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This book is dedicated to
anyone who will read it

INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ is the foundation of your life and the real person you believe in, it means that the God is building something in your life.

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

This scripture is about the quality of a new life and the divine nature that every Christian has. The Lord has prepared a glorious project for your new life and wants to build a house that is not destroyed by any wind, storm, circumstances or dangers. He builds patiently and consistently, following the project that He openly presented to all men in the Gospel — this is **Christ in YOU**. This divine construction begins with the laying of foundations and ends with a glorious and eternal house that the Lord builds for everyone who trusts in Him. The Lord desires to complete this building, so that at the end of our lives on this earth, we may exclaim with certainty, like the apostle Paul:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

At the beginning of the journey of faith, when we accept Jesus into our hearts, God shows us wonderful promises and rewards us with glorious prophecies about the wonderful life He begins to build in us. When we look at the glorious and incredibly

beautiful project of a new life, which He is about to build, we think how it is possible to build it, especially when, at first, we see only an empty field, as if, a white sheet of paper in which a wonderful "masterpiece" must appear. However, if you allow the builder to act consistently according to His design, the glorious structure will certainly be completed. All it takes is not move away your eyes from God's project (Christ in you) and let the Holy Spirit fulfil it.

But why are the lives of some Christians seem like the ruined houses or abandoned constructions, where you can only see disappointment in God, disbelief, routine, boredom, apathy, criticism, reproaches, murmurs and endless questions: "*Why is nothing happening and changing in my life, why is there no power and miracles of God, why is my life no different from a non-believer, despite the fact that I have been a Christian for ten or twenty years, why do I not see the reality and help from God, despite the fact that I do good deeds, attend church and do not commit great sins, why is my Christian life limited to the memories about the joyful beginning of faith, when I experienced His goodness, had so much hope and faith, and rejoiced, looking at that wonderful project that God offered me - where all this disappeared?*" Why do some Christians, after glorious experiences and the beginning of a wonderful path of faith, stop and spend their time wandering aimlessly and walking in a circle around an abandoned construction site, where you can see only the ruins of once-built activities and good deeds dedicated to God?

One of the main reasons for the unsuccessful construction or the collapse of an already half - constructed house, is incorrectly placed and insufficiently deep foundation of the house. Oddly enough, but very often at the beginning of our faith we ignore

the time when the Holy Spirit lays in our hearts the fundamental truths of the faith, teaches spiritual alphabet and reveals the most important and simple truths of faith, without which it is impossible to build the stable Christian life.

Who keeps the above-ground part of the building? It's the foundation. The taller and larger the structure, the stronger and deeper its foundation should be. It is a pity, but often, a burning and sincere Christian, at the beginning of the faith, begins to build his life, laying the foundations from the signs of God, miracles, good deeds, experiences, human wisdom, healings, or the search for the voice of God without laying the foundation of Christian life. Because of this, the spiritual growth of the Christian stops or, having grown for some time, unexpectedly collapses.

The apostle Paul writes in his epistle to the Hebrews that, despite the long path of faith, divine construction in their lives has stopped. The reason for this is incorrectly placed foundation of the word of God. Therefore, regardless of how long you believe or how much you work for God, if there are holes in the foundation of your life, then this construction cannot be successful.

*In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the **elementary truths of God's word** all over again. You need milk, not solid food! (Hebrews 5:12)*

In a letter to the Hebrews, we see that Christians in this church for a long time built a house of faith, but without results. It constantly collapsed, because there was lacking the most important and solid part of the house - a fair and solid

foundation. Have you not watched a Christian whose life does not change, despite great efforts, good deeds, attendance of the church and sincere desires? Sometimes it seems that something is already happening in the life of such a Christian, that for one month already his mood is good, he is full of hope and faith, but when the winds and storms come, again - everything disappears somewhere. Such construction and collapse take place, as an ongoing process, from one Monday to the next, from the beginning of one year to the next, from one firm decision "I will not do it again" to the routine, failure and collapse. Such Christian plunges into the endless cycle of building and collapsing, efforts and disappointments, and does not understand that the only reason for such an endless cycle is the lack of basic bricks in the foundation of the structure.

Such repetitive collapse indicates that the problem is not with the visible above-ground part of the building, i.e. with works and activities for God, but with foundation, that lacks the alphabet of faith and the revelation of the essential truths of God's word. After many collapses, the Christian becomes disappointed in God and begins to think that the reality of Christ's life is not for him, but only for the special servants chosen by God. He accepts the "normal", grey and boring Christian life. In the hearts of some, only an inexplicable emptiness and anticipation of some kind of change remain, as if something should happen on its own. However, all is needed, is to lay a solid foundation with the help of the Holy Spirit.

If your life is like endless construction, return to the fundamental truths of faith, regardless of how stupid this action may seem in the eyes of other people. The Holy Spirit will be waiting for you as long as necessary to lay in your life the unshakable foundation on the rock that is Jesus Christ.

The larger the structure, the deeper the foundation should be. The preparation of the foundation of a skyscraper takes more time than the construction of the visible above-ground part. So, it is the same in the life of Christian. The Holy Spirit leads in such a way that at the beginning of our path of faith He devotes a lot of time to the revelation and teaching of fundamental truths. However, very often a young and sincere Christian ignores this time and falls into the whirlwind of deeds and activities for God. He becomes a busy for God, while the Holy Spirit encourages him to sit at the feet of Jesus and drink His word, so that the revelation of the fundamental truth can be established in his heart.

Laying the foundation is an unattractive process, because you do not see the most pleasant (visible) part of the structure, i.e. your works and activities for God. And they are so desired, and, especially, at first. Therefore, very often, having laid "any foundation", you can rush to work for God, thinking - *"ah, it will be good and so..., God sees everything and knows that I will be doing something for Him, there is no time to mess with the foundation, the world is perishing, and I need to save others..."*. At first, such solution may seem attractive, since you can see the rapidly rising above-ground part of the building. Those around you also admire you, wondering how you grow so rapidly in such a short time. But those works are often built on weak foundation. As time passes, the foundation does not withstand the increasing burden of deeds and activities, and, suddenly, one day there comes a collapse: you not only want any more to serve God, but you become a frustrated, murmuring, tired and entangled by the worries and routine of the world.

It often happens that a Christian at the beginning of the faith, instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal and lay in his heart

the foundations of God's word, devotes all his time to activities for God. Such Christian, perhaps, even for several years, can zealously serve God and rejoice in the results of visible activity, but after a longer period, he can become disillusioned and embarrassed person, remembering with an ironic smile and nostalgia those years of intense activity, and holding the Lord as a spare tire in a car that, if necessary (illness, misfortune or other problem), could solve an extreme life situation. Why does this happen with some burning Christians? The reason for this - the foundation of the Christian life under construction was too weak and did not withstand the increasing weight of the above-ground part.

The devil is perfectly capable of taking advantage of such occasions when Christian builds a house without foundation. Seeing that the Christian casually looks at the Holy Spirit's exhortation to drink the word of God, the devil allows him to be active for God's sake "until time." But when the time comes, he attacks such a house, and it collapses. The collapse of the house is so strong, affecting other Christians and unbelievers, who are amazed at this collapse: *"How could such a burning and sincere Christian plunge into depression, alcohol, and become an angry, murmuring, frustrated and filled with grudge and bitterness? Where is his God, why did it all happen?"*

In the Gospel, we can observe what were the priorities of Jesus' ministry and how He prepared His disciples so that the house of their new life would not collapse. Jesus' ministry on earth before His crucifixion consisted of three parts: (1) preaching the kingdom of heaven; (2) teaching; and (3) the practical part - the healing of the sick and the driving out demons. Surprisingly, Jesus devoted most of His ministry to the interpretation and teaching of the word of God. Why? Humanly speaking, it would

be much more effective if Jesus would spend more time for healing the sick, raising the dead and casting out demons. It's so useful and effective. But only in the eyes of man. The Lord knew that only the word of God could change a person's life and bring him to the cross, through which not only salvation, forgiveness of sins, redemption, but also divine life flows. Jesus knew that without filling the heart with the word of God, the expelled demons return, and the physical healing of the body could be lost.

“When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first.” (Luke 11:24-26)

Therefore, Jesus spent most of His time preaching and teaching the word of God, because it was important for Him to lay the foundations of faith of the disciples. Jesus was not worried that the visible part of the life of his disciples did not rise as rapidly as the Pharisees demanded by their reproaches. For a long time, the disciples of Jesus were lazy to pray, did not even think about fasting, did not understand the parables of Jesus. They were still with shortcomings of the character, often made mistakes and stumbled. While others admired the healings and didn't really bother themselves with understanding who Jesus was - whether He was a prophet or, after all, a man of God – the most important was that He heals. Jesus consistently led His disciples to the revelation that He is the Messiah and the Saviour of the world. Jesus placed in the hearts of the disciples the simple truths of

faith: salvation from sins, transfer from the power of darkness to the kingdom of heaven, love, following Jesus, and childish trust in Him. With His life, Jesus showed that, no matter how great storms rage in the life, if there is a sleeping Jesus in the boat, every disciple can be completely calm and safe.

The preaching of the message of the kingdom of God and healings attracted many. However, He spent most of His time with the disciples, explaining and teaching the word of God. That's why the disciples used to call Jesus a "teacher."

We see the same priorities of service in all the epistles of the apostles, which, in essence, are nothing more than the teaching of the word of God, explaining how to live with Christ inside, what changed since the believer accepted Jesus as the personal Savior, how to grow in the knowledge of God and live for Him. In the epistles of the apostles, we will not find a sermon explaining in detail how to heal the sick or cast out demons, how to perform miracles. It is so simple that the Holy Spirit did not "bother" to include this in the New Testament. These miracles accompany everyone who believes and preaches the Gospel. Signs and miracles are performed by the Holy Spirit, who needs a house built on a rock and not collapsing after the first rain or blow of wind. The Holy Spirit has no interest in pouring out and showing God's strength just once, but He wants us to walk in God's power consistently. The signs and miracles of God often do not appear only because the house is not yet ready, which after the first miracle, when the rain and winds come, collapses.

Jesus did not pay much attention to the teaching how to heal the sick or raise the dead. He, quite simply, gave this power to His disciples, who were taught the word of God. However, most of the time He patiently, simply and continuously interpreted the

secrets of the kingdom of God and laid the foundation of the God's word in the hearts of the disciples, so that later, when the Holy Spirit came down, the foundation of the word of God in the life of the apostles would withstand the weight of the above-ground part of the structure: persecutions, mistakes, difficulties, etc.

*Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he **began to teach them**. Jesus went back to the foothills. (Mark 2:13)*

As in previous times, so now in the church the Holy Spirit focuses on the service of the word of God, i.e. preaching and teaching. This is followed by manifestations of God's power, which confirm the message or teaching being preached.

What are these fundamental truths, or what does the Holy Spirit do when Jesus Christ is laid as the cornerstone of the house being built? Is it enough to know that God loves us, that Jesus Christ died for us, and now all that remains is to close the Bible and love and serve God? Many sincere Christians do just that. Full of love, they put the Bible aside as an unnecessary book, say "amen", and run do something for God. In the meantime, the Holy Spirit wants to begin the credible construction of the house of our glorious life. He always starts construction from the foundation.

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:10-11)

CHAPTER 1 THE PLAN OF SALVATION

What are the basic truths of faith mentioned in the epistles of the apostles? Were those truths only relevant in the days of the first church? The epistles of the apostles do not focus on teaching and explaining how to heal the sick, cast out demons, raise up the dead. Strangely enough, we will not find there a detailed teaching of how to hear the voice of God or how to be led by the Holy Spirit. Little is also written about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Why? Doesn't that matter? Does this mean that we do not need miracles, manifestations of the Holy Spirit or His guidance? Far from it! However, it seems that we miss something important, ignoring those truths and foundation of faith that the Holy Spirit emphasizes throughout the ages of Christianity.

The central theme of the New Testament is Jesus Christ as the Savior of men, who was sent by God. Through Jesus's sacrifice, His death and resurrection, God fulfilled the promise made in the Old Testament—to save man from sin and to give him eternal life. Therefore, in the epistles of the apostles, the Holy Spirit shows, explains and teaches how eternal life reaches you personally and what the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in your life really means. All the truths of faith revolve around the cornerstone - God' **s plan of the salvation, which is Jesus Christ.**

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

By revealing God's plan of salvation, the Holy Spirit opens up to us the riches of God's righteousness and grace that God pours to us through Jesus Christ. If we ignore the fundamental truths of faith and do not understand what, in fact, God gave through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, if this is only a symbolic meaning for us, then God's righteousness and grace will not work in our lives, without which the Christian life is possible only "on paper."

Oddly enough, but for many Christians, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is a symbolic meaning that works only once — when we accept Jesus into our hearts and repent. Many of us think that sacrifice of Jesus is needed only at the beginning of faith, as if it were some kind of beautiful act of God, which draws a person's attention and brings him to God and then becomes only a symbol of the Christian life. However, Jesus's sacrifice is the essence of the whole Gospel, the door and source of eternal life.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

However, why was it necessary for Jesus to die on the cross, why couldn't God otherwise save man if He is omnipotent? Why was Jesus's sacrifice necessary? Couldn't God, just, from a good heart, forgive us? It seems to us that if God is omnipotent, He can do anything and anytime. We ask such questions without understanding His character or having false imaginations about God.

Therefore, understanding God's plan of **salvation** is one of the cornerstone truths of faith around which the gifts of God's

righteousness and grace revolve. Without understanding God's prepared, foretold and accomplished plan of salvation, we will not understand God's character, and as a result, we will separate ourselves from God's power, righteousness and grace that flows through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is not surprising that even long-time believing Christians, because of their ignorance of the fundamental truths, often resent God, become disappointed in Him, murmur before Him, and do not experience the reality of God's character and power in their lives.

my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge...<>
(Hosea 4:6)

The lack of knowledge of fundamental truths makes the life of a Christian boring and limited to attending the church, good deeds and silent murmur: "*Where is this Biblically described God with real strength, signs, and miracles, where is the reality of Christ and His character in my life?*". The reason for such dissatisfaction is that the Christian does not know the character of God and has a distorted image of Him. It becomes like closed water tap, connected to a powerful water source. There is plenty of water, but it does not flow due to the status of the tap. If you allow the Holy Spirit to reconcile your heart with the original image of God, then the power and wisdom of God will begin to flow through the tap of your life. Therefore, in order to understand God's plan of salvation, you need to know what God is like, why does He do as His word says? Why is there no other way?

So, what is God like?

God is love. Many think that God created man only because He was bored. Others think that God lacked fame, therefore, in

order to diversify His long years of life (eternity), He decided to play and create man, so that another exhibit appeared in the collection of angels - a man who glorifies and praises the Creator. Such a picture of God is painted by many religions. Even among Christians, the image of a selfish and ambitious self-glory-seeking God prevails. Therefore, it is not surprising that when we see such picture of God, we do not understand His actions and flee from Him.

However, the Bible reveals to us what God really looks is. One of the main qualities of His character is love. God creates everything out of love. All His actions are motivated by love, i.e. the desire to share and give. Only through the glasses of love can you see God correctly and understand His works.

*Whoever does not love does not know God, because
God is love. (1 John 4:8)*

God did not lack anything even before the creation of man. He was, is, and will always be perfectly glorified. He has no shortage of glory. He does not feel inferior or tormented by the boredom. On the contrary, God is so happy, perfect and loving that, quite simply, He cannot but share Himself with others. God is not an instrument of love, He is love itself, and love cannot be silent — it shares and gives away.

However, if God is love and wants to share His happiness with others, why are there so many unhappy people around? Maybe God can't do everything? Such doubts overtake people who think that God is just a formless mass of love or a fog that dissipates from the slightest blow of wind. Therefore, very often religion portrays God as a weak "caregiver" who loves you, but

cannot help you with anything. However, God is **NOT JUST** love...

Is God just
love?



LOVE



God is omnipotent. The Bible reveals to us that God is omnipotent.



*And God said to him, “**I am God Almighty**; be fruitful and increase in number. 35:11)*

God is not an easy fog of love, but an all-capable, tremendous love power. Nothing is impossible for God. When you come to this point of knowledge of God, you, both are surprised and crushed. You are surprised to realize how loving and powerful God is. How good it is to know that He is such a loving person and capable to do of all things. But at the same time, you are crush, not understanding why there are so many wars, lies, violence in the world, why there are so many unhappy people around, where is that loving and omnipotent God?

If you think of God **ONLY** as love and power, you distort His image, and for this reason, you become offended. Many resent why wars, misfortunes, deaths of children, abuse, deception happen and even prevail in the world. After all, if God loves man and is omnipotent, then why does He, simply, not impose order and force sinners to change, repent, and live righteously? From the face of the earth in the address of God rises murmurs, offences, resentments, and anger: "*Why do you, such a loving and almighty God, not help us, do not crush evil, and impose peaceful order?*" Such resentments and questions indicate that a person does not know God. Do not take out the two qualities of God's character and limit Him by saying that He is **ONLY** love and **ONLY** omnipotent. It would be like if you imagined a person without legs, arms, eyes and ears. The biggest mistake is in the word "**ONLY**," which distorts the image of God and makes Him a formless mass of love and might. However, God is not only a love that can do everything.

Is God just a powerful love?



POWER	LOVE
	

God is righteous. The word of God also says that God is righteous. All His decisions and actions are based not only on love, but also on another characteristic – His righteousness.

The LORD is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. (Psalms 145:17)




God's love and power are inseparable from God's righteousness. All that God creates out of love is righteous in His eyes. God's righteousness goes before Him.

Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps. (Psalms 85:13)

God's righteousness directs His love and power only to what is righteous in His eyes. Therefore, God has nothing to do with injustice, wars, death, lies, etc. He is not the author of hunger, disease, poverty and misfortune. It is impossible for His love and power to go hand in hand with unrighteousness. It's not His character. But why doesn't God impose His righteousness and order on earth? He is, after all, loving, omnipotent and righteous. What else do you need to know about Him to answer this question?



Is God just righteous, almighty, and loving?

RIGHTEOUS- NESS	POWER	LOVE
		

God is a consuming fire. The Bible reveals to us that God is not only love, omnipotent and righteous, but He is also a consuming fire. This is perhaps one of the qualities of His character, which is the least talked about. However, it is an integral part of His being. The burning fire is not His robe, which He could set aside. It is part of God's character. Just as it is impossible to peel off a human skin and let a person walk without skin, so too is it impossible to separate God's fire from His being.

for our "God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29)

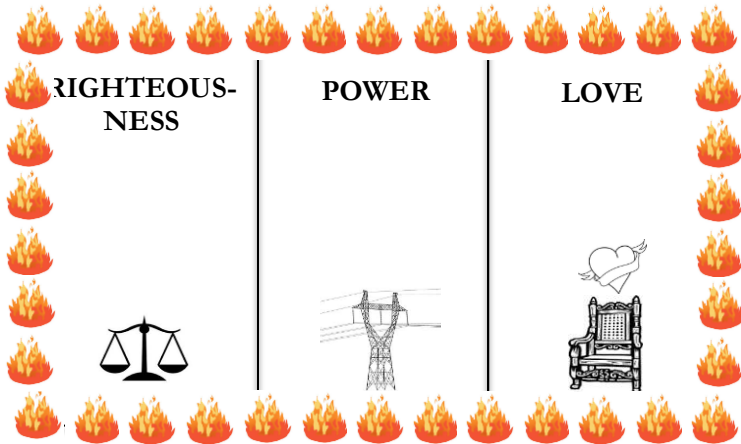
There is nothing wrong and bad in God. He is love, omnipotent and righteous. Neither a shadow nor a smallest dot of the evil or sin can enter His presence or being. God has no bad thoughts, emotions, motives or intentions. Just as human skin covers the whole body and protects it from filth, so too is God surrounded by a fiery belt of fire, which burns any evil, darkness and sin that could draw toward God.

God's fire always goes on front of Him. Anyone who wants to draw near to God should first experience the fire of God, which envelops His righteousness, power and love.

*But be assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across **ahead of you like a devouring fire.** He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD has promised you. (Deuteronomy 9:3)*

So, God is not just love, He is also a devouring fire. The coin has two sides. If there is no image on one site and the number

on other, it means that this coin is fake. You won't buy anything with it. The same is with God. If God is presented to you only, as love, or only as fire, this is a false image of Him. It is impossible to separate some qualities of His character and leave only those that we prefer. The true God is the whole undivided being.



So, why is Jesus Christ the only way for man to come to God? Without Jesus, why is it impossible for man to communicate with God and experience His power and love? In order to understand why God, who is love, almighty, righteous, and a consuming fire, cannot approach and commune with man without Jesus Christ, let's look what the man looks like?

What kind of person is man?

The Bible reveals to us that God created man in His own image. Eve and Adam were sinless, holy and similar in their character to God. They could walk alongside God and communicate. God's fire was not terrible for them, for there was nothing wrong

with them. Therefore, Eve and Adam had a fearless relationship with God.

*So God created mankind in his own image, **in the image of God** he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)*

However, the first people were not created as robots or "puppets". God has given them the most precious thing – free will, i.e. the right to choose and say “yes” or “no” to God. When Eve and Adam were tempted by the devil, they made a choice, rejecting the word of God, and accepting from the devil a lie through disobedience, i.e. the choice to live by sight, emotions and independent decisions. For this reason, sin entered the being of man.

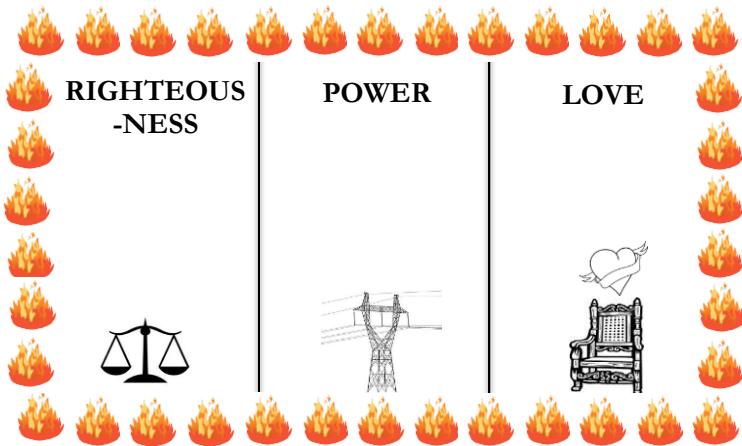
Man became sinful, so all the sons and daughters of Adam, born after his fall, began to wear no longer the image of God, but the image of Adam.

*When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, **in his own image**; and he named him Seth. (Genesis 5:3)*

Every person is born sinful. He is not sinful because he commits sins, but he commits sins because he is sinful. We all inherit from our parents a sinful nature that does not allow God to come closer and commune with us. Why? After all, God loves us and desires good for us?

*Surely I was **sinful at birth**, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)*

Of course, God loves everyone, but what do you think would happen to a man inside whom there is a sinful nature if a God approached him, who is not only love, omnipotent and righteous, but also a devouring fire? Before God embrace you with love, the fire would touch you and destroy any sin and evil, for no darkness can touch God. How can a God who desires to have fellowship with man, loves him and has tremendous power, would pour out His love and touch man, if there is a sinful nature in man which cannot stand against the fire? It's the same if you want to shake someone's hand without touching his skin. Regardless of how much you love and cherish that person, it's impossible. The first thing you would experience from God is to touch the devouring fire behind which lies God's righteousness, power and love. However, God's love, righteousness and power would not have time to touch you, for you would be already burned by the fire of God because of sin that dwells in you.



Before touching God's love, power and righteousness, a sinful person first touches God's fire.



In the Old Testament, we see that God could not approach man and only interacted with Him from afar, so that the fire would not touch and burn him. Many, reading the Old Testament, see God distant and alien, but do not understand that this points to the mercy of God and His wisdom that protects man from the fire of God until the plan of salvation is fulfilled.

So, how can God touch, save and communicate with man without burning him? In the eyes of man, this is impossible, but only not for God. God drew up and fulfilled an astonishing plan of salvation and paved the way for restoration of close relationship. So, what's that plan? This plan is the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

The Way to God — Jesus Christ

God sent His only Son (the Word) into the world, through whom He created everything in heaven and on earth. God clothed the word with a human body and gave Him a name — Jesus, who, translated from Hebrew means – Savior. The Jewish people were waiting for a Saviour to free them from political oppression and solve all their problems, but no one suspected that Jesus was sent not only to save people from the power of sin, but also to open the way to eternal life, which is hidden in God.

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes **to the Father** except through me. (*John 14:6*)

Jesus was born in a supernatural way, so He did not inherit from Adam the sinful nature. Jesus, as a man, wore not the image of Adam, but the image of the heavenly Father. Jesus lived a

perfect life on earth without committing any sin. During His ministry, He did good to the people by preaching, teaching, healing the sick and casting out demons. However, this was not the main purpose for which He was sent. Jesus consistently went to the purpose that the Father assigned to Him - to open the way for people to have relationship with God, thus giving them eternal life. The way could not be opened otherwise than through the death of Jesus, i.e. the sacrifice for the sin of men. The body was prepared for Jesus not to reign and live beautiful life on earth, but to be sacrificed and die on the cross. Jesus walked in the body that was intended for sacrifice.

Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:
“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a
body you prepared for me; (*Hebrews 10:5*)

God appointed the time and prepared a place, where the first meeting of man with God after the fall of Eve and Adam was scheduled. Since the days of the Garden of Eden, when Eve and Adam sinned through disobedience and a sinful nature entered their being, God has been hiding from men. He hid in order to protect them from coming into contact with Him, as with the consuming fire. Behind that fire God's righteousness, power and love were hidden, which at that time could not touch the human heart. Therefore, when we read the Old Testament, we very often see His love, righteousness and power, as if through a glass enclosed by a wall of wrath and fire.

After the fall of man God had postponed the meeting with man for a long time - the meeting that Eve and Adam had to experience after the first sin. This meeting had to be experienced by every person who carried the nature of Adam. However, because of God's mercy, this meeting was not prepared for us,

but for Jesus, and was scheduled in a special place – on Mount Golgotha. Jesus walked to this place carrying a cross with all the sins of mankind. He went to a special meeting with God — with God, who is a consuming fire. On the cross the meeting between God and sins of mankind took place. The result of this meeting was the death of Jesus. Someone had to be the first to "break through" the fire of God's wrath, thus experiencing death for others, so that the righteousness, power and love of God could reach those who would follow Jesus.

But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God **he might taste death for everyone.**
(Hebrews 2:9)

The mercy that, since the time of Adam and Eve, has covered up sin and delayed the fire and judgment of God, has reach the cross of Jesus. The mercy that "until the time", stood between the fire of God and the sinful nature of man, shouting "*Wait, it's not yet time, be merciful,*" was silent for Jesus, when He hung on the cross. There was no mercy left on the cross for Jesus. Jesus, the bearer of the sin of the world, met the fire of God, who punished and burned the sin.

The fire of God's wrath in Jesus was extinguished. The way has opened toward God's righteousness, grace, power and love. After Jesus's death, the veil in the temple torn, indicating that the way to the Holy of Holies, the place where the throne, power and righteousness of God's was hidden in Old Testament times, became free. The people of faith, who died during the time of Old Testament, could not come to the Father and waited for a

promise after death in a special place called the "place of Abraham."

In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.
(*Luke 16:23*)

However, after the death of Jesus, many of the dead people of faith of the Old Testament appeared to the living and went to the Father. The Holy Spirit showed that it is not through good deeds and behaviour that one can come to God, but only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The way to the Father became free, the price for sin was paid, the fire of God's wrath was quenched.

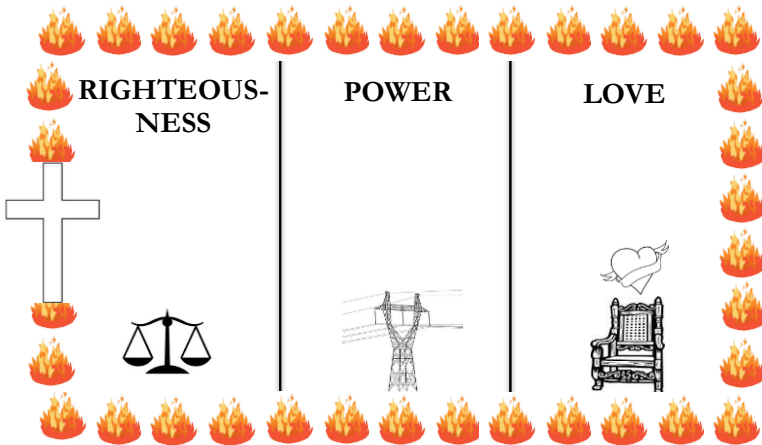
At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.
(*Matthew 27: 51-53*)

From this moment on, God in Jesus Christ can embrace everyone and pour out His gifts of righteousness, power and love without fear that the fire would burn a person. Now God can embrace man through the blood of Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus is stronger than fire, because it fulfils God's legitimate demand to punish and destroy the sin.

After Jesus's death on the cross, the time of New Testament began, when the Good News is preached to all people, saying that the way to God is free. Now, the Father can embrace you, give His righteousness, power, grace, and love. There is no

longer any obstacle. In Jesus Christ God can embrace you without wrath and the fire of judgment. In Jesus Christ, you can enter the heart and the whole being of God. Now God preaches reconciliation and peace to all people.

that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (*2 Corinthians 5:19*)



Everything is done, the way is free, but why does nothing happen automatically? If God has done everything, why, quite simply, do all people not rejoice in relationship with God in Jesus Christ, why is there still so much sin and its consequences on earth? If the sins of the whole world and of all times are paid for, and the way to God is free for all people, why is sin still

flourishing, and not everyone rejoices in salvation and communion with God?

God has done everything, but there is something that He will never do. God will never force man to choose. Man is created with the free will. No one can force him to choose life or death. God has done everything and suggests that everyone choose eternal life. Not wanting to force a person to choose eternal life, God in the simplicity of the message decided to save everyone who believes. God does not require any works other than a free decision made without manipulation. Man has a free will of choice, i.e. the freedom to say "no" or "yes" to God's work of salvation.

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased **through the foolishness of what was preached** to save those who believe. (*1 Corinthians 1:21*)

Thus, God's plan of salvation has been fulfilled. Through the preaching of the message of salvation, God's work is presented to the conscience of every human being. However, we can observe several different reactions to God's work of salvation. Man's reaction to the Good News determines - whether the plan of salvation will actually work in a person's life, or whether it will be just a theory, doctrine, fairy tale or new moral code.

The human reaction that God is waiting for

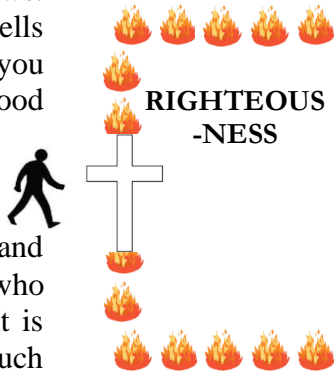
God's plan of salvation is preached as the Good News (Gospel), which is preached not by beautiful and powerful angels, but by ordinary people who have received and experienced the salvation. After Jesus' death and resurrection, this message

began to be preached by the disciples of Jesus, who were witnesses of His death and resurrection and were the first to believe and receive Jesus's sacrifice personally. Later, anyone who accepted this message and personally experienced God's forgiveness, righteousness, grace, and love began to share and preach about it to others. This message is not preached with human wisdom, convincing arguments, complex theories or reasoning. Nor is this message intended to satisfy human curiosity, enrich thinking, or become a "paper" doctrine of morality. This is very simple and incredibly Good News. It's news that God Himself has punished and destroyed sin in His Son's body, and now proclaims peace to all people, pouring out blessings to everyone, who believes and accepts this message. God has chosen a way of preaching, so as not to overshadow our free will with His glory making for us a free and equal opportunity to say "yes" or "no".

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power. We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. (*1 Corinthian 2:4-6*)

So, what are the most important steps that determine whether this incredibly Good News will actually work in a person's life? What are the steps the Lord is expecting from us, so that God's power, love, and righteousness **may actually come** in our lives?

Step one. For the life of God to come into human being, first of all, you need to hear this Good News. How can you accept a gift if no one tells you about it and shows it? How can you be saved if you do not hear the Good News that the way to God is free through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Very often, people expect to hear bad news from God, and religion presents Him as a God who demands something and is angry. It is not surprising that, having heard such "good news", people continue to flee and hide from God. However, the Gospel is, indeed, the Good News, proclaiming the time of God's favour, forgiveness, grace, and blessings to every person who accepts the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.



So, the first step is to HEAR about God's gift personally and to take the second step.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (*Romans 10-14*)

Step two. When you hear the Good News, you have the right to ACCEPT it. How to accept it? This wonderful message is received **by faith**, when everyone personally **recognizes the truth** that Jesus died not for His sins, but for yours. This recognition is called repentance, which actually brings forgiveness into our lives. The recognition of the truth also

opens the way to faith. Without the recognition of the truth, it is impossible to believe. Therefore, Jesus said that prostitutes enter the kingdom of heaven rather than the Pharisees. Why? The heart and the outer behaviour of prostitutes were the same (openly sinful). They could not hide their sin, because everything was clearly visible. They did not hide but recognized that their lives are "broken" by sin, and they themselves do not have the strength to get out of this pit. They really needed a Savior who wouldn't moralize them but rather give a helping hand. As they confessed the truth about themselves, they also received the gift of faith to know the truth about God's righteousness, kindness, and mercy in Jesus Christ.

Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. Then Jesus said to them, "Verily I say unto you, publicans and harlots go first to the kingdom of God. For John came to you on the path of righteousness, but you did not believe in him. (*Matthew 21-31-32*)

Since the time of Adam man used to hid everything and "wrap it in cotton wool", trying to cover the truth with tree leaves. A corrupted human nature names black as white, and good things as bad. Sin is often identified as weakness, error or the right to a lustful life. Pornography is presented as a tendency to admire the "art of the body", and theft - as borrowing an object that no one needs or as "the wisdom" to live. Sexual perversion and infidelity are called equal rights and democracy. During Jesus' life on earth, the sinful nature was also hidden in similar way by the most religious people the Pharisees, who covered everything with "good" deeds and external behaviour, thus not recognizing the truth about themselves. Therefore, Jesus said about them that

they resembled white-painted monuments, inside of which are full of rotten bones. Very often, the denial of truth, the fear and the shame of naming everything in the eyes of God by its own names, closes a person's way toward God's greatest gift – Jesus Christ, who has the riches of forgiveness, freedom, power and grace that can change life. Without the recognition of truth in the heart, the real faith cannot come.

Acknowledging the truth that Jesus died for you, opens the way for God's mercy and forgiveness to enter your heart. Every person who hears the Good News and acknowledges the truth, accepts God's forgiveness and peace into his heart. It becomes not a "paper" theory, but a real experience of God's forgiveness and supernatural assurance that ALL your sins are forgiven. As a result, God's goodness, favour, and peace fill your being.

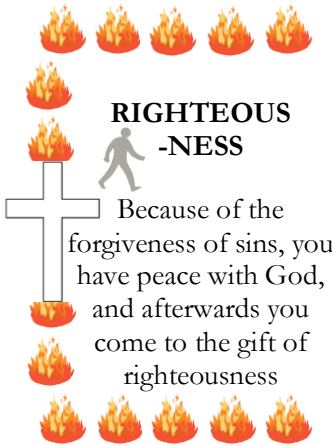
For I will forgive their wickedness and **will remember their sins no more.**" (*Hebrews 8:12*)

Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, man passes through the quenched fire of God and enters His being. From this moment on, life changes radically. It is impossible to explain and clarify it - you need to take it and taste it personally. Stories about food for a hungry person will not help anything if he, simply, does not taste the meal laid before his eyes.

The peace that the world dreams of and every person aspires to, is now available and received for free. The world seeks peace in an attempt to solve all problems and adjust external circumstances. Many think that if they would have a place to live, plenty of food to eat and clothes to wear, if the children would study well and do not get sick, if there would be no war and so on, then there would be peace. However, this deception

imprisons a person in constant stress and a cycle of procrastination, when he is waiting for something that is supposed to come tomorrow but never comes. The reason for this is that the peace does not equal to settled circumstances or solved problems. Peace is the person of Jesus Christ.

Peace I leave with you; my peace **I give you**. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (*John 14:27*)



Who can explain why the greatest sinner, having not done any good work, but having believed in the Good News and accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ personally, suddenly, begins to feel the supernatural peace in his conscience. His heart is no longer condemned, oppressed by any worries, fears, past and shame. The inexplicable, supernatural peace of God comes inside. It is not the peace of man, but God's, showing that God has nothing against you,

accepts and blesses you. It is because of the faith of the heart.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, **we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ, (*Romans 5:1*)

The third step. The peace of God, as a sign that all your sins are forgiven, leads you deeper into the being of God. Now everything that was inaccessible, impossible in Old Testament,

and hid behind a fiery wall, is given and freely available to you. By accepting God's peace as a gift, you are led toward another gift— God's **righteousness**. God's righteousness is not your good and righteous works. This is the **legal position** before God when He looks at you, as if you have never sinned. You are dressed in royal clothes that you did not sew or buy. These garments are the work of Jesus Christ, by which your punishment for sins is credited to Jesus, and Jesus' perfect life, deeds and character are given to you. From now on, God looks at you like to His son Jesus.

This righteousness **is given** through faith in Jesus Christ **to all who believe**. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, (*Romans 3:22*)

By accepting the gift of God's righteousness, you can lift your eyes to heaven without any remorse of conscience and look directly into God's face without any condemnation, shame, or fear. Before God you stand clean, your conscience is calm and without any reproach. It's an unearned position that God puts on anyone who accepts God's righteousness. It's not YOUR righteousness, but GOD's. There is no merit on your part for this gift. Everything belongs to God. It is His works and His results. From this moment on, **a courageous trust in** God, a reassurance in His power, kindness and protection comes into your heart.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace **with confidence**, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (*Hebrews 4:16*)

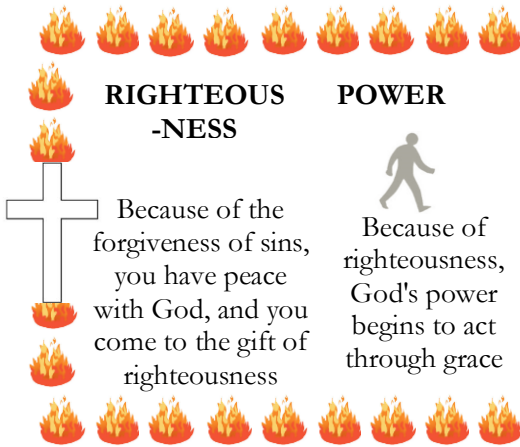
The fourth step. God's gifts do not end here. There's another wonderful thing behind God's righteousness. It is **the power of God** that acts as His **grace**. In this place, the supernatural power

of God begins to act in the life of a Christian. The grace of God gives you supernatural qualities, desires and abilities that are completely unrelated to the efforts and will of man. It is a supernatural, God's power that flows from His character. Even the greatest sinner or enslaved man, addicted to drugs, alcohol or having other addictions, having believed in the sacrifice of Jesus and accepting God's forgiveness – suddenly and effortlessly becomes free from drugs, intoxicants, fears or deadly diseases. What power could do that? It is God's power that flows on everyone who receives Jesus Christ into their hearts. No one can explain why no psychological, legal, moral, or personal efforts can set free a person from the power of sin, but the simple faith in Jesus Christ makes him instantly free from greatest sins, habits and changes his desires and attitudes.

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

What is this power that performs such miracles, puts in man's heart the desire and ability to forgive and love, the power that heals cancer and restores broken bones, that gives a desire to live for others and trust in God? In the Gospel we read about ordinary fishermen who turned into apostles of Christ, about Saul, who persecuted the church, but later became Paul - the apostle who proclaimed God's forgiveness, strength, and mercy? What this is the power that still today lifts the sick out of bed, restores relationships in families, sets free people from various harmful addictions and changes character? The apostle Paul wrote that by the grace of God, he became a new man. This power comes into the lives of every Christian who accepts God's gifts of forgiveness, peace, righteousness, and grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

But **by the grace of God** I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10)



Many imagine grace as a casual attitude of God to everything that happens in life or, as a kindly, sweet-talking person who indulges in various weaknesses. However, the Bible shows that the grace is not a gentle voice, but a real supernatural power

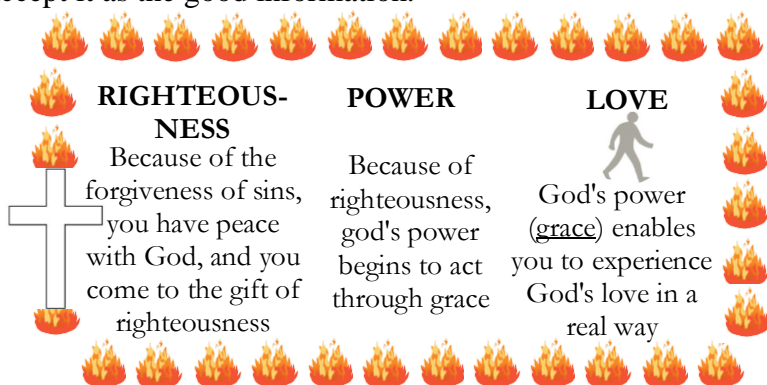
of God, which does what is impossible for man. This power descends upon God's righteousness, which is given and available to everyone through faith in Jesus Christ.

Step five. In this place the Christian approaches the boundless ocean, where the immeasurable riches of the knowledge of God's love lie ahead. Everyone who accepts God's forgiveness, peace, righteousness and power, also experiences the love of God. It becomes not a "paper" knowledge with the title "*God loves everyone*", but a personal experience and a supernatural faith in God who loves you personally. God's love from the theoretical part becomes practical only when we accept Jesus Christ. Then in our hearts there is no longer resentment and indifference with the title "*God loves everyone, even those who*

go to hell", but becomes a real mutual relationship based on love and trust. From this moment on, you notice God's love, care and protection every day. Your life is painted in the happiest colours, because you receive supernatural certainty and a testimony within you that God accepts and loves you. You see His love in everyday situations and in the smallest details. Where does all this come from? Why didn't you notice it before? Now you are behind the quenched wall of fire, where God's love is available to you. Previously, you knew about it only by reasoning, but now - you taste it personally.

... **and to know this love** that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (*Ephesians 3:19*)

No one doubts that God loves everyone, but why do many not see, experience and rejoice in the reality of His love? This is because God's love can only be experienced, understood and known beyond the quenched wall of fire through faith in Jesus's sacrifice and acceptance of God's forgiveness, peace, righteousness, and grace. God's riches, gifts and reality are only in Him. If a person stands outside, he can only theoretically accept it as the good information.



Approaching God not through Jesus Christ

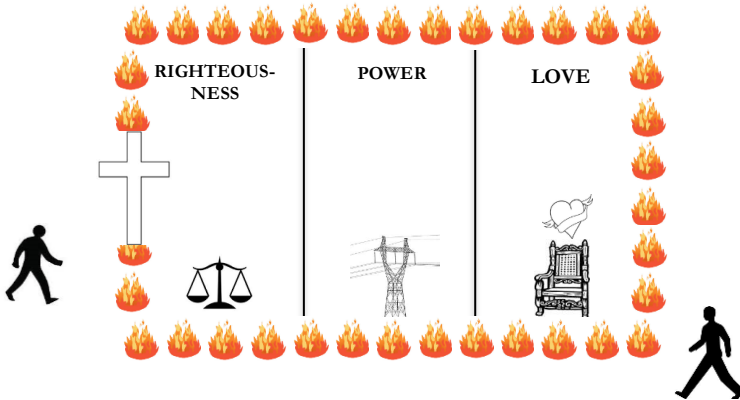
Many people think that it is possible to approach God in other ways, so very often you can hear excuses and reasoning: "*I have my God, this is MY way, everyone has his own way, everyone chooses what he likes.*" The most popular statement that distances man from God's gift is "*All ways lead to the same God.*" In this way, man tries under the clothes of various religions, theories and teachings as well as in the form of good deeds, to hide the true state of the heart and the need to know the living God.

Does God love someone who does not accept God's gift and the work He has done in Jesus Christ? Absolutely! God's love is as strong and clean as for those who accept Him or reject. However, what do you think will happen when a person with a sinful nature draws closer to God who loves him greatly, who is not only love, but also a consuming fire? Such a person will be able to touch only the fire of God and will experience the fire of judgment and wrath for the sin in him, while the love of God and all other gifts will not have time to reach him. There is only one way that Jesus broke through the wall of fire. This is the person Jesus Christ. Only in this place can a person freely come to God and His gift without being burnt by fire.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
(*John 14:6*)

Not a single representative of religion (Buddha, Muhammad, Confucius or others) died for your sins. God has not confirmed the life of any of them as the way to Him, raising them from the dead and receiving them into heaven. All of them fought with

their sins and weaknesses in the form of various works, meditations, but none of them overcome the sinful nature, and even more, did not help anyone to do it. No matter how beautiful and full of good deeds their lives may have been, none of them were raised from the dead, and none of them could die for you, for they themselves fought against their sins. Therefore, there is no other way to God except Jesus Christ, who alone died for your sins, whose only life and words were confirmed by God, when God raised Him from the dead. Only the tomb of the Jesus on earth is empty, indicating that Jesus Christ alone has passed through the wall of God's fire and has opened the way to the Father. This way is opened to anyone, who will believe in Jesus's sacrifice and accept eternal life as a gift.



Approaching God
through Jesus

Approaching God
in your own way

CHAPTER II DIFFERENT PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

However, why do many Christians not experience God's love in their lives, but are depressed, have sorrow or remain dependent on various habits, sins, and fears?

Why the life of some Christian's differs from others?

Why some do not know the peace of God, live with constant fear, shame or inferiority, as if God gave everything only symbolically? Why for some Christians these gifts are only "on paper", but do not actually work in their lives? Why sometimes we do not see God's power, grace and real victory over sin despite great efforts? If God did everything through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, why it doesn't work in the lives of all Christians?

There are several reasons, why the same gifts of God and the same sacrifice of Jesus Christ work in the lives of some and do not in others.

❖ **Christian stuck at the door**

Many Christians do not experience peace, freedom from sins, God's power and love simply because they spend their time walking AROUND the sacrifice of Jesus being afraid to accept forgiveness for all their sins. God's peace and all His gifts can come and be real only in Christian who has a clean conscience. The unclean, hiding and frightened conscience will never accept from God any gift or help. Therefore, it is very important to accept the forgiveness of sins by faith and to step through Jesus's sacrifice into the inner part of God with a clean conscience, rather than walking around and waiting, imprisoned by doubt, condemnation and fear.

The blood of Jesus was shed for the **sins of** the whole **world**, of all times and **of all** men. His blood is enough to wash and eliminate all sins, starting with the greatest and most terrible, ending with a small and insignificant. But the blood of Jesus will never work if a person does not accept this gift by faith. Without faith, the sacrifice of Jesus does not work.

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—**to be received by faith**. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished -
(*Romans 3:25*)

Some Christians do not believe in the word of God and are more likely to trust psychologists, conversations, discussions, human consolation and various "coincidences" that would confirm that God has forgiven them all sins. They walk around the cross, constantly repenting and blaming themselves, believing that God will take a look at them, and, because of great self-humiliation and lamentation, He will forgive all their sins. They keep asking the same questions: "*Did God forgive me? I don't feel like I've been forgiven. Does God still love me?*". Therefore, all the gifts of God remain somewhere "outside the door", inaccessible and lingering only "on paper". It is difficult for such Christian to understand that the blood of Jesus without faith does not work. The Christian closes himself in unstable emotions and waits for some kind of supernatural manifestation of God, which would confirm that God has forgiven him all sins. He constantly confesses the same sins, stumbles upon the past, and looks for his hidden mistakes, will search for especially spiritual people or anointed servants of God, to whom he could tell the same sinful stories again and again with all the details, in the hope that

such actions will convince God to forgive. For such Christian, the word of God is not a sufficient authority, he seeks special experiences, confirmations and prophecies that prove God's forgiveness.

The reason for this behaviour and the constant state of guilt is **DISBELIEF** in the sacrifice of Jesus. Do not stay in this state with the conscience that constantly accuses you but let the blood of Jesus enter with faith inside you, touch your conscience and give you the confidence to step towards God and receive all His gifts. Nothing can wash away conscience except the blood of Jesus, but this is possible only by faith. Thanks to Jesus's blood, **ALL** your sins are forgiven.

let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the **full assurance that faith** brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (*Hebrews 10:22*)

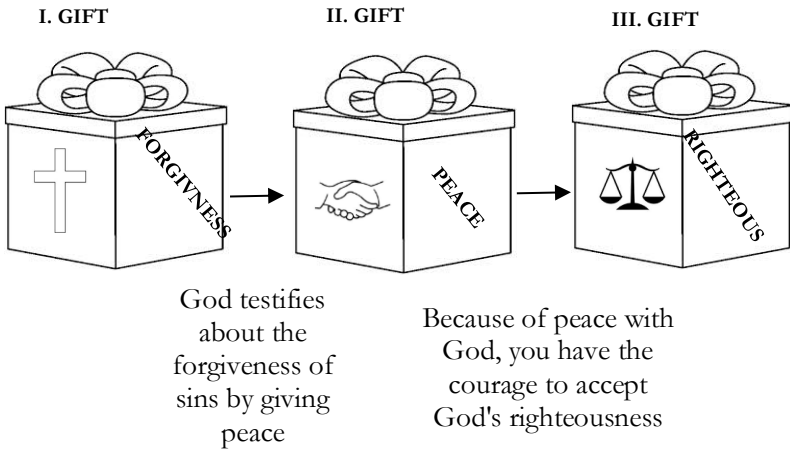
❖ **Ignoring the sequence ordained by God**

Another reason why a Christian does not experience and rejoice in all the gifts of God is that God's gifts work only in a certain order. Until you accept gift No. 1, you cannot receive gift No. 2. God arranged everything in such a way that one gift leads to another. So, what is the sequence of God's gifts?

Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. (*John 1:16*)

The first gift that a Christian receives by faith is the forgiveness of **ALL** his sins through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. As long

as you do not accept this gift, God's peace, His righteousness, power to overcome sin, the life of Christ and the love of God will remain only "on paper." As much as you try to calm down by increasing the number of good deeds or by trying to gain peace through various conversations and discussions, as long as you doubt that the blood of Jesus is enough to forgive all your sins, you will not be able to experience the supernatural peace of God. However, as soon as the blood of Jesus flows into your conscience by faith, suddenly, without any work and effort, the **second gift of God comes into your heart** - the peace of God.



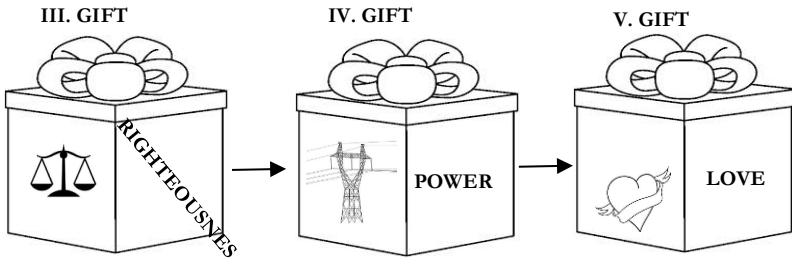
God's peace leads to **the third gift** — God's righteousness, which places you before God without shame and with assured faith and boldness. It is impossible for a Christian to stand in the position of God's righteousness until he doubts the forgiveness of sins, and there is no peace of God in his heart. Only with a

peaceful heart can a Christian "dare" to accept the gift of God's righteousness. For a man who doubts the forgiveness of his sins and lives with a restless heart, the gift of God's righteousness is too good, and standing in God's presence dressed in His righteousness is too bold and difficult step.

Only in the position of God's righteousness can you receive **the fourth gift of God** - His power and grace to overcome sin, the world and carnality and live the supernatural life of Christ. If a Christian seeks to live the life of Christ, but does not accept the gift of God's righteousness, then he will constantly stumble and be imprisoned in a circle of his efforts, falls and disappointments. The power and grace of God comes down only on righteousness and works in a Christian who has no doubt in the position of righteousness, where God places him thanks to the sacrifice of Jesus.

so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also **grace might reign through righteousness** to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (*Romans 5:21*)

God's power and grace lead to the **fifth gift** — God's love. Only, with the assured forgiveness of all sins, an unshakable legal position before God, with His peace and courageous trust, can a Christian see and experience the love of God. Only by accepting all four gifts does it become possible for a Christian to love God and others not in his own love, but in His love. A Christian who does not accept God's peace and righteousness will never feel loved. He will want someone on the outside to say again and again that God loves him.



Because of righteousness,
you can accept God's
power (grace) to live in
victory

Because of God's power, His
love can work through you.
You are loved and can love
others

So, if you accept the first two gifts of God, but miss the third and fourth (God's righteousness and His power), then the fifth gift of God (the love of God) will not really work in your life. For example, if you are convinced that all your sins are forgiven and have God's peace, but you do not accept the gift of God's righteousness (because it seems too bold for you), then living like Christ and walking in His love will be "mission impossible". Although you may try to do it, but, most of all, it will be just a human effort and a "fight against windmills". Only, having accepted the gift of God's righteousness and, because of it receiving the power and grace of God, will you have the supernatural love of Jesus, which will be simple and easy to manifest through you.

❖ **Devaluation of the word of God**

Another reason why God's gifts don't actually work in a Christian's life is a misunderstanding of how to accept God's gifts. Very often, the word of God is devalued, putting above one's efforts, will, and good deeds.

So, how do you accept God's gifts? Some people think that in order to accept the gift of God, some work needs to be done. For example, if you are good and help others, then God will pay attention to you and give you some gift. That's how the world thinks. However, in the Kingdom of God is different. Everything happens, exclusively, through the word of God. It is only by hearing and accepting the word of God that faith and the ability to receive the gift of God wrapped in the preached message are born in your heart.

So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or **by your believing what you heard?** (Galatians 3:5)

If you want to accept the forgiveness of sins and the peace of God, you need to hear and receive with your heart the message that declares that God has forgiven you all sins through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. If you want to accept the gift of God's righteousness, you need to hear and receive the MESSAGE of God's righteousness. Without knowledge and the preached word of God, it is impossible to get anything from God. Everything comes as you hear and receive the word of God, not when you do the work of righteousness.

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? (*Romans 10:14*)

Also, very often signs and miracles are put above the word of God. Therefore, some Christians do not accept the gifts of God,

waiting for special manifestations, confirmations and miracles, not realizing that signs and miracles do not give faith, but only point to a person who is the source of faith, salvation and eternal life. In the Gospel of Luke, we read of a rich man who, when he went to hell, asked Abraham to send someone to earth to his relatives, so that those who saw someone risen from the dead would believe and not come to hell. Such thinking is typical for the world. However, Abraham's response shows that there is no higher authority, source and power than the word of God. If a person does not believe and does not accept the word of God, then a miracle for him will be just an interesting "focus" and an interesting manifestation of the supernatural world.

“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, **they will not be convinced** even if someone rises from the dead.’ (*Luke 16:31*)

During Jesus' life on earth, many Pharisees saw the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead and other miracles but remained in disbelief and continued to live with unforgiven sins. In Old Testament times, the entire Jewish nation was set free from Egypt, everyone was healthy and provided with all necessary things, everyone saw the mighty miracles of God in Egypt and in the desert, but many of them remained in the desert never entering the Promised Land.

Yet the LORD says, “During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. (Deuteronomy 29:5)

It is not the visions, signs or the quantity of miracles determines the reality of God's gifts, but only the faith in the word of God.

There is no greater power than the word of God, which can give faith and the ability to accept everything from God.

❖ **A misunderstanding of God's righteousness**

A misunderstanding of God's righteousness is one of the greatest obstacles preventing God's power, grace, and love to be experienced in our lives. The revelation of God's righteousness is one of the foundational bricks of the life in Jesus Christ. Without this revelation, it is impossible to grow into knowledge of God, so the first epistle of the apostle Paul (to the Romans) is intended, namely, to clarify what is the gift of God's righteousness and to warn Christians who have already believed to beware of their own righteousness. Self-righteousness always points to his own good and self-sacrificing works, and God's righteousness points to the life of Jesus and the work done on the cross. The very essence of the gift of God's righteousness lies in the word GOD. It is not our property, but God's property: it is His works, His character, His motives, His life, and the work He has done on the cross. All this was done during the life of Jesus Christ in the body on the earth. Jesus did this not as the Son of God, but as the Son of Man. Because of these works, Jesus Christ stands before God in a position of righteousness, for which He can deservedly receive all things from God. However, Jesus, out of love, asked God that you would stand in His position instead of Him. Jesus instead of you goes on the cross and takes your place, and you come and stand before God in His position. Accordingly, the consequences also change. Jesus experiences death for your sins, and you receive a free acceptance, the power and love of God not because of your works, but because of the exchange that has occurred with the Jesus who loves you. This special position of righteousness

before God is given to you because of faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and does not change from your works, feelings or opinions. Thanks to this, the power and love of God begins to flow into your life.

Because of the misunderstanding of God's righteousness, relying on one's own feelings, deeds and experiences, a Christian may withdraw from this privileged gift or, having rejoiced for a while, return to the position of "sinner". Here are some stereotypes of thinking which can push a Christian back into a marathon of self-justification:

- a) **Is God's righteousness growing?** The gift of God's righteousness is full, unchanging and dedicated to whole your life. It does not change from the amount of your good deeds, your cleaner heart, motives and character. On the contrary, your deeds, character and motives change as a result of this gift. It is only because of the position of righteousness, that Jesus put you in, that you constantly accept the power and love of God, which changes your character and encourages you to do good deeds. The fact that you do good deeds and strive to please God does not in any way change or increase the gift of God's righteousness. This is the same position of righteousness in which you stand in the presence of God. The same, complete and perfect gift is possessed by a Christian who does little good deeds, a Christian who does many good deeds as well as a man who has not yet done a single good deed, but who has just accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Works add zero to God's righteousness. The same righteousness of God is possessed by a Christian who believes twenty years and the one who has been a believer for only two years.

- b) **Do you lose God's righteousness when you commit the sin?** Some Christians think that having God's righteousness they will never sin again. However, the apostle John writes in his epistle that if we say that we have no sin, we are lying to the truth (*1 John 1:8*). Likewise, the apostle James acknowledges that we all stumble and often have faults (*James 3:2*). Therefore, the answer to the question "Is it possible for a Christian with the righteousness of God to commit the sin?", is - "Yes, it is possible." But what happens to God's gift of righteousness when a Christian sins? If God's righteousness depended on your deeds, you would lose it every time you sin and reclaim it back, having done a good deed. However, God's righteousness is a special place in Christ, which depends only on **the work God has already done**. When you sin and stumble, you ask forgiveness and rise again, for the power and love of God flowing into the gift of God's righteousness, gives you repentance, lifts you up, and gives you supernatural power to go further.

for though the righteous fall seven times, they **rise again**, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes. (*Proverbs 24:16*)

Very often it happens that when a Christian sins, he himself withdraws from the position of God's righteousness and remains lying on the ground. For this reason, the power and love of God, which can lift and restore him, pours into an "empty" place. Therefore, such Christian cannot overcome sin and remains lying in sin for a long time. He is often told that, at first, he would "deal" with sin, and then again stand in the position of

God's righteousness. However, this is a trap. Without the power of God, it is impossible to overcome sin and "deal" with it. At first, one must stand up to the position of God's righteousness through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus, and only from this position - to rise. Thus, the righteous falls, but doesn't lose God's righteousness. He can only rise thanks to the unchanging gift of God's righteousness.

- c) **God's righteousness and works.** The most direct and fastest way to one's own righteousness is to associate good works with the gift of God's righteousness. Then, after every good work, **your** righteousness grows and your better position before God grows. A Christian who does more good deeds begins to feel more loved, accepted and able to gain more power from God. For this reason, external behaviour improves, but the inside is moving away from God. However, some may reproach: "So what, now you no longer have to do any good deeds?". Most often, such a question is asked by a person who does not understand that in the eyes of God, any "good" work aimed at self-improvement and justification is, in fact, bad. It is impossible to do good deeds if you do not stand before God righteous. For example, although both a steam locomotive and a wagon are necessary and inseparable, but everything changes radically if the steam locomotive is put behind the wagon. God's righteousness is a steam locomotive, while the good deeds are only the wagon attached to the locomotive. A Christian does good deeds not because he wants to be justified, but because he is already righteous. Such works are seen in the eyes of God as good deeds that are motivated and liberated by God's initiative, not

by your efforts. God's righteousness is a credit that He has given us free of charge, so that we may do good deeds with a free and loving heart.

- d) **God's righteousness and struggle against sin.** A lack of understanding of God's righteousness can imprison a Christian in old habits, sin, and his own efforts. When God's order is mixed, then there is no real power that sets free the Christian from sin. If one first seeks to change himself and overcome sin, and then to stand righteous in the presence of God, then such a desire never comes true. First, one must accept the gift of God's righteousness and stand before Him with full forgiveness, peace, and grace, and only then, with the power of God, to reign over the sin and overcome it not by his own strength, but by the power of God. For example, if a person is initially told that he is a drunkard and is told to quit drinking, then a burden is placed on that drunkard, which he will not bear. To overcome sin being a sinner is impossible. However, Jesus, at first, offers to such drunkard a forgiveness of sins and the gift of God's righteousness. It is only by accepting God's forgiveness and the purification of the conscience, that such person also receives God's power to resist sin, overcome it and leave it behind.

“No one, sir,” she said. “Then **neither do I condemn you,**” Jesus declared. “**Go now and leave your life of sin.**” (*John 8:11*)

- e) **God's righteousness and circumstances.** Another misconception that hits a Christian, is the association of God's righteousness with circumstances and events.

Some may think, "If I have the righteousness of God, everything must be beautiful in my life, and all circumstances must be favourable. However, when the winds and storms blow (and they are present in the life of every Christian), then a person begins to doubt God, believing that he has strayed from God's will, sinned and lost His righteousness. Very often, a Christian can suffer for good deeds, face unfavourable circumstances, be offended or despised. Such situations provide an opportunity for God to reveal God's love, forgiveness, and power through us to others. However, if a Christian associates suffering and difficult circumstances with the righteousness of God and thinks that failures and difficulties mean the loss or decrease of God's righteousness, then any severity will plunge him into depression, close his heart and isolate him from the power and grace of God. Then the Christian begins to be led by circumstances, "speculating" about the will of God, which depends on "weather conditions".

❖ **Thinking in the Old Testament**

Another reason why a Christian does not rejoice and does not live in the fullness of God's gifts is the thinking based on Old Testament shadow. This may be like a railroad track switch lever, which, if set in the wrong direction, can lead the train of blessings to bypass your life. Many Christians live and serve with the thinking of the Old Testament and try to pour new wine into old wineskins. For this reason, such ministries not only do not bring the Christian closer to God, but also divide, polarize believers and imprison them in a torrent of meaningless quarrels and debates. Instead of the character of Jesus, a life becomes full

of one's own righteousness and a huge set of rules, which is impossible to fulfil.

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins.
Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the
wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined.
(*Luke 5:37*)

The entire Old Testament prophesies and speaks about Jesus, the Savior of the people. However, this Savior, Jesus Christ, has already come and accomplished the work of salvation. Now the thinking of the Old Testament is not meant to wait for Christ, but to accept Him into your heart, not to follow the rules, but to live in Him. The New Testament does not talk about the rules, but about the Person who is the source of life, the author of the faith and the Savior. Therefore, it is very important to renew our thinking in the spirit of the New Testament.

The Old Testament relied on rules, regulations and laws. These were very clear and precise norms governing human behaviour. Why did God give man the Ten Commandments and a whole Law with many rules? The apostle Paul reveals in his epistle to the Galatians that the Law was given to reduce and limit the evil that is within man. Therefore, many of God's commandments begin with the word "no" (do not murder, do not cover, do not steal, etc.).

Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was given through angels and entrusted to a mediator. (*Galatians 3:19*):

Since man has a sinful nature and is prone to evil, then the Law with its rules of external behaviour was given as **protection and control** to contain carnal desires and temptations, so that what is inside of a person does not go outside. The believer of the Old Testament lived with the following attitude: "I am imperfect, prone to evil, there is a tendency in me to sin, so I need clear rules, so that I can control myself and restrain the temptations in me."

These rules and laws were not for the knowledge of God but were directed to limit the tendency inside toward evil and thus to make people's lives easier. The rules were for external behaviour, but not for the inside of a person. Therefore, the Old Testament's main focus was directed to **human behaviour**.

The main axis of the Old Testament, around which all the commandments, rules, and instructions of God revolve, is "I AM BAD, but I want to become better." However, it is impossible to change the old nature by the commandments and rules, although many people are still trying to do this. They put their faith and hope into the rules and commandments of God, but not into the work done by Christ on the cross by which the old human nature was crucified on the cross. Instead of the old nature, Christ gives us a new divine nature in which there is no desire to sin. Divine nature comes into our inner part changing it and removing any wilful desire to sin but rather puts in the desire to live and serve the Person (Jesus). The Old Testament is directed to the old nature, and the New Testament - to the new one.

However, what happens to a Christian, if a small grain of leaven, called "I am bad", remains in his thinking, or if the Christian focuses on the improvement of the old nature? Then a new wine

(New Testament) begins to flow into the old wineskin (the old human nature, which is bad). The consequence of this is that a new wine (grace, power, forgiveness, the character of Christ) spills out to the ground, and the old wineskin not only does not become improved, but tears apart even more (the Christian everyday notices in himself more and more sinful desires, wrong motives and inner filth).

The Old Testament's "I have only a sinful nature", makes the New Testament without power the life of a Christian. Powerful blessings such as the blood of Jesus, the living word of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit become perverse and without power. Here are some of the blessings of the New Testament that can become twisted because of incorrect thinking.

- a) **Incorrect attitude towards the word of God.** In such case a Christian is looking for new rules in the New Testament. He reads the word of God as the Law. The main question of his heart is - "What to do, how to behave?" In the Bible, he looks for clear and specific rules that he can fulfil. The word of God becomes boring for him, because every day he reads about the same rules that he already had read about yesterday. He finds nothing new in the word of God. This is a very practical Christian. For him the most important are the practical things: "How to live, how much to pray, how much to fast, how much and how to serve, what to eat, when to go to church, how much to offer." He is everywhere looking for instructions and rules.
- b) **The twisted "guidance" of the Holy Spirit.** When a Christian does not find enough rules in the New Testament (he is nervous by abstract exhortations to love, believe, rejoice), then he turns to the Holy Spirit

and begins to "demand" direct commands and instructions from Him. In this way the guidance of the Holy Spirit is replaced by search of concrete commands and specific instructions in Christian's imaginations and mind. Very often, such Christian lives in "tension" to make a mistake and disobey the command of the Holy Spirit. Over time, he becomes a "super spiritual", unpredictable and led by various unstable commands. He reads the word of God less, because all the rules are already known there, and he receives new and more specific ones directly from the Holy Spirit.

- c) **Distorted use of the blood of Jesus.** The blood of Jesus is used by the Christian in the same way that the blood of animals was used in the Old Testament. The blood of Jesus washes away only external behaviour. A Christian always feels guilty that has not done everything for God. He always finds some kind of rule or command that he has not yet fulfilled. The blood of Jesus gives him not the full forgiveness and freedom, but a new opportunity to fulfil the set of commands and rules, as if by bringing him back to the starting line to "work" with his old nature again. Such type of faith in the blood of Jesus is weak due to the fact that he unconsciously makes it equal to the blood of animals. He splashes the blood of Jesus with faith on his behaviour, home, car and other external things, but he does not drink it and does not accept it inwardly. Therefore, the inner part of such Christian is always not clean enough, there is always something to "repair".

Using the thinking of the Old Testament, Christian perceives the New Testament as a new version of the Old Testament. Instead of the old rules, there are new ones, instead of the old means of

controlling and improving the old nature, now there are new ones. Instead of efforts to "work" with the external behaviour, it is now necessary to improve and "work" with the inner part as well.

So, a small leaven of thinking corrupts the whole dough as well. The mighty blessings of the New Testament (the living word of God, the blood of Jesus and the Holy Spirit) become perverse and without power. However, it is enough to switch the rail lever to the correct position and the blessings of the New Testament come to life. The lever of thinking must be shifted from the position "*I am of a sinful nature that must be controlled*" **to the position** "*I, through the sacrifice of Jesus have received a new divine nature that I want to express from inside to outside.* "

The same thing Jesus wanted to say to Nicodemus, who respected Jesus. He came to Jesus at night to learn and express approval for the new teaching. However, Jesus bluntly and without hesitation declared to Nicodemus that he needed to be born again, i.e. to receive a new nature. Only then will he be able to accept and understand the new wine, i.e. the new teaching of Jesus.

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."
(John 3:3)

So, when you are born again and receive divine nature, the Law and the rules become useless. Why? There is no longer any point in controlling and protecting you, because now in you there is not an old sinful nature that needed to be controlled, but a divine life that must be encouraged and allowed to manifest itself. Now the word of God encourages and exhorts you, so that the new

nature will erupt from within to the outside. The New Testament removes from our heart all protective barriers with rules and restrictions. Love, faith and the character of Christ, which is in you, no longer requires protection and control. Now there is no sense to have to Law, which could control the divine nature, because in this nature there is nothing bad.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. **Against such things there is no law.** (*Galatians 5:22-23*)

Here are more differences between the Old and New Testaments that must be understood in order for God's gifts to work in the life of every Christian at full capacity.

Old Testament	New Testament
Guilt, unclear conscience. Despite the number of good deeds, the Christian constantly feels remorse and guilt before God.	A clear conscience, righteousness. A Christian can boldly raise his eyes towards God without any remorse and condemnation.
The Christian communes with God, as a slave with the master.	The Christian communes with God, as a son with the Father.
The Christian lives in fear. He is afraid of people, of circumstances, of God, of mistakes. He does not trust in God, he is afraid of His punishments, reproaches for not doing something.	A Christian lives by trusting in God , but not in his behaviour or character. He has boldness when having relationship with God and people.
The Christian is uncertain about the future, is not guaranteed of	The Christian feels safe about the present and the future. He is

the salvation, feels insecure , so he tries to earn God's favour through deeds.	assured of salvation now, so the relationship with God is not "official".
A Christian reads the Bible as a criminal code or a set of rules. The word of God is on the outside , which must be placed inside.	A Christian reads the Bible as a person, Jesus Christ. The word of God is inside (in the heart) , which he desires to take from inside to outside.
The Christian uses the blood of Jesus, as the blood of animals , which washes away and changes only external behaviour.	The Christian drinks the blood of Jesus inwardly , which cleans his heart, motives and gives rest to the conscience.
The Christian understands obedience as the fulfilment of set of rules and commands. Obedience out of fear is directed to get something from God.	The Christian understands obedience as the obedience to the person Jesus Christ. Obedience out of love for God, as a response of gratitude for what God has already done.
The Christian tries to execute commands and fulfil certain rules. The works are devoted to self-improvement and getting something from God.	A Christian does good deeds because he loves Jesus. He desires not to execute commands, but to live for God.
The main question is " What to do? "	The main question: " What to believe? "
The Christian does everything on his own and goes to the Promised Land by his own efforts, so he is often disappointed, feels fatigue and dissatisfaction with the passiveness from God.	The Christian is led by the Holy Spirit to the Promised Land. He has a Helper whom he trusts and follows, so he often boasts of God's help and is grateful to Him.
The Christian thinks that he is bad , so he tries to become good.	The Christian has a new divine nature, so he is good , and the

	behaviour is directed to express who he already is.
Life according to the flesh. The Christian's focus is directed to how to restrict carnal desires, so he follows commands with the word "no" (don't do, don't touch). He tries to limit and prevent the carnal desires to erupt from his inner part to the surface.	Living by the spirit. The Christian lives according to spiritual desires. He has desires to love, to believe, to rejoice, etc. He wants that what is inside of him would break through to the surface.
The Christian' s focus is directed at himself: how to improve himself, protect, control himself.	The Christian' s focus is directed to Jesus: how to know Him, to understand His heart, His thoughts, His motives, how to admire and praise Him.
The ministry of condemnation. After serving, the Christian notices more errors and shortcomings in his character, becomes self-preoccupied and frightened.	The ministry of reconciliation. After service, the Christian falls in love with Jesus more, feels better, braver and stronger.
The Bible and prayers are directed to self-improvement, making them boring and without results.	The Bible and prayers are directed to the knowledge of Jesus, so they draw him to Jesus. The Bible and prayers are interesting and easy, because they are the tools of communication with Jesus.

CHAPTER III GUILT AND ACCUSATIONS

God's gifts of salvation (forgiveness of sins, peace, righteousness, grace, and love) are supernatural. To live in the reality of these gifts and to maintain them is possible only with the power of God. This is not a psychological disposition, effort or information in the mind. It is a real and supernatural manifestation of God's gifts in our life. If someone says that living a Christian life is difficult, then he is lying. It is impossible to live the Christian life. The Christian life is supernatural and possible only under the influence of the power of God, which places the character of Christ in you and reveals it through you to others.

- *Religion* is the Christian life through the efforts of man
- *Faith* is the supernatural life of Christ in you, not by your own strength, but by His power.

Some Christians believe that the power of God is only necessary to perform miracles and heal the sick, and everything else, this is the improvement of character, psychology and self-analysis. However, the power of God, especially is necessary for the character of Christ to be revealed in you and through you. So, how does God's power come into your life?

In the book of Revelation, God reveals the mystery of what holds back the manifestation of God's power, His kingdom and the authority in the life of a Christian. This is the accuser (the devil) who constantly accuses Christians of many things. Accusations are the main weapon of the devil and the greatest obstacle that stops the manifestation of God's power in the life

of a Christian. **Until you throw the accuser out of your life**, God's authority, power, and kingdom will be “frozen”.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. **For the accuser** of our brothers and sisters, **who accuses them before our God day and night**, has been hurled down. (*Revelation 12:10*)

The accuser constantly knocks on your conscience, mind and feelings with all sorts of complaints, accusations, reproaches and discontents. The devil does not take a vacation, he is experienced and has more than two thousand years of practice in this area. Through various accusations, the devil steals from Christians the trust in God, blocks the channels of the heart and prevents the way for God's power and grace to manifest itself in the life of a Christian. With blaming, condemning and terrifying heart the Christian cannot accept the power of God, and therefore becomes incapable of living the Christian life.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace **with confidence**, so that we **may receive** mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (*Hebrews 4:16*)

You can't naively expect the devil to stop blaming and reproaching you if you behave well or feel good. He will always find something to blame you for. Therefore, it is necessary for you to understand how these accusations come, how to recognize and resist it not with your own experience, mind, feelings or deeds, but with the word of God. It is impossible to resist the accusations of the devil with good behaviour. Also, you cannot ignore and leave the accusations until they resolved

on its own or disappear. This is dangerous because as long as accusations sound in your heart, you will be disconnected from the supernatural power of God. The Lord wants you to separate the devil's accusations from the persuasion of the Holy Spirit and be able to serve in an atmosphere of pressure and accusation. While serving, Jesus received constant reproaches, accusations and pressures about what He did or didn't, such as why He ate with sinners, why He didn't keep the Sabbath, why He proudly spoke of Himself or didn't speak as others wanted to, why He didn't heal Lazarus, why He healed on the Sabbath, and so on. Jesus also experienced accusations that the devil sent, reproaching Him for not jumping off the roof of the temple or turning stones into bread. Jesus never made excuses, did not engage in discussions, and did not rely on His spiritual experiences and emotions. He recognized where the accusations came from and resisted it with the word of God.

The Lord wants to teach you to recognize and resist the devil's accusations in four areas of life. In each of these areas, the devil will blame you and try to steal courage by erecting a barrier between you and the power of God. Here are the four areas where the devil constantly blames every Christian.



1. Accusations about the sin
2. Accusations about the sinful nature
3. Accusations about circumstances
4. Accusations about the lack of spiritual growth

AREA 1 - Accusations about the sin

(a) True sins. We all sometimes commit the sin out of weakness, although we have no desire to sin. For this reason, we need to learn how to fight accusations and correctly solve the problem of sin when we stumble. As the apostles John and James wrote in their epistles, each of us stumbles, but if we walk in the light and confess our sins, then the power of Jesus' blood works in our lives, cleansing conscience from guilt.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (*1 John 1:9*)

Walking in the light is not that you never sin, but the fact that, when you sin, the Holy Spirit convince you about it and leads you to the cross of Jesus. When person walks in the darkness, he does not notice and does not see sins.

The devil, on the contrary, wants you to stay in the dark when you stumble. Ignoring the unclear conscience can cause the ship of the faith to wander aimlessly in the labyrinths of theory and discussions. Therefore, it is very important whose voice you listen to, when you stumble. When you sin, you will hear two voices. Both the Holy Spirit and the devil respond to your real sin. Some Christians believe that the devil does not respond to your sin or approves it. This is a mistake. The devil reacts much more sharply and strongly to your sin than you imagine. He blames and condemns every Christian who sins.

When you stumble, the main thing is to separate the conviction of the Holy Spirit **about sin** from **the accusation of the devil**.

Two voices will speak differently about the committed sin and will quote the word of God differently.

When you sin, the devil immediately begins to blame you and quote the word of God. He will definitely remind you of a verse from the Gospel that says that the Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin. However, the devil always distorts the word of God and presents it in abbreviated form or "out of context." When the devil puts a ending point in the word of God, the Holy Spirit puts a comma. If the devil blames about sin, then the Holy Spirit convinces.

When he comes, he **will prove** the world to be in the wrong **about sin** and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. (*John 16:8-11*)

When you sin, the Holy Spirit does not blame but convinces you of sin. He is not an accuser, but a helper and comforter. After convincing you of sin, the Holy Spirit does not condemn you but leads further. He puts a comma and convinces you of righteousness and judgment. After sin, the Holy Spirit always points to Jesus's sacrifice and reveals that your sin is punished and for this reason you can accept the gift of God's righteousness. What's more, He will convince you that your accuser, the devil, who blames you of sin, is condemned. The result of the action of the Holy Spirit will be that when you confess a sin, He will immediately wash you with the blood of Jesus, lift you up and strengthen you. Thanks to the work of the Holy Spirit, you can constantly walk in the light and **see when**

you stumble, and when you stumble, immediately rise. Walking in the light is not that you never sin, but the fact that when you sin, you notice sin, admit it and accept the forgiveness.

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

The Holy Spirit will always give strength to shake off the sin and will not imprison you in condemnation, self-pity or temporary depression. He will immediately lead you to the sacrifice of Jesus, so that through faith in His blood, you will remain in the light.

The devil acts on the contrary, and when you stumble, he wants to keep you stumbled for a long time. Therefore, he will quote the word of God with an accusing, but not convincing, spirit. The devil will always put the end point, trying to avoid further revelation of the word of God, where you can receive forgiveness and strength to leave the sin.

It is a pity, but when a number of Christians stumble, they are more likely to listen to the voice of the devil than to the Holy Spirit. Deceived by the accusing, but not convincing spirit, they remain in depression, constant guilt and self-pity. Such Christians constantly analyse, blame and condemn themselves for the sin committed and cannot leave it and accept help from God. For this reason, the Christian remains lying in the dark, frightened by the devil's lies and stricken by shame. Here are some differences in how the devil speaks and the Holy Spirit when you sin.

Devil's Voice	The voice of the Holy Spirit
Accusation of sin	Conviction of sin
<p>The word of God is presented in a distorted and incomplete way, hiding the truth.</p> <p>For example, he quotes <i>John 16:8-11</i>: When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin. (puts a dot, noy a comma).</p>	<p>Reveals the truth of God's word.</p> <p>For example, He reveals <i>John 16:8-11</i>: When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment. (<i>John 16:8-11</i>)</p>
Points to your sin – there is no way out.	Points to Jesus' sacrifice for sin – leads to judgment.
Encourages to postpone the decision and tries to keep you stumbled for a long time.	Leads immediately to washing with the blood of Jesus through faith and cleanses from guilt.
Through guilt, the Christian is sad and weak, does not have the strength to leave sin, he repeats the same sin.	Immediately the conscience is cleansed with the blood of Jesus, so the Christian receives the desire and the power of God to leave the sin.

The difference between the accusation of the devil and the conviction of the Holy Spirit was also experienced by the apostle Peter, when he stumbled painfully, publicly renouncing Jesus three times. After such a sin, the devil blamed Peter and tried to show him a desperate situation, perhaps, quoting to him the words of Jesus: "*But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.*" (Matthew 10:33). However, another voice may have reminded Peter of the prophecy Jesus had given just before the renouncement: "*But I*

have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” (Luke 22:32). These words of Jesus gave hope to Peter and indicated that faith in Jesus could forgive, cleanse, strengthen, and restore. Peter needed to choose by faith which voice to listen to. The condemning voice could lead to depression, the destruction of faith and suicide, and the other voice - to the love and forgiveness of Jesus. Peter passed the test, choosing to believe in the forgiveness of Jesus. As a result, later we see the cleansed and strengthened apostle Peter standing before the crowd on the day of Pentecost and boldly proclaiming the word of God in the presence of all men.

Therefore, it is very important that you know throughout your life that the Holy Spirit is not the accuser, but the comforter, not the one who leads to condemnation, but to justification and restoration. Therefore, when you sin, do not listen to the accusations of the devil, but accept the conviction of the Holy Spirit about sin and do not remain in condemnation, but rather accept the grace and forgiveness through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.

b) The sins of the past. Very often, a Christian is faced with accusations of sins committed in the past. The devil has a book where all your sins, transgressions, and weaknesses are listed. He carries this book and constantly reminds you of the past. If you listen to his reminders about the sins committed in the past, eventually, these reminders turn into accusations, and even later into weakness, temptation, and a return to old sins. This is the devil's scheme, which he uses to return you to the old way of life.

Jesus does the opposite. He forgives all your sins. When you accept Jesus into your heart, you receive forgiveness of ALL committed sins.

For I will forgive their wickedness and **will remember their sins no more.**" (*Hebrews 8:12*)

There are many examples in the Bible where the Holy Spirit teaches you never to look back and not to stumble upon the garbage of past sins. Remember that in the book of God all your sins are erased by the blood of Jesus. The devil doesn't have this book. In the book of the devil, all your sins are still recorded. He can remind you of them, sending various thoughts, feelings, memories and impressions. Do not be scared, but firmly resist, confessing that the blood of the Lamb has cleansed you from all the sins of the past. The accuser is defeated not only by the blood of Jesus, but also by the word of testimony, which proves that your heart's faith in the forgiveness of sins is true.

They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the **word of their testimony**; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (*Revelation 12:11*)

Many Christians, constantly attacked by the reminders of the devil about the past sins, immerse themselves in the "archaeological" excavations, analyses, searches for past motives, and dig into an old garbage. For that reason, the heart of such Christian is filled with memories of the past, guilt and weakness. Sin, taking advantage of the weakness, gradually returns. If the real sin is a real barrier for relationship with God, the Holy Spirit will convince you about it and lead you to the cross of Jesus. Do not engage in spiritual self-activity and work

entrusted to the Holy Spirit in search of sin but leave this function to the Holy Spirit.

(c) uncommitted sins. Very often, the devil accuses Christians of sins and transgressions that they did not commit. The devil begins the accusations in the abstract. He does not convince but blames. At first, you can't understand specifically and clearly what you've sinned about. It's just, there comes a general impression of guilt, and you are not sure whether you have sinned or not. Such blame is not from the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, then there is complete clarity about a particular sin. This conviction does not condemn or isolates the Christian, but leads him to repentance, i.e. a change in thinking and action.

Sometimes a Christian accepts the devil's lies and blames himself of various things, but when you ask to explain specifically what sin he is accused of, he cannot clearly name it, only in the abstract he says that, perhaps, somewhere and somehow, he sinned. There is a lot of uncertainty in the devil's accusation, when he blames you concerning the non-existing sin. You cannot say clearly and be convinced that you have committed sin. But for all that, you agree with the accusing atmosphere, thinking: "Ah, it's better to feel guilty and regret it in the abstract, after all, additional repentance and self-pity will not be in vain..." This is a hidden trick of the devil, leaving the Christian in the labyrinth of guilt. Sometimes a Christian makes excuses by saying, "Forgive me if I did anything wrong..." Such a confession and acceptance of the guilt does not lead to repentance - in fact it leads to prison. The Christian thinks that it is better to repent already for things that were not there, because in this way it is possible to "insure" against unknown and misunderstood sins.

When the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, then there is no doubt or abstraction. There is no depression, general sadness or impasse and hopeless situation. In the conviction of the Holy Spirit there is clarity and light that encourages us to step towards Christ. This is an active conviction of sin, leading the Christian to freedom, not to self-analysis. When the apostles spoke the word of God, the Holy Spirit convinced and opened hearts of all those who listened, who did not endure and asked - what they must do. This conviction was from the Holy Spirit, leading to salvation. The consequence of such conviction - people who have accepted Jesus's forgiveness, believed it, and were filled with joy.

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (*Acts 2:37*)

Therefore, true conviction of sin always changes the heart and life. A general and abstract accusation closes and leaves everything, as before, only in a depressive and sad state.

It is also very common for the devil to blame the Christian for the sins of other people, imposing and placing responsibility for the decisions and choices of other people. The devil blames the Christian for other people's sins and wrong decisions: "*You didn't say so, you didn't do something, and you didn't smile, so the other person now has so many problems and sins.*" The devil can blame you for other people's disbelief and bad behaviour, associating their sins and mistakes with your actions, which, in reality, are not the cause of their sins or wrong decisions, for example: "*Since you did not smile to your brother, he was offended, went to a restaurant, got drunk and left the Lord.*" Each person is responsible for his own decisions. Do not let the

devil impose wrong decisions and sins of other people as guilt on you.

AREA 2 - Accusations about the sinful nature

If you learn to distinguish between the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the devil's accusation about the sin, the devil will try to send accusations not relating to the sins committed or not committed, but to your old sinful nature.

You may not commit any sin, but when you get up early in the morning, before you do anything good or bad, you will encounter a accuser who will begin to blame you for the qualities of your old man, for example, for pride, selfishness, etc. Before you have time to do anything, the accuser is already doing his job. How to resist such accusations that can hit you at any moment, and that do not depend on your actions. You can do a hundred good deeds, trying to be good and please God, but in the evening, you hear the accusation that you are bad and be "turned off" from serving the Lord.

Such accusations can only be resisted by the revelation of the word of God. If we overcome the accusations of sin by believing in the blood shed by Jesus Christ and confessing not only sin but also forgiveness, then we overcome the accusations of our old nature believing that our old man is crucified along with Jesus.

Jesus' sacrifice is related not only to shedding of His blood, but also with His death on the cross. The blood of Jesus was not shed accidentally. The shedding of Jesus' blood is inseparable from His death.

If a Christian believes that the blood of Jesus was shed because of his sins, then he must also believe that Jesus died and was crucified not alone, but with you. When you look at the cross of Jesus, what do you see? Is it just Jesus hanging on a tree, or is it also you crucified with Him? If you have the correct understanding about the death of Jesus, you will be able to resist the accusations of the devil concerning your old nature? In his epistle to the Galatians, the apostle Paul writes that he is crucified with Christ.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (*Galatians 2:20*)

It is not written here that he will be crucified or trying to crucify himself, but that he is already crucified. The crucifixion is not the result of the efforts or work of the apostle Paul. Someone else crucified Paul. Paul doesn't write that he did it himself. God crucified Paul's old nature through Jesus Christ. Paul accepted this truth by faith, not by trying to do it himself. Just as salvation or forgiveness of sins is accepted by faith, in the same way the death of Jesus together with your old nature is accepted by faith. In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul clearly writes that he KNOWS that our old man was crucified with Him. This is a fact that has happened in the past. This work of God must be accepted by faith.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. **For we know that our old self was crucified with him** so that the body ruled by sin might

be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. (*Romans 6:5-6*)

An attempt to crucify oneself gave birth to many "super spiritual" people, monks and ascetics, who by their deeds are trying to prove their own crucifixion and once again do what already God did two thousand years ago. The only way to accept this truth is through faith.

What happens if you are a very sincere Christian, but you do not accept all the truths of God's word? For example, maybe in the "more difficult" truth you do not believe, but the "easier" ones you accept. Perhaps, you easily accept that God forgives you sins because of faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, but it is too hard to believe that not only are all sins forgiven to you, but also your old man with all his qualities (pride, selfishness, etc.) is crucified with Christ. If for you this truth about the crucifixion of Jesus is too difficult, too bold and too simple, then you yourself are engaged in self-improvement. Then, you will try to perform this difficult task yourself. The most direct path to religion is ignoring the work of Christ that has already been done and trying to do this work on your own.

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes **Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.** (*Galatians 3:1*)

What happens when you disobey the truth that you are crucified with Christ? Then you will easily accept the accusations of the devil about the qualities of your old man. When the accusation that you are selfish and proud knocks on your heart, then, you will have natural desire to get rid of pride, selfishness and other qualities. You will have a natural human reaction not to be what

the devil accuses you of being. The qualities of the old man are not specific sins, but qualities that lead to sin. Since this is not a specific sin, but a quality, it takes time to get rid of it. However, all this time, as long as you try to get rid of the qualities of the old man, crucify them with your deeds and efforts, you will feel guilty. And guilt alienates you from the power of God. Therefore, you will fall into a "vicious circle" and try to cope with the old sinful nature by being in an atmosphere of guilt without the power of God.

Because of the ignorance of God's word, the devil traps the Christian into a marathon of acts of guilt and condemnation. For this reason, the accuser has the opportunity at any moment to "turn off" the Christian from life, which is expressed in love and faith, and to keep him tied to self-analysis and concern for himself. By accepting the devil's accusations about the old nature, the Christian is afraid to serve the Lord because he feels himself bad, proud, and selfish. For this reason, the Christian tries, at first, to repair his old nature and only then follow the Lord. Without repulsing the devil's accusations about the old nature, even if a Christian begins to serve, the content of such service is not faith acting on love, but a desire to get rid of one's own pride, selfishness, etc. Such ministry and works are called "dead works" because they do not reveal or bring Christ's life, freedom and His kingdom.

So how to defeat the devil's accusations about a sinful nature? A Christian usually asks the question of what to do to defeat these accusations. However, this is the wrong question, because by asking the question of what to do, you can be entangled in a marathon of patching old nature. The correct question should be: **WHAT TO BELIEVE?** The apostle Paul gives an answer to this question in his epistle to the Romans, suggesting that he

believe in the word of God and consider himself dead in Jesus Christ.

In the same way, **count yourselves dead** to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (*Romans 6:11*)

Overcoming the devil's accusations related to our sinful nature is possible only by identifying yourself with Christ, and by accepting by faith the truth that we are already crucified and dead in Christ. Therefore, do not spare yourself, improving and trying to give the old and sinful nature another opportunity. If you accept the revelation of your death in Jesus Christ by faith, then every time the devil blames you for certain qualities by pointing the finger at your old nature, you point your finger at Christ the crucified. Thy old nature, with a whole package of evil qualities, hangs with Christ crucified. God's word does not judge your sinful nature and does not call it good. The word of God identifies it as evil and sinful but reveals that this sinful nature has already been punished and crucified along with Christ. The only question is: do you believe it?

3. AREA – Accusations about the circumstances

Another area in which the devil constantly blames the Christian is the circumstances of our lives. Very often, the devil points to difficulties, unpleasant experiences, problems and obstacles. Pointing to the unfavourable circumstances of our lives, he accuses the Christian of deviating from God's will and presents this as proof that God has left you, forgotten or, at the very least, is angry with you. If a Christian associates external circumstances with the love of God and His will, then it is very easy for the devil to throw unfavourable circumstances, fears or

other obstacles, thereby disturbing and stopping the Christian from trusting in God and following Jesus.

Very often, the inability to resist such accusations is associated with the wrong teaching about the fact that when you believe in Jesus, everything in your life will begin to go well, and you will swim downstream carried by the blessed current of the Holy Spirit. The Christian then sees any obstacle, failure, or unfavourable circumstance as alienation from God. When the circumstances of his life are good, no one is afraid at work, everyone is happy in the family, the salary is paid on time, brothers and sisters in the church love you, then the Christian is confident in the love of God and His perfect will. But the next day, when he is reproached by the neighbour, and his salary is delayed, he is already looking for sin, guilt in himself, and is convinced that he missed the will of God. Such Christian is different every day. His mood depends on the circumstances, he goes to church only in a good mood, he loves others, only when he is "in spirit", etc. On Sunday, he is at rest and has no fault inside of himself, and on Monday - already pressed by heavy accusations and condemnation, because he gets some problems at work or faces difficult and unpleasant circumstances. How do you resist accusations that follow difficult circumstances? As in the other areas described above, so in this one, the only weapon is the revelation of the word of God.

When we read in the Bible about the lives of the first Christians and apostles, we do not see them as the "gentlemen of success" whose lives were accompanied by favourable circumstances and pleasant coincidences. On the contrary, the apostle Paul writes in his epistle to the Romans that he rejoices in difficulties. Such an attitude is the exact opposite of the thinking of some Christians, who think that God sends unfavourable

circumstances in order to humiliate us, to "knock out" from us the pride, to point the evil motives in us and to punish it. Such thinking gives the devil a solid basis for constantly blaming the Christian and drawing in front of him the image of an angry and cruel God. Thinking in this way, the Christian avoids and hides from the Lord and constantly blames himself. All the difficult circumstances are accepted as an instrument of God, who uses it to eliminate the bad things in him, so naturally, such Christian begins to feel guilty. However, God's word reveals to us a very different reason for the existence of such circumstances. The apostle Paul, indeed, rejoices in it. Why?

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but **we also glory in our sufferings, because we know** that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. (*Romans 5:1-4*):

The apostle Paul writes that sufferings and other unfavourable circumstances and obstacles do not "knock out" the pride or punish our old nature, but, on the contrary, reveal and highlight the character of Christ (endurance, hope, etc.). Therefore, the Christian must look at the difficult circumstances from the point of view of freedom and clear conscience. Some believers say that God leads them through difficult circumstances in order to humiliate, "knock out" pride, punish selfishness, and so on. However, God long ago "knocked out" the pride and crucified all qualities of the old nature on the cross along with Christ. We face difficulties and unfavourable circumstances not because they kill, humiliate, punish the pride, anger or selfishness in us,

but, on the contrary, they reveal the character of Christ (love, patience, generosity, etc.). Therefore, if your thinking is renewed by the word of God, and you see the circumstances not as a punishment instrument and the enemy, but as allies who help to reveal the Christ in you, then the devil will have no place for accusations related to difficult circumstances. By thinking correctly, you will have the strength to go through all the difficulties and obstacles. Then you will experience not a loss, but an excess of the character of Christ.

Reading about the life of the apostle Paul, we see that he has experienced many misfortunes, sorrows, persecutions, starvation, dangers and other adverse circumstances. This did not frighten him or question God's calling and His will. Obstacles and difficulties are not a bad sign sent by God to prove your mistakes, but on the contrary, to show and highlight God's love and His character in you.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? Is grief? or misfortune? or persecution? or hunger? or nudity? or danger? or sword? or sword? (*Romans 8:35*)

How can God reveal His love, if there are no one around you who do not love you, how to reveal His patience, if you do not have to wait for anything patiently, how to reveal His mercy, if there is nothing to forgive? Therefore, never judge God and yourself according to the circumstances. Let this door be closed to the accuser and let he doesn't steal from you the courage and trust in the Lord, so that you may overcome all obstacles without stopping and without hesitation. It is possible to overcome them

only by going with a clear conscience, free from guilt and accusations.

AREA 4 – Accusations about the lack of spiritual growth

The devil's accusations about the lack of spiritual growth are, perhaps, the main battlefield of sincere and God-seeking Christians, whom the devil wants to distract from fellowship with Jesus and bind them to the works of death. If you do not learn to resist the accusations sent by the devil in connection with your spiritual growth, then there will be a danger for you to begin to do things and strive to grow spiritually, resisting not from faith and freedom in Christ, but from guilt. The spiritual growth, motivated by guilt and dissatisfaction, always alienates the Christian from the Jesus and returns him to the shackles of religion.

The devil's accusations about the lack of spiritual growth are the hidden scheme targeted to push back the Christian into religious works. As in the above areas, so in this one, the main way to resist such accusations is the revelation of the word of God. In his epistle to the Philippians, the apostle Paul writes that he has not become perfect or has achieved everything, but that he is pressing forward.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, (*Philippians 3:12-13*)

This suggests that every Christian does not know yet everything, is not yet perfectly loving or having an unshakable faith. We will always have a goal, where to run and space to grow in spirit. Also, in a letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul praises believers by saying that their faith and love increase. Consequently, today you are not yet love others as you will love tomorrow or in five years, today you believe not as strongly as you will in a year. Love and faith grow, so they are not yet perfect now.

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because **your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing.** (*2 Thessalonians 1:3*)

But the main question is whose voice motivates you to grow in the knowledge, love, and faith, and what is the basis and motive of your spiritual growth? Some Christians think that the devil suggests only to sin, to commit adultery, to steal and to commit various sins. However, this is a mistake. The devil also offers Christians to grow in spirit, serve God, and do good deeds. The devil, tempting Jesus in the wilderness, did not offer adultery, but offered to perform miracles and serve God. However, he proposes to do all this on base of wrong foundation, i.e. from the guild and human efforts.

The only true and solid foundation from which every Christian must rely and start, is the work done by Jesus on the cross, His sacrifice and His love for you personally. Therefore, the Christian seeks to grow in love, faith, and wants to do good deeds not because he is guilty, frustrated with his evil character, but, on the contrary, that he is free, having a clean conscience and is in love with Jesus. The true basis of spiritual growth is

the face of Christ, i.e. the glory of God. Only then can we grow and be changed.

And we all, who with unveiled faces **contemplate the Lord's glory**, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 *Corinthians 3:18*)

However, if you try to grow from the the foundation proposed by the devil (accusations of not loving enough, having weak faith, serving too little), then, in fact, you do not grow in spirit, but increase the number of dead works. Then you want to love and believe, not because there is a Christ in you, but because you love little. Guilt, sinfulness and unclean conscience become the engine and the main motivational force.

What happens if you are motivated to know Christ by accusations and reproaches? Then you do the work of love without love, works of faith without faith, you serve out of fear, duty, reproaches and guilt. These works than only cover up the guilt and inferiority. Service, communication with Christians, going to church, prayers, reading the word of God become means of healing the conscience, hiding guilt, inferiority or improving the old man.

God's word shows that we grow into the love of Christ because He was the first to love us, we do works of righteousness because He gave us His righteousness, we believe not in our own efforts and deeds, but in what He did. There is no guilt and condemnation in this growth, we grow out of love and faith, but not from reproach and discontent. May you seek Christ motivated by the freedom to love God and others. Only then

comes the supernatural power of God, enabling us to live not our own life, but His.

So, if you allow the Holy Spirit to anchor you in the revelation of God's word, then you will know and have the power to resist the accusations of the devil in all the above areas of your life. Therefore, drive the ACCUSER out of your life and do not become his tool, blaming others. This is the main weapon of the devil, by which he separates the Christian from the power of God, divides churches, separates families and turns the Christian into a religious monster. You are called to freedom, so take the word of God as a weapon by which you can resist all the accusations of the devil and grow in power and knowledge of God.

In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle Paul addresses the faithful believers, asking them, "Who will blame God's elect, who will condemn, who will separate from the love of Christ?" In asking these questions, he also indicates answers showing that neither our sins, which are cleansed by the blood of Jesus, nor our old nature, which is crucified, nor adverse circumstances can separate us from God's love. (*Romans 8:33-35*)

Accusations about sin	Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. (<i>Romans 8:33</i>)
Accusations about the old nature	Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. (<i>Romans 8:34</i>)

Accusations about circumstances	Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (<i>Romans 8:35</i>)
Accusations about the lack of spiritual growth	And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (<i>2 Corinthians 3:18</i>)

CHAPTER IV FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is one of the main building materials used by God to restore and build relationships between Himself and people, as well as to restore relationships in families, at work, and in the church. Without forgiveness, no church, family and communion can survive. Therefore, it is not surprising that the devil is constantly targeting Christians and trying to make their lives lacking this vital building material, whose name is "forgiveness". The lack of this material leads to the collapse of families, the division in the churches, the breakdown of relations among people.

Some Christians believe that forgiveness is an action or a one-time event that is needed only when we accept Jesus into our hearts. However, forgiveness is not a one-time action, but a **quality** that will be needed throughout whole life on the earth. Some, who ignored forgiveness, remained stuck in the labyrinths of controversy, debate and theoretical Christianity. Therefore, before building and cultivating any relationships, fellowship and ministry, let the Holy Spirit lay the foundation of forgiveness as the primary attribute of a Christian in the deepest place of your heart. The size and success of your building or the ministry depends on how much you can forgive.

The first quality of a Christian that immediately appears as soon as he accepts Jesus into the heart, is forgiveness. This quality separates the real believers from the fake, true disciples of Christ from the ones, who interested only in the miracles and gifts from God. When you hear the word "Christian", the first thing that must fall into the eyes is the ability to accept God's forgiveness

and pass it on to others, i.e. forgive others. So, why is forgiveness the alphabet of the Christian life?

How has your relationship with God started? What was the first gift you received from God when you accepted Jesus into your heart by faith? The first thing the Gospel preaches is that God has forgiven us all the sins we have committed. Our relationship with God began only because our sins were forgiven thanks to the blood shed by Jesus. The first experience that comes into our lives is forgiveness. Every Christian remembers his first steps in the faith, when, as it were, a huge bag fell from his shoulders and a real communion with God began. **Our relationship with God began with forgiveness.**

that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (*2 Corinthians 5:19*)

During His life on earth Jesus always worked in forgiveness. He forgave the disciples who did not believe in Him, often resented Him, and at the most difficult time they fled and betrayed Him. Jesus forgave the Pharisees and the whole nation, which denied Him, mocked Him and condemned Him to die. He also forgave many everyday offences when He was not accepted, believed, laughed and doubted from family members as well as the closest disciples. Jesus walked in constant forgiveness. Only in this way He could work till the cross and complete the task assigned by the Father. Even in the face of death, some of His last words were about forgiveness. Jesus begged the Father to forgive the people who crucified Him. **Jesus's death without forgiveness would have meant nothing.** Therefore, these vital words were

uttered in public to make the meaning of Jesus' death clear to everyone.

Jesus said, “Father, **forgive them**, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. (*Luke 23:34*)

How is our relationship with God are being maintained, nurtured, and built? They are supported by the constant forgiveness that is placed in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. In our life, we often transgress and make mistakes, but God's forgiveness does not go anywhere. It is only through CONSTANT forgiveness that our relationship with God grows. Thus, the beginning of a relationship with God is forgiveness, maintaining and building the relationship with God — as well as God's constant forgiveness.

How does God build relationships in His body, i.e. in the church? What material He uses to collect living stones, i.e. believers, who would be kept in one place (spirit) under the head of Christ. Just as God restores, maintains and begins a relationship between Himself and man, relationships among Christians are also starts and being restored in the same way.

The kingdom of God spreads through forgiveness. In the Gospel of Luke, we read that when the publican Zacchaeus, who in the eyes of all men was a thief and a great sinner, let Jesus into his life, God's forgiveness came in. Jesus forgave all sins to Zacchaeus and thus restored relations with him. However, it didn't end there. Zacchaeus began to expand the kingdom of God around himself and the first thing that erupted from his heart was the restoration of relations between Zacchaeus and

other people through forgiveness. Zacchaeus decided to compensate everyone he had hurt or offended.

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” (*Luke 19:8*)

The devil lies to the Christian, saying that forgiveness will be not needed if you are good. If you avoid conflict situations and try to help everyone, then you will not need this feature. He draws false expectations, saying that the church is a group of perfect people where forgiveness is not needed.

Many Christians are looking for a perfect church where no one should be forgiven for anything. Therefore, when a sincere Christian does not find a community in which everyone is like him, or in which no one should be forgiven for anything, he closes himself in self-development or travels from one community to another in search of perfection. For this reason, spiritual construction in the life of such a Christian stop, because relationships with God and people are built using forgiveness. However, very often a Christian flees from such places where forgiveness is needed and hides in the "comfort" zone. Therefore, this property does not grow, and at the same time does not build anything, because without this building material it is impossible to create anything stable.

So, how to acquire this feature? The epistle of the apostle Peter says that we are living stones build into the spiritual house of God, i.e. the church. When you accept Jesus into your heart, you become a living stone, but this stone still has many sharp corners. It is naturally formed and not processed by any human

instrument. The Lord, taking such stone, places it next to another Christian, who also has many sharp corners. Then the grinding and gluing of these stones begins.

you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (*1 Peter 2:5*)

If you place two stones with sharp corners next to each other and constantly hold them in the water, then thanks to the constantly flowing water, their sharp edges will begin to round and sag until they become harmoniously standing next to each other and forming a solid structure of stones. It's the same with Christians. If, despite the different levels of character, knowledge, love and faith, Christians remain next to each other constantly immersed in the word of God, then the Holy Spirit, who sows the word of God into their hearts, will polish, and change their characters until they become a supportive, encouraging and living structure for each other. If unforgiveness, grievances and bitterness do not separate Christians and they do not get out of the water, i.e. allow the word of God to change them, it is only a matter of time before they become a beautiful and harmonious structure.

Without the quality of forgiveness, further construction and following Jesus is impossible. There will always be resentments, hurts and misconduct on our way. Also, from our side there will be various errors and falls. Therefore, without forgiveness, it is impossible to build relationships with God, or it will only be a short-term construction until the first resentment and problem.

In the Old Testament God spoke in images and parables about what is happening to us in the spirit. As we read about how God led the Israelites to the Promised Land, we can learn how to overcome the obstacles on the way to God's promises. The Promised Land for us is the person of Jesus Christ and His reality in our lives. God leads us to this promise through the wilderness. When God brought His people out of Egypt, (i.e. the world), they came to a place in the desert called Mara.

When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) (*Exodus 15:23*)

It was a place where the Israelites could not drink water. The Bible writes that in Egypt the Israelites were treated unfairly and cruelly. They experienced a lot of oppression, slavery, injustice, their babies were killed, and adults were forced to work in the face of bullying and cruel masters. Such experience left bitterness in their hearts. Bitterness is a silent wound, which constantly remind you about wrong done to you. The Israelites, indeed, have suffered unfair treatment in Egypt. Therefore, in order for them to go further to the Promised Land, it was necessary to leave and get rid of grievances and past bitterness.

Very often, such spiritual place on the way to the great promises of God also appears in Christian life. Having accepted the sacrifice and forgiveness of Jesus Christ and brought out of the world (Egypt), we come to a spiritual place where, due to the grievances, bitterness and memories of the past, we cannot drink and receive the word of God. In this state, the Bible becomes a closed book for us. Therefore, if in your heart there are memories of the past about the wrong

treatment, about the grievances inflicted on you and the words spoken to you, you will not be able to understand and receive the revelation of the word of God in your heart. The word of God will then be closed and will not quench thirst.

Therefore, Christians who hold bitterness and unforgiveness in their hearts cannot understand and accept the word of God. Everything they see in the Bible has to do with the wounds and bitterness that remain in their hearts. They see everything through the glasses of grievances or see in it only God's revenge, judgment and wrath to those who have treated them badly. Such a reading of the word of God does not revive but kills.

How long you will stay in a desert place with your memories of the past, bitterness and unforgiveness, depends on whether you allow the Holy Spirit to heal your heart from past grievances and wounds through the cross of Jesus Christ.

What healing drugs did God offer to Israelites, when they began to murmur that they could not drink bitter water? What is God's medicine to heal a scorched heart and not to die of thirst in the wilderness of murmur, anger, and self-pity?

Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD **showed him a piece of wood**. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink. There the LORD issued a ruling and instruction for them and put them to the test. (*Exodus 15:25*)

God pointed to Moses at a tree that, when thrown into the water, makes it sweet. It is the image of the cross of Jesus, through which we not only accept His forgiveness, but also become free

from bitterness. If you look at the cross of Jesus, in which all your sins and those of the world are hung, if you allow the Holy Spirit to present the word of God along with the cross of Jesus, then you will gain the strength to overcome bitterness and unforgiveness. The word of God will become not bitter, but sweet, refreshing the heart and giving strength. Then, from the eyes of the heart, the veil of murmuring will fall off and the word of God will become sweet. The only cure for past grievances and memories is the cross of Jesus, a tree that makes the word of God effective in your life.

Faith and forgiveness. Even long-time believing Christians ask themselves the question: "Why is it sometimes difficult to believe?". Why, faced with a real problem, very often it turns out that the heart is not able to believe, and faith becomes only "paper" knowledge in the mind? One of the reasons for disbelief is unforgiveness. Oddly enough, but living faith and forgiveness are connected and depend on each other.

In the Gospel of Luke, we read that after Jesus explained to the disciples how many times a day it is necessary to forgive the one who asks for forgiveness, the apostles responded to this with a very strange question: "Increase our faith."

Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them." The apostles said to the Lord, "**Increase our faith!**" (*Luke 17:4-5*)

Often the reason for the weak faith is the inability to walk in forgiveness. Jesus's taught that if someone sinned against you seven times a day and asked for forgiveness, then you should forgive all seven times. This teaching speaks not of a one-time

action, but of a constant walk in the power of forgiveness. Unforgiveness and bitterness stop the Christian and weaken the faith. Therefore, very often the complaints that God does not speak, or murmurs about God's silence, are related with grievances and bitterness still living in the heart. It is possible to believe only by heart. Faith in the mind leads nowhere. Therefore, if in your heart the place of faith is occupied by unforgiveness, then the supernatural life of God and the living faith will be a deficit in your life. Do not let the devil keep you in this prison but begin to drink the word of God with forgiveness, which is possible only through the cross of Jesus, by which, both your sins and those of the person who hurt you, are forgiven.

Forgiveness and healing. God's word clearly links the healing with unforgiveness. The apostle James writes in his epistle that healing comes very easily when we forgive one another.

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.
(James 5:16)

Some Christians try various principles of faith, prayers, fasts, go to healing ministries, look for especially anointed servants of God and are increasingly frustrated and unable to accept healing. Just like salvation, all the gifts of God come through faith, and faith can only be expressed in our heart. Therefore, if an unforgiveness sits in the heart, it hinders the living faith to descend on the heart.

Many people who have accepted God's healing testify that very often God's healing comes at a time when the heart releases a person who is difficult to forgive.

The Ministry of Reconciliation. After Jesus's death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit entrusted the church with a ministry of reconciliation, which proclaims peace and God's forgiveness for all people, as well as proclaims peace for one another.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the **ministry of reconciliation**: (*2 Corinthians 5:18*)

Thus, forgiveness in the church, as in one body of Christ, maintains connections and ensures a constant flow of grace and God's life. This is a construction cement for spiritual houses. Therefore, do not be afraid **to practice forgiveness** and build a lasting and living relationship with God and people.

CHAPTER V DISAPPOINTMENT IN GOD

Disappointment in God.... These thoughts become quite common among Christians. Although it is not spoken about openly and publicly, in the secret rooms of the heart there is silent confession about the fact that God is not working, His promises and prophecies do not come true, and hearing His voice and receiving concrete answers and help becomes a commodity that is traded only by the special servants of God. The Christian stops praying because he does not receive answers. Some feel as if they are "playing to one gate" and bombarding God with questions, and He, as if, is silent or is somewhere far away, busy with more important matters than your health, home and service. Such thoughts and experiences push the Christian into disappointment in God, indifference, spiritual fatigue and apathy. Therefore, many Christians still adhere to the form of external behaviour, but have lost their content, i.e. the faith of the heart and real communion with God. Why is this happening and what is the reason for it?

The Bible says that Jesus is the same today, yesterday and forever. He worked, He works and will act always, He does not change, does not get angry, does not reproach and today is alive and active. He is willing and able not only to help, to answer prayers, but also to perform great signs and miracles in the life of Christians. He desires to reveal the glory of God in the church.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (*Hebrews 13:8*)

Consequently, the problem of disappointment in God is not in Him, but in us. God is not a hypocrite and does not have special persons, whom He chooses for reasons unknown to us. The Bible says that He gives everyone abundantly and does not reproach. Consequently, somewhere there is a problem with the Christian, somewhere we are deceived and misled. So, what are the root causes of disappointment in God, and how do they come into our lives?

Wrong expectations. One of the main reasons why a Christian is disappointed in God is the wrong and unfulfilled expectations. Many imagine God as a powerhouse, who control everything and does whatever He wants. However, it is the deception of the devil that pushes the Christian into the doctrine of "destiny". Then the Christian thinks that everything in his life must go by itself, automatically, because God is almighty, and Jesus has already done everything. Therefore, it remains only to wait for all the promises of God, the calling, and His kingdom to come automatically. However, when this does not happen, the Christian begins to resent God, asking in his heart why there are still not those things that preachers, pastors and other servants of God have spoken of and prophesied to him about. Nothing extinguishes the fire so much as the unfulfilled expectations that make the Christian a passive observer of his life.

Therefore, sometimes the life of a Christian is no different from that of an unbeliever. If an unbeliever sits in front of a TV screen and watches all sorts of fictional stories, series and TV show projects, then, disappointed in God, the Christian does the same, only the content of the screen he is watching is different. He watches how God works in the lives of others, on the Internet, on social media, in books, and in the church. He remains a passive observer watching a game called "God is good" and

waiting for his hour of success. Eventually, such a life in front of the screen becomes boring, the Christian begins to resent why he still does not win that ticket of success, even though God has given him a calling to be His powerful tool. However, God's calling is different from a lottery ticket. In God's calling there is an invitation to come, and in the lottery ticket there is only a silent waiting for success. The expectation of the "God of the lottery" does not come true and pushes the Christian to disbelief and disappointment in God.

Another unfulfilled expectation that alienates the Christian from God is believing in Jesus as the solver of all problems. The main difference from the unbeliever is that if without Jesus in the world he couldn't reach impressive career, get a better job and buy a car, then with Jesus all these problems can be solved, because He promised to fulfil his dreams. But when that doesn't happen, a Christian begins to resent God, to look for better preachers and churches that promise more, speak more beautifully, and help to fulfil his dream list.

However, this is not a true Gospel. Indeed, the Gospel is the message that Jesus offers you His death and life. He suggests exchanging lives on the cross. The Gospel adds persecution and difficulties because of the faith, self-denial, and a new life, which is based not on your wish list, but on the will of God. God has a much better plan and calling for your life, and He does not want to exchange it for a poor list of your dreams. He is not a manipulated servant of your life. On the contrary, He is the author, master, and source of your life, your love and strength. He wants and has a purpose for your life and a plan that He wants to share with you. But first of all, He desires that you may put your life into His hands, and come unto Him without your ideas, plans, and ambitions.

Bad experience. It is also very common for a Christian to be pushed into the valley of disappointment in God by bad and negative experiences he has. Such experience imprisons in unpleasant memories and constantly points to what, how and why you failed. The devil also often points to the mistakes and failures of others in order to convince you that you will not succeed. If you see a bad church, he says that all like that, if you see a lukewarm Christian, then he shows that you will be like that too. By pointing the finger at the behaviour of others and the absence of God's power, the devil distances you from God.

As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." (*Romans 2:24*)

The devil distorts beautiful, majestic and divine things, turning them into copies and substitutes. He presents the love of Jesus as the self-love, faith as a presumption, a prayer as speaking into the air, the Bible as a moral code, the fellowship among Christians as a social club. Having tasted such surrogates, the Christian is disappointed in God, and only an empty question remains in his heart - "is this all?". Thinking that this is the fulfilment of real expectations, he turns towards the valley of disappointment and life "as always".

Do not let the bad experiences, opinions and deception of the devil influence you and close you in theoretical discussions about distant God. The Lord is the same forever. Close all the doors of bad experiences and the past, and look at the real things that will encourage, build, and raise you in Christ.

God acts only through man. Another reason why nothing happens in a Christian's life, is a misunderstanding of how God works. Many think that God works in any way, anytime and as

He wants. However, the Bible reveals to us that this earth was given to man by God from the very beginning of the creation. Having given people to rule the earth, God resolved never, as a spiritual being, to interfere or take it away from people. The only way for God to act on the earth is through the body, i.e. through man. On His own, as a spirit, God does not work on earth.

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so **that they may rule** over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” (*Genesis 1:26*)

Through disobedience, Eve and Adam, who had all the power on earth, gave it to the devil, so now there are wars, famines, misfortunes, uprisings, injustices, etc. on the earth. This happens also only through man, but the source of these misfortunes is the devil.

However, God is love and He decided to return lost power to man and save him. Therefore, it was necessary that the word of God, which has been inside God since the ages, be sent to the earth not as the Spirit, but as a man. God needed a body. Through Jesus, God accomplished the salvation of man, deprived the devil of the keys of death, and ascended to heaven in the human body. Now Jesus has all power in heaven and on the earth.

However, this authority is exercised only through the human body of Jesus, i.e. the church. Jesus' physical body is now in heaven, but believers who have received the Holy Spirit become His body on the earth. Therefore, God, through the church and its members, can act and do His works.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (*Matthew 28:18*)

Very often, a Christian is waiting for special help directly from heaven. Some expect to see an angel or to hear the loud voice of God. For this reason, such Christian ignores and does not accept the Jesus, who acts on earth and gives answers through the church and its members. Therefore, if you ignore the body of Christ on earth and distance yourself from the church and other Christians, then you limit God to the requirements and conditions of how He is to help you. Often, a Christian sets his own conditions for God, how He should act and help. However, God will always act on earth only through the body, i.e. people with the spirit of Christ.

God also wants to act through you. He will never force you to do something. He will teach, persuade, explain, give strength, but will never decide for you. Therefore, if you think that God will do everything automatically without your intervention, then you are misled. God works when you cooperate with Him. He opens your eyes, but you should look, He opens your ears, but you should listen, He paves and illuminates the way, but you should go, He gives desires, but you should express it. Thinking that we are only puppets in the hands of God, we fall into a trap and, indeed, become puppets of the devil, when postponing decisions and waiting, actually, we become imprisoned and swept away by circumstances. Such thinking closes the Christian into disappointment in God, and leaves in his head an angry question: "Where is this almighty God?".

God acts only through the His Word. Another false expectation is thinking that God works in any way. However,

God, exclusively, acts only through a word that is sown in your heart. God creates and does everything only by SPEAKING, i.e. using the word.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. (*John 1:3*)

If a Christian sits and waits for the miraculous events but does not come to the source from where the answer, life and strength gush, then he remains only with the empty dream in his head. It's like sitting in a dark room complaining about electricity but refusing to push the bottom and switch on the light. The light will illuminate your life, and you will receive the answer.

If, a Christian sits and complains about that God acted only at the beginning of his life, and hopes that, suddenly, something will open up and fall from the sky, then he can sit like that for the rest of his life. God is willing and able to help, but He helps and acts by speaking. Therefore, He placed the servants of the word in the church, gave spiritual gifts and invited you to come where the word of God is SPOKEN. Also, He gave you the Bible and placed in you the Holy Spirit, who can reveal and speak when you read the word of God. All it takes is to come to the source.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. (*Matthew 11:28*)

What does it mean to come to Jesus for a Christian who has already accepted Him into his heart but lives in problems, disappointments and hardships? It means to come with an open heart to the place where the word of God is spoken. He will definitely speak to you and, together with the spoken word, will

give you help, strength and grace. Help is there; therefore, it is very easy to receive and accepts His answers and help. **Just come.**

CHAPTER VI DECISIONS

The word of God speaks of the fact that God created everything in six days, and on the seventh He rested. In the eyes of God, everything has already happened and done. When Jesus died on the cross, He uttered the word "Completed," meaning that the salvation of people was accomplished. It is a complete and perfect work of God. We also read in the epistles of the apostles that God has already given us everything we need for this life and for future life as well (*2 Peter 1:3*). He also blessed with all spiritual blessings (*Ephesians 1:3*), called, justified, glorified (*Romans 8:30*), and seated us with Christ in heaven (*Ephesians 2:6*). Everything related to the work of God is spoken in the past tense. God has already done everything. The present time is left to people who **decide**: to accept and enter the finished work of God or to reject and remain in the darkness.

Your decisions are the territory into which neither God nor the devil enters. Some Christians to this day are misled by the devil, thinking that God occupied this territory, and they will never have to decide anything else. Also in the world, among the unbelievers, the devil through many religions, humanity and various worldviews, spread the veil of lies, presenting the doctrine of fate, which says that everything is decided for you, and you are carried by the river of fate. You cannot change the direction of this flow, and you need to come to terms with everything that happens in your life. It is not surprising that even among Christians, the doctrine of passive destiny prevails, accepting everything that comes to life: diseases, misfortunes, sins, weakness, bad character, etc. The most popular statements of this doctrine are: "*this is the will of God*", "*here you will no*

longer change anything", "*God knows everything*", "*it will be as He wants*". Such thinking opens the way to sin, carnality, apathy and depression. Christians begin to flee in this vicious circle of fate and wanting to predict a future in which everything has already been decided for you. It remains only to find out what has been decided and will happen, regardless of you. The Bible calls it witchcraft and sorcery. The search for God's will without the personal involvement and decisions, but only to obtain information, is sorcery.

It's all done for you, but it's not decided for you. God has already done everything, but He has not decided for you. He, even if you accept Jesus, does not deprive you of the right and freedom of decision. He will never decide for you. Likewise, the devil, cannot enter this area, because man was created not as a robot or a puppet, but as a free creation with the right to decide. Despite the fact that the devil enslaved a person and manipulates him through various lusts, carnality and circumstances, but man has not lost his freedom of decision. He himself chooses it, tempted or misled by the devil. Therefore, each person is responsible for the decisions made. There is no one in heaven or hell by chance or through coercion. This is determined by the decisions made. Therefore, the devil seeks to isolate, deceive and mislead a person, restraining the decision-making mechanism. When the engine of your decisions is turned off, circumstances, difficulties, illnesses and problems make decisions for you. Then they dictate and drive your life and destiny.

Many people, even Christians, place the responsibility for their lives on God and on the devil. The decision is your exclusive right, which will never be taken away by God. Despite the fact that you can be deceived by the devil, you do not escape

responsibility for your choices. Neither the devil nor God decides for you. The only difference is this: whether you make a decision deceived and misled by the devil or convinced and enlightened by God.

Many Christians think that accepting Jesus into the heart is a one-time solution. From the moment you take Jesus into your heart, you lose your freedom of decision, and now Jesus will decide everything for you. Thinking in this way, the Christian gives the right of decision to the Lord, placing all responsibility on Him. But, why in the word of God do not disappear the words: "*Me*", *you, we, strive, go, hold, desire, do not care, do not be afraid, rejoice, love*? If you didn't have to make any decisions, there could be only one sentence in the New Testament: "*God loves you, He did everything. Amen.*"

The decision or its implementation? Thinking about decisions, some Christians confuse decision-making with their implementation. The decision is not implementation, is is the choice. We choose Jesus, and He gives us the strength and grace to follow the chosen path. The solution is to connect to the source of faith. We make a decision, and the supernatural power and grace of God helps us to implement it. Some are afraid to make decisions that exceed their strength, because they mix decision-making with their implementation. Then, the Christian is afraid to give his whole life to Jesus or to entrust certain areas of life, worries, problems and loved ones, because he thinks that he will not have the strength to implement the decisions made. However, faith differs from ordinary life. Walking by faith, you make decisions, and for its implementation you receive strength and grace from the Lord. Therefore, do not be afraid or analyse yourself, how cowardly, anxious or insufficiently devoted to God you are. Do not think that you will need to implement

decisions by your own strength. All it takes is to decide. Therefore, Jesus used to say, "*Do not be afraid, only believe.*" In this way, He showed that the most important thing is your decision to believe, and the rest is His care and help.

Christian fears associated with decision-making. The main questions and fears that cause Christians to turn towards the doctrine of "destiny" or "lottery" are related to fears of **making** decisions. Every sincere Christian desire to know God's will and choose or decide what God pleases. However, the devil has sown many fears that stop the Christian, imprisoning him to live "as usual". So, when it comes to decisions, there are some fears that prevent it:

- **FIRST FEAR: How to know the right decision?** Many Christians live without making any decisions because they are not convinced of God's will in a particular situation. Their main question is how to know the right decision when there are so many options, or when there is no definite answer. Then, the Christian does not make any decision, constantly procrastinating it, logically considering and living "as usual." He lives in doubt and thinks that everything will resolve itself. The fear of error gives the devil ground for manipulating a Christian and controlling his life through circumstances.
- **FEAR II: How to have the strength to make the right decision that is already known?** Many believers know in their hearts what God wants, but do not have the strength to make a decision. Often it is not enough just to know what God's will is, or what the right decision is. Also, you need to have the supernatural strength to make

an already known decision. Very often, when a Christian calms down and honestly looks at his heart, he knows what God wants. When there is no strength to make a decision, the Christian delays and looks for additional confirmations, justifications and excuses, trying to escape from the decision already known in his heart, which seems so difficult to make.

- **FEAR THREE: How to maintain the decision you already made?** The right decision is not a one-time event. Very often, when we make a decision, inspired by a good sermon, after a while we see that we do not have the strength to continue what we decided yesterday. Jesus often repeated the same things to His disciples, encouraging them to stay in Him, to remain in His love. These are not one-time solutions. Often, we need to make the same decisions every day. For example, the apostle Paul writes that he dies in Jesus Christ every day, i.e. makes the same decision to live not for himself, but for Jesus, every day (*1 Corinthians 15:31*).

All of the above fears are unfounded and sown by the devil. God has the power and grace to keep us and help us not only to make the right decisions, but also to implement them. It all depends on what spiritual environment or atmosphere you live in, and how often you come to the right and divine environment.

Making and maintaining decision depends on the spiritual atmosphere. All the fears associated with decision-making depend on the atmosphere in which you live. Because God cannot make decisions for you, He desires to help you, to reveal the right decisions and to give you strength to make them. The Holy Spirit is **not a doer, but the helper**. His function is to

envelop you with a heavenly spiritual atmosphere, to persuade you and give strength to choose what He advises. After the decision, He empowers you to do it. This power of implementation comes not before the decision, but after. The godly decision is the right choice made under conviction of the Holy Spirit while being in His divine atmosphere. Therefore, in order to make the right decision, you need **to come** into the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit.

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (*John 14:26*)

A decision according to God's will is not a logical decision and analyses of available information. If you think that it is possible to make a logical decision, then you will make a mistake. It is possible to know the right decision, and then to make it, only by being in Him, i.e. being in the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Jesus told His disciples that without Him they could do nothing. Without being in Him, i.e. in a divine environment or in communion with Him, they will not be able to make the right decisions or will not have the strength to make them and stay in them constantly.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (*John 15:5*)

When we are in the right spiritual atmosphere, we make correct decisions that may seem strange and illogical in the eyes of the world. That is why logic does not help to make spiritual decisions, because spiritual decisions are often illogical. For

example, self-denial, sacrifice, love and faith in adverse circumstances are not logical, but taken in the spiritual environment. When Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit after baptism in the Jordan river, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. It was illogical but spiritual decision. The logical solution in the eyes of man would be to begin the ministry, because at that time Jesus received a powerful anointing of the Holy Spirit, accompanied by a clear and strong testimony from both God and men. However, Jesus made illogical decision, which was revealed to Him by the Holy Spirit. The correct inner spiritual environment gave Jesus the wisdom and strength to obey the Spirit and follow Him into the wilderness.

Nor is prophecy a logical or rational speech. We prophesy not by logically thinking, observing the environment and having our own opinion, but by making the decision to say the words that come to us when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, i.e. being in a spiritual environment that is characterized by love, peace, faith and communion with Jesus.

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: (*Luke 1:67*)

All our decisions are influenced by the spiritual environment. The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians encouraged them to come and immerse themselves in the atmosphere of the Holy Ghost, in which they would be able to know judgments according to God's will. It is possible to understand what God's will is when filled with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the more often you come and immerse yourself in the atmosphere of God's love, peace and faith, the easier it will be to know, make and maintain the right decisions that will lead you to the goal God has set for you.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, **be filled with the Spirit**, (*Ephesians 5:17-18*)

Why are wrong decisions made? Just as God desires to help a Christian to know His will and make the right decisions, so the devil seeks to mislead and place the Christian in an opposite spiritual atmosphere dominated by fear, selfishness, depression, sadness, and self-pity. In such spiritual atmosphere, the Christian makes the wrong decisions or loses the strength to stay in the decisions he made yesterday, when he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Decisions made in a hurry or in the presence of fear, anxiety, anger and apathy lead away from God, are wrong and useless.

There are many examples in the Bible that show that the wrong spiritual environment dictates wrong decisions. In the Old Testament, we can see why the nation of Israel did not enter the Promised Land.

Where can we go? Our brothers have **made our hearts melt in fear**. They say, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.' " (*Deuteronomy 1:28*)

They made the decision not to go to the Promised Land, being in an atmosphere of fear. When the scouts returned, they spread false information and pushed the Israelites into an atmosphere of fear. In such environment, the only logical solution was not to go.

Often a Christian is pushed into the wrong spiritual environment. Then, the heart is surrounded by fear, worries, accusations, problems, panic and anxiety. In such state, decisions are rushed, dictated by anxiety and fear. The main tactic of the devil is to place you in a bad spiritual atmosphere and then encourage you to act. This is how he seduced Eve and Adam. First of all, he sowed to Eve doubting the word of God and presented in her eyes God who hides something from her. In such atmosphere of fear and doubt, the devil encouraged to make a decision. Eve did not wait until the spiritual climate changed but hurried to act.

Likewise, the Christian is encouraged and rushed to serve, change decisions and run out of fear or anxiety. The devil rushes and whispers in his ear, saying: "*You will not have time to fulfil the will of God, you will miss the calling of God, you will not endure, you will do mistakes. Change your decision you made yesterday, because it was wrong...*"

What to do when the spiritual climate around you changes?

The examples written in the word of God show that in a bad spiritual climate, it is better not to make any decisions, but to wait for the spiritual climate to change. In the New Testament, we read about how Jesus was tempted. The Lord, filled with the Holy Spirit, was led into the wilderness. He made this decision while He was in a divine environment. However, the spiritual climate in the desert has changed. Jesus faced an atmosphere of pressure, reproach and seduction. Namely, in this atmosphere, the devil encouraged and offered Jesus to serve and to do miracles. He did not offer to steal or to commit an adultery. He offered to make hasty decisions. However, Jesus did not make any decisions but waited for the spiritual climate around Him to

change. Therefore, when the devil left Him, Jesus received a divine atmosphere and was enveloped by power.

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. (*Luke 4:13-14*)

In order to avoid mistakes and wrong decisions, the Christian needs to wait or change the spiritual atmosphere. Until the spiritual atmosphere is changed, do not make hasty decisions dictated by fear, anxiety or carnality.

Also, sometimes a Christian stays in a bad spiritual environment and does not respond to the Holy Spirit's exhortation to leave it. Not always can we change the spiritual environment. Sometimes it's necessary to leave it. The Bible is full of examples of when, in order to cultivate the faith, God brought man out of a sinful and evil environment. God called Abraham from the city of Ur and told him to leave his usual environment, because in such an environment it was difficult for Abraham to grow up in faith. Also, when God saved Lot and his family, He commanded them to leave their sinful environment and not turn back. Only in the right spiritual environment is it possible to grow in love, faith and peace.

In the New Testament, we also read about Paul's exhortation to avoid an atmosphere of controversy and division. In his epistle to the Romans, he urged to avoid those who cause divisions (*Romans 16:17*). In this way, Paul sought to protect others from a bad spiritual atmosphere in which Christians would begin to make the wrong decisions.

Sometimes God encourages a Christian to leave environment where disbelief, fear and anxiety prevail, because in such environment love and faith cannot grow. The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians that by staying in a bad spiritual environment, they could begin to make bad decisions and thus prevent the character of Christ growing in them.

Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” (*1 Corinthians 15:33*)

How to enter the right spiritual environment? No matter how strong and experienced you are, you will always need the right spiritual environment to follow Jesus. The need to be filled with the Holy Spirit will never disappear. It is impossible to live a true Christian life based on yesterday's experiences or old-made decisions. Therefore, every Christian has a daily need to remain in the right spiritual atmosphere, i.e. in Jesus Christ.

Our decisions are renewed as we listen to the word of God under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Why is the New Testament so full of exhortations, comfort and encouragement? What are they for? When we hear the word of God, the spiritual atmosphere around our heart's changes. Every inspired sermon, exhortation, testimony builds around us a spiritual climate under the influence of which we can go further and make the right decisions. The apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, urges them not to abandon the gathering, but to stay where there is an exhortation and encouragement to live a true Christian life. In the church we experience good spiritual climate.

not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and

all the more as you see the Day approaching.
(*Hebrews 10:25*)

We can also maintain and change the right spiritual climate while in prayer. Jesus knew the will of the Father that He was destined to die for the sins of all mankind, but as this moment approached, Jesus was surrounded by an atmosphere of death, pressure and fear.

Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” (*Matthew 26:38*)

Although Jesus knew the will of the Father, in such atmosphere it was difficult for Him to make a decision. Therefore, Jesus began to pray. At first, He asked the Father, if possible, to take away a cup of suffering, but not as He wants, but as is the will of the Father. It was difficult for Jesus to make a decision and move towards death on the cross. However, Jesus did not make any decision, but prayed until the spiritual atmosphere changed, and He was able to make such illogical but spiritual decision with certainty, i.e. go to death. After the third prayer, Jesus rose and resolutely stepped up to meet His betrayer.

Therefore, and the apostle James, in his epistle, counsel believers that if there is difficulty or someone is suffering, let them pray (*James 5:13*). During prayer, the spiritual atmosphere around our heart's changes. If it is difficult to make a decision, the word of God advises you to pray and wait in prayer until the Holy Spirit will give strength to resist temptations and inspire you to continue to follow Jesus.

Hearing the word of God, praying and having fellowship in the church are not rituals or a to-do list. It is the coming into the divine environment, so that you can know God's will, fulfil it, and abide in Christ. If you are constantly surrounded by the word of God, prayer, and communion with your brothers and sisters, you will be filled with the Holy Spirit and led (not pushed) to make decisions according to God's will.

CHAPTER VII GOD'S PART AND MINE

The greatest challenge in our daily Christian life have to do with not understanding what part does God and what I have to do. Am I, simply, carried by the Holy Spirit and need to do nothing, or am I, using the Holy Spirit, plan, decide and implement everything myself. The misunderstanding of what is God's responsibility and what is mine's, mislead many Christians to extremes that distort the word of God and push the Christian into the shackles of disappointments or religion. So, what are these extremes and how to be protected from it?

The first extreme is that God has done everything. When one truth is taken out of the Bible and presented as an independent truth, then we get a distorted picture and, without maintaining the balance, deviate with all our hearts to the margins of our faith. This extreme is very attractive and, at first, it seems acceptable, and bears fruit. This is true, but only partial. This truth is about that God did everything through Jesus's sacrifice: our salvation, healing, forgiveness of sins, purification, sanctification, justification, provision, glorification. In Jesus Christ, our old man was crucified, buried, and in Jesus we were resurrected as new creation to serve the living God. Finally, we were planted with Christ in heaven and glorified in Him. This is such a wonderful list of what accomplished by God without our participation and merits. It's the past tense. Man was not involved in this work, so none of us have anything to boast about before God. It is His work - complete, done, finished and perfect.

This truth is the key message of the Gospel. However, the devil always distorts, translates and does not fully show the word of God. He brings this truth to the Christian in another spirit. He tries to mislead the Christian by saying, that he now does not need to decide anything, or do anything, but it remains only to accept the work of God as a fate, that will automatically be maintained and preserved during his life. All your deeds and decisions are automatic and dictated by God, so everything that happens in your life is from God. In this way, the Christian is introduced into passivity, then into weakness, and, finally, into sin and slavery. All responsibility for the things that happen in life is placed on God, and the Christian plunges into passive anticipation or meaningless spending of time, which is perversely called "surrendering" to all circumstances.

If you eat only delicious part from the top of the cake and pick up only raisins, you will eat only the sweetest part of the food and will not know the real taste of the cake. It is the same with this truth. If you accept this message not in the Spirit of God, but by trying to apply it to the needs and personal plans of your body, then you will be able to justify everything that happens in your life. The carnal desires will be understood as follows: "*God sees everything, if He wants, He can help. He knows everything and understands me...*" With such excuses, the Christian drifts in the sea of life, having neither purpose (calling) nor the wind (the guidance of the Holy Spirit).

The second extreme is that all depends only on me. Very often, when a Christian is disappointed in the twisted word of God, he falls in the opposite direction and gets trapped in the other extreme. Often, those who see that in addition to a part of God there is a part of them, throw themselves to another margin, titled: "We take everything by force and everything depends

only on us." This is the exact opposite of a passive and all-justifying Christian. Such Christian is very active, relies on his own strength, chooses goals, direction for himself and tries to use the word of God, the Holy Spirit and the blood of Jesus to achieve what he wants. Such Christian is characterized by self-persuasion, confession of faith, the application of various principles and rules in order to achieve the goals of God and fulfil the calling by his own strength. Such Christian begins to manipulate God, tries to convince Him and "force" Him to do what he wants. Bombarding the gates of heaven, such Christian cry out to God in the face: *"Now, a blessing belongs to me, I take everything by faith, Lord, I demand, you must help, You can, You will succeed, You are good and powerful."* In the prayers, he wants to persuade, encourage, and force God to act faster and more powerful. God acts too slowly for him, so he tries to push God using his own sincerity, works and heroic deeds in order to convince God to act faster.

On this roadside a Christian does not get disappointed in his own strength and does not see the need for God's guidance and help. Therefore, there is a danger for him to get stuck in self-righteousness and become a hostage of religion. However, God is merciful, and He allows such Christian to reach the place when he finally gets disappointed in himself, in his efforts, and in his strength. This happened to many servants of God, starting from Abraham, ending with apostle Peter. Abraham himself tried to fulfil God's promise. That's why Ishmael was born. Peter tried to follow Jesus relying on his own strength, so he disowned Jesus three times. Such things happen to Christians who are approaching a dangerous margin called: *"I can do everything for God."*

However, the Lord leads us in the middle of the road and desires to protect us from these extremes. Sometimes we get into these extremes, but only for the purpose of getting experience. After such experiences will never leave the middle of the path along which the Holy Spirit leads us.



So, how to combine the truths of the word of God: 1) "*Without Me you can do nothing*" and 2) "*Everything is possible for him who believes.*" The first truth from the Bible is willingly repeated by those who place all responsibility for their actions on God, and those who trust in their own strength willingly quote the word of God about the inexhaustible possibilities of the believer. However, both of these truths are important. They ARE NOT INDEPENDANTE. There are no separate independent truths in the Bible. All of them are connected and reveal perfect unity in the person in Jesus Christ.

The Lord wants you to understand what is God's responsibility, and what is yours. God's word calls Christians God's co-workers. In faith, there is always a part of God and a part of man. God has done the plan of salvation, you accept it. God opens your eyes - you see, He pronounces the word of healing – you

react and receive healing, He calls – you respond and come, He shows, He leads and helps – you go, He heals – you put your hands on the sick, etc.

For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building. (1 *Corinthians* 3:9)

It is very important to understand that although we must do our part, but we are also completely dependent on God. It is not us who take it ourselves, but it is given to us. It is not we who come up with callings and goals in our lives, but we are called and guided. It is not we who speak the principles of faith, but we use our ears to hear the word of God, which brings the faith.

This is called “walking with God”. He takes a step; you copy the same thing. It's like one person's two legs. The Lord puts one foot forward, and the other joins in from behind, taking the same step that He made before. It's the same with the Christian. We are one body in spirit with Christ. God wants to walk and move on earth, so He takes the first step in encouraging, showing, teaching, and giving us strength and as a second leg, we respond to His action, and do the same thing—obey.

Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. (*John* 5:19)

Human effort. So, in order to avoid the above extremes, you need to understand what our efforts are for. Even if you try to ignore it, but nevertheless, there is a place in the Bible dedicated to the efforts of believer.

Sometimes a Christian, after great efforts and failures, is disappointed in the results, cease to pray and gets tired. The motto of his failure is the conclusion "*I have tried so many times, I have made such a tremendous effort, but nothing happened.*" Such Christian feels, as if, beating his head against a wall that does not even think to move from place. However, there are other Christians who completely ignore any efforts and say that God has done everything, you only need to trust Him, i.e. do nothing.

The Bible clearly shows that in addition to the work done by God, there is also a part of the believer, i.e. there is a place dedicated to our efforts. However, sometimes a Christian after many failures avoids making any efforts, fearing to receive reproaches that sound like this: "*God did everything, if you try, then you will have the opportunity to boast of yourself, and God will not allow it, so, do not even try, you will still fail.*" How to explain in the Bible such contradictory truths, one of which proclaims that God has already blessed us with all the blessings and has done everything, and the other say should put efforts staying in the faith.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, **make every effort** to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, (*2 Peter 1:10*)

It is important to understand what the basis of the efforts is, and what is their purpose. It depends on these two things whether our efforts will bring us closer to God and be a blessing or become a burden that brings slavery and disappointment.

It's very similar to two people who iron laundry. The person irons laundry with iron connected to electricity, and the other with iron disconnected from the electricity grid. Both of them perform the same movements, but their results are different. The laundry of the one who irons without electricity will be difficult and the person probably will get angry and disappointed. He will not understand why with so much effort, i.e. performing the same actions (prayer, communication and the word of God), his laundry remains the same (his life does not change). Opposite, the one who makes a laundry with iron connected will get results (life will change), and his mood will be good, because he will see that the efforts are accompanied by some other force (electricity). Both people do the same deeds (prayer, word of God, communion, etc.), but their results are different. Thus, the mere revelation of what is the basis of your efforts, determines their results as well.

The basis of our effort. So, the Christian, first of all, must understand what the basis of his efforts is. If the main motive of your efforts is the desire to get something from God, to appear better, to become righteous in His eyes, or to change your character, then the results of your efforts will not be divine and accompanied by His power. You will be like a person making the laundry with an iron not connected to electricity. As much as you try to wave your hands with an iron, the results will be miserable. This is what happens to some Christians who are trying to do what Jesus did. They are unhappy and lack something, so they make tremendous efforts to get it from God.

However, the apostle Peter shows in his epistle what, in fact, the basis of our efforts must be. Peter's second epistle says that God has given us EVERYTHING we need for life, and He has also made promises about the coming age. This shows that we

already have everything. This is followed by the key word "THEREFORE". Peter goes on to say that based on God's previous work, we would make an effort.

His divine power **has given us everything** we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he **has given us his very great and precious promises**, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. **For this very reason**, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; (2 *Peter* 1:3-5)

The reason for our efforts is that we have already received everything from God. We put our efforts not because we are miserable and lacking God's love and power, but that we already received everything we need. We do not need to make efforts to prove that God saved us, purified us, justified us, provided for us, and raised us with Christ. Such efforts would be in vain. However, your efforts must be based on the God's work and the promises from which you take your stand, and, thanks to this understanding, the supernatural power of God will begin to flow into your life.

How often does a Christian try to stand the sand, thinking that the reason for his efforts is that he has nothing and has not received anything from God, that he is not loved and acceptable to God, so he needs to put efforts to please Him. No matter how much you put efforts, you will always feel like you lack something, and you will feel unhappy and unloved by God. It is not surprising that the efforts to pray, to read the word of God,

to go to church, to do good deeds and to offer money with the motive "*I have nothing and I am bad*", do not reveal the character of Christ, but deepen the religiosity, which manifests itself in unhappiness or boasts of its own deeds done on the basis of these efforts.

The Christian's efforts flow from God's love, peace and faith in His work. The basis of the Christian's efforts is Christ, His sacrifice, and His work on the cross. Only this motivates and encourages him. There is no tension, discontent and anger in these efforts. The source of these efforts is gratitude and thirst to know your Savior, Jesus.

The purpose of our effort. Another thing that puts a Christian in the right place, where the power and grace of God pours out, is the understanding of what is the purpose of our effort is.

As for the same comparison with a person who makes a laundry, it is very important, where his focus is directed. If he focuses on the source to which the iron is connected and thanks to which electricity flows, then the results can also be poor. He should not worry and concentrate on the electricity source but to pay attention to the laundry process.

When our efforts are focused on results but not on the person Jesus Christ, then we are often disappointed and do not understand the action of God. If you try to build the largest church, to solve your own and others' problems, to have a fruitful service, then over time, you can be disappointed in your efforts. The purpose of our efforts is to know the Lord Jesus Christ. He never disappoints.

What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of **knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ (*Philippians 3:8*)

When we focus only on the Lord's answers, His gifts, actions and His power, then we can get lost and be disappointed. He responds, leads not in the way we imagine. Therefore, if the purpose of our efforts is to receive God's power, to see miracles, to have the ministry or to be very holy, we can stray to the extreme. As the apostle Paul wrote, his main goal was to know Jesus Christ. As a result, he pressed forward and made huge efforts. The result of such efforts is always divine, i.e. the character of Christ is revealed. Such efforts do not disappoint, because they are accompanied by the supernatural power and grace of God, because it fits with the purpose of God. The basis of these efforts is Christ, its goal is also Christ, so the result will also be Jesus Christ.

So, your understanding of what is the source of our efforts and what is the purpose of these efforts, will determine whether the same works will be accompanied by grace and the supernatural power of God, or whether this, after all, will remain only your efforts. Understand that the source of your efforts is Christ. The goal and the result are also Christ. Our ministry and works must reveal in others the character of Christ but not increase the number of believers. Therefore, the word of God proclaims that all and in all is Christ.

Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but **Christ is all, and is in all.** (*Colossians 3:11*)

CHAPTER VIII SPIRITUAL FOOD

Every Christian desires to grow in the knowledge of God, and to see the church mature and full of the glory of God. Namely, in this area, the devil tries to rob Christians, distort the word of God and stop the spiritual growth. The devil tries to replace spiritual food with various surrogates, so that the Christian not only does not grow into the knowledge of Christ but is poisoned.

Many Christians ask the question, why is what God promised twenty years ago not happening, why is there no spiritual growth, although external behaviour is not so bad compared to unbelievers? What is so important, what is missed, and very simple, what do we ignore? This is spiritual food.

Our physical body grows from a small embryo, and then a baby, to a mature and full-matured person. How does this happen? This happens for only one reason. The body is constantly nourished. Food enters the body and not only gives strength to live but also becomes an integral part of the body. **Our body consists of eaten food.** Thanks to food, it changes and grows. The same thing happens with our spiritual body. The only thing that influences our spiritual growth is the constant eating of spiritual food.

The Bible talks about food from the very first to the last page. After creating the man, God told them to reproduce, rule and manage the earth. To fulfil this calling God prepared the food. Therefore, God commanded Eve and Adam to eat from all the trees except, from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The successful or unsuccessful fulfilment of God's calling was

related to not with Adam's ability and wisdom to manage and to take care of the earth, but with the correct diet. Also, in the Old Testament, special attention was paid to what should or shouldn't be eaten by the Israelites. The source of the successful service of many of God's servants and the supernatural power of God was not their mind and sincerity, but their correct spiritual diet. In order for Samson to be born, his mother had to listen to dietary instructions. After the birth of Samson, he was given commandments on how he should feed himself so that God's power could work in his life. The prophet Daniel began his service to God with the fact that he decided to eat only what is good in the eyes of God. Why did God pay so much attention to food in the Old Testament? Does he only care about the health of our body? Why did Jesus, when he came to earth, spoke of Himself as food and introduced a new diet to the Israelites? He said about Himself that He is water, bread and called His blood and body the real food. Why does the Bible end with the image of the tree of life and the river from which the saved people will have the right to eat and drink? Why is the Bible, as it were, a cookbook that talks so much about food and the right diet?

Today we live in the quick problem-solving society where fast food, quick bank loans, quick friends in social media, quick pills to lose the weight, various quick online services impose to Christians understanding about quick spiritual food and therefore, fast spiritual food. Spiritual growth depends only on what you eat. Spiritual fruits and the character of Christ are not formed at the touch of a button. Many Christians wander from one community to another, look for special principles and formulas in the word of God, chastise all the anointed servants of God and ask them to put their hands on them, fall under the power of God and do many similar things for ten years, but cannot achieve spiritual maturity. Very often, Christians begin

to look for miraculous formulas and buttons, thinking that when someone puts their hands on them and pronounces the words "in the name of Jesus Christ be a mature Christian", they will instantly become mature Christians. In the absence of a sudden change, Christians are looking for various curses of their ancestors, hidden sins or some unlearned principle, which, if applied, would lead to the appearance in their lives of the character and fruits of Holy Spirit. Fleeing in such a carousel of searches, Christians lose time and enter into the long-term fasting of the inner man, who, without receiving spiritual food, is weakening. It is not surprising that then there is no strength and desire not only for prayer, but also for communion with God.

Before His death, Jesus repeated and emphasized to His disciples the need to stay in Him.

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.
(John 15:4)

It is only by constantly remaining in Jesus that the fruits of the spirit begin to naturally grow in our lives. Our purpose as branches is, simply, to hang, connecting to the source, and to accept into ourselves the nutrients flowing from the trunk. If we are constantly accepting spiritual food within ourselves, it is only a matter of time before spiritual fruits will mature in our lives and the character of Christ will come to the surface.

The devil at first does not propose to sin. He, exhausts Christian, weakens him and only then enslaves. We become weakened when we stop eating and drinking. When we think that we can

survive with yesterday's revelations, knowledge or testimonies of what He did yesterday, we are wrong. Just like the physical body, so the spiritual one, needs food every day. The whole Bible speaks of the need for a person to constantly accept food. In the Old Testament images pointed to the coming Christ, who is the true food for our spirit. The most important thing that influences not only our spiritual growth, but also the building of the church, is the constant acceptance of spiritual food. Therefore, Jesus said that He was the chief shepherd who puts His shepherds and servants in the church, whose main task is to provide the flock with spiritual food.

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household **to give them their food** at the proper time? (*Matthew 24:45*)

Therefore, the most important thing for a Christian is to constantly eat appropriate and healthy spiritual food. If our body eats unhealthy food, then, accordingly, we feel and act. It's the same with a spiritual person. If he feeds on diluted surrogates, criticism, gossip and quarrels proposed by the devil, then the Christian begins to feel bad and loses strength. Then Christ becomes unreal and distant, and the church, only the place of religious rituals.

In order to understand and eat the right spiritual food, it is important, at first, to distinguish what is not spiritual food. Now there are many beautifully wrapped substitutes for spiritual food. What are they?

Good deeds are not spiritual food. This is one of the first and most common mistakes that Christians who have just believed

are so willingly immersed in. Good deeds are so fascinating. When we begin to compare ourselves to others, to read what the apostle Paul did, how much he prayed and fasted, how he took care of all the churches and devoted all his time to service, we are tempted to begin to feed ourselves with deeds and leave real spiritual food. The Christian begins to think that by increasing the number of good deeds, he will grow faster in the spirit. Putting an unbearable burden on his shoulders, he begins to pray four hours a day, attend all meetings, get up at night and pray. After a few days, he is so exhausted that at the end of the week he no longer wants to see in his eyes not only Christians, but also the Bible. The word about service, prayer and communication makes him sick. This mistake is made due to the fact that the spiritual food is mixed and replaced with the result. Good deeds are not spiritual food, they are only a consequence of good spiritual nutrition. We do good works not because we draw closer to Christ and know Him more, but because we are strengthened in spirit because of the right spiritual diet. Spiritual food gives strength to spiritual works. Therefore, in order to grow in the spirit, you need to constantly eat real spiritual food. Works do not raise a Christian but **show** and **testify** to his relationship with God.

Who is wise and understanding among you? **Let them show** it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. (*James 3:13*)

The apostle James writes in his epistle that works of wisdom show and testify of the wisdom that exists. The devil, on the contrary, tries to distort the word of God and says that in order to receive wisdom, it is necessary to do works of wisdom. He swaps a horse with a chariot and says that good deeds will

cultivate wisdom. However, everything is the opposite - wisdom increases the works of wisdom.

The ministry is not spiritual food. This is a very similar error to the one mentioned above. A Christian thinks that in order to know God and get closer to Him, he needs to increase the service or begin to serve. Then such service does not convey the character of Christ. The opposite happens: such service transmits pressure and manipulation in order to change others or to prove one's relationship with God through the service. The essence of the service is to pass on the Spirit of Christ and His character to others, so service is a consequence of our relationship with God, which is directly proportional to the amount of spiritual food we have eaten. The more we eat spiritual food, the more we know our Lord Jesus, and the stronger we become, able to serve and pass on to others the testimony of Christ that we have cultivated by feeding on spiritual food within ourselves. Therefore, in order to serve more efficiently, it is necessary to increase not the service and the amount of work, but to eat more spiritual food and change spiritual diet. The basis of the apostle Paul's ministry was the revealed Jesus inside him, which he preached. As we serve, we pass on to others Jesus, who is inside us.

to reveal **his Son in me** so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. (*Galatians 1:16*)

Miracles are not spiritual food. Very often it happens that a Christian exchanges spiritual food for miracles. Thinking that the miracle he saw brings him closer to Christ and strengthens his faith, the Christian begins to strive for miracles. However, this is one of the biggest deceptions. Miracles are signs pointing

to Christ but not feeding you. When, after a miracle performed with several loaves of bread and fish, the crowd came to Jesus and waited for the miracle that follows from Him, Jesus told them that these miracles were intended to direct them towards real food, i.e. Jesus. The Lord began to teach them about Himself as true spiritual food.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (*John 6:51*)

Jesus is the living bread that comes from heaven. The Lord sought to show that it is not miracles that give eternal life and nourish the spirit, but Jesus. Therefore, miracles are just road signs that indicate the direction, so that you turn and go to the one who provides real spiritual food. In the Bible we read that there were many Israelites who saw the mighty works and miracles of God in the wilderness, watched the miracles performed by the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and also saw the works done by Jesus, but remained unbelievers. Miracles did not feed or strengthen their hearts. They only showed the way to the source of miracles.

Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. (*John 12:37*)

Miracles do not depend on our spiritual standing. They are not intended to testify to how mature we are. Miracles and signs testify and confirm the message about Jesus by pointing the finger at the source of faith and eternal life.

Spiritual food. Like carnal food, so is spiritual, it is divided into liquids and solid food. Without solid food, a person can survive longer than without liquids. The same is the case with spiritual nutrition. Fluids are the first and most necessary food for a Christian. So, without spiritual liquids we cannot survive, grow and follow Jesus?

- **Blood**

The first and most necessary spiritual food that we receive inside ourselves is the blood of Jesus. It's not just a symbolic meaning, but the real drink. In the Old Testament, it was forbidden to drink any kind of blood. The blood of the sacrificed animals was splashed on people and objects. Drinking blood was unimaginable and understood as the greatest crime. However, Jesus, speaking of His blood, said that we shall drink it. It is not surprising that many Jews resented it and called it a "difficult teaching."

Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. (*John 6:53*)

Speaking of His blood as a drink, Jesus wanted to say that it is not for our body, but for our spirit. Believing that the blood shed by Jesus on the cross brings forgiveness for all our sins, we let it in. For this reason, faith in His blood cleanses our consciences and from that moment on we do not feel any remorse and condemnation of conscience. The blood of Jesus cleanses not our physical body, but our conscience. In the Old Testament, only external behaviour was cleansed with the blood of animals, because the blood of animals only touched the outside of man. However, the blood of Jesus works so powerfully that it cleanses

not our behaviour, but our conscience. Therefore, by drinking His blood by faith, we can walk continually in the light without any stain of reproach and guilt.

For my flesh is real food and **my blood is real drink.** (*John 6:55*)

Blood has two functions. The first is to remove carbon dioxide from the body, and the second is to bring oxygen and nutrients. So does the blood of Jesus. He washes away our sins from the conscience, eliminating guilt, reproaches and condemnation, and then - brings the nutritional substances to the spirit: peace, forgiveness, joy and reassurance in God's love.

Some Christians believe that the blood of Jesus is needed only at the beginning of their faith, when our past is washed away by the blood of Jesus or only when we sin. Such an approach is similar, if you say that a person needs only a blood transfusion, but not a constant flow of it. Faith in the blood of Jesus is needed every day. Thinking about His blood fills us with God's life, joy, peace and faith. For this reason, we are getting stronger and able not only to serve, but also boldly to communicate with people. Faith in His blood constantly keeps us in the light, i.e. in a clean conscience that opens our inner being to the grace of God. Then the power of God does not "shake" or gives external manifestations, but touches and enters our inner being, giving a supernatural character that manifests itself in serving and communing with God and people.

Some Christians try to splash the blood of Jesus on houses, cars, things and their behaviour. It is not surprising that then the life of God remains somewhere on the outside, and the Christian has no power to live a supernatural life. Therefore, it is very

important that through faith the blood of Jesus enters our inner being, touching not only conscience but also motives and the deepest thoughts. The blood of Jesus opens the way for God's nutrients to get inside of us and nourishes our spirit.

- **Water.**

Our physical body cannot survive without water. Also, our spiritual body constantly needs **spiritual** water. The Gospel of John records Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman at a water well. In this place, where the Samaritans came to draw water, Jesus spoke of another water, which He promised to give to everyone who desires. Jesus said that spiritual water will not only satisfy the desire of the heart, but also become a well, from which the person will be able to constantly draw a spiritual drink.

but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”
(*John 4:14*)

What is the spiritual water and how to drink it? In the Bible, water very often symbolizes the word of God, but the water offered by Jesus is different. This is not the written word of God, as a letter, but the word of God, spoken by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.
The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. (*John 6:63*)

Before His death, Jesus promised that every person who believed in Him would be able to receive spiritual water, which

is the word of God spoken and brought by the Holy Spirit. Many Christians still feed on the letter, i.e. the written word of God, which is a standing water. The letter does not move and does not speak, but only lists the rules, describes the events and explain certain norms. Written but not spoken to you personally, the word of God does not give life, but kills. However, our spirit can only be nourished by running water, i.e. the word of God spoken and influenced by the Holy Spirit. Then such word is not a letter, but a Spirit. The letter was dedicated to the body, and the Spirit to the reborn spiritual man. Therefore, now, reading the Bible, you meet the person Jesus Christ.

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty **come to me and drink**. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this **he meant the Spirit**, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (*John 7:37-39*)

What kind of water do you drink - standing or flowing? The flowing water indicates that the word of God is spoken, and you hear it with your spiritual ears. Hearing God's word actually, you drink it. The word of God is spoken to you personally and comes not in the form of rules or norms, but as a person Jesus Christ. Some Christians study the Bible, graduate from Christian Bible colleges and schools, but God's life in them does not always grow after long hours of studies. Why? This happens because they feed on standing water, i.e. only in the general written word of God, as a set of rules, parables, examples or historical facts.

By reading the word of God in this way, you can flip through it as a thing and examine it as you wish. Often you can swipe the places of the Bible you like, and the unpleasant ones you can skip. The word of God, which you read as the letter is directed at external behaviour and tries to wash the body, change behaviour and implement the certain rules. For this reason, external behaviour changes, but the Christian remains hungry inside, and God's life in him does not grow.

However, Jesus promised that He would place inside of us a source of water that would gush for eternal life. This water well will move and speak within us. Therefore, when you read the word of God under the influence of the Holy Spirit, you submit yourself into the hands of another person. It is He who speaks, shows, teaches, and leads. Hearing the word of God inside the heart is a daily and necessary spiritual food. Without it, we do not have the strength to live supernaturally, and the character of Christ remains somewhere on the outside, like an inaccessible source of water.

The effect of God's word, which is given to us by the Holy Spirit, is very vivid. The water of the Spirit brings peace, certainty and trust in God, the person of Jesus becomes more real within us, fear is replaced by courage and worries are replaced by peace. On the contrary, the word of God, as a letter, brings fear, self-concern, confusion, disappointment in external behaviour, alienates the reality of God brings to our mind only the set of rules. Therefore, look at what fruits the word of God brings to you. From this you will recognize, whether you drink standing water, i.e. a letter, or flowing water - a life-giving Spirit.

- **Milk**

Another important spiritual liquid that is necessary in everyday life, and especially for Christians who have recently believed, is spiritual milk. In his epistle, the apostle Peter exhorts newly believed Christians to desire and drink spiritual milk, which is the pure word of God.

Like newborn babies, crave **pure spiritual milk**, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, (*1 Peter 2:2*)

What is the difference between spiritual water and spiritual milk? If, both water and milk, are the word of God, then what is the difference between them? In ordinary life, milk is produced not by baby, but by mother. Mom eats a firm meal, and, for this reason, milk is produced in her breasts. The baby does not need to take care and chew firm food, as he is given a ready-made concentrated liquid that holds the most important nutritious substances. The baby cannot yet eat solid food, so someone else needs to do this and provide already prepared and suitable food for the baby.

A similar thing happens in the spiritual life. Newly believed Christians do not yet have developed spiritual sight, hearing and teeth, and therefore cannot chew and eat solid spiritual food, the digestion of which requires not only time, but also a sufficiently developed digestive system. More mature Christians, who already are established in the fundamental truths of the word of God, carry spiritual milk within themselves, i.e. the revelation and reality of the fundamental truths of God's word in the practice of their lives, which they can clearly and simply present to newly believed Christians. Babies take spiritual milk directly,

absorbing the truths presented in the spirit without any chewing. These spiritual truths are not yet the real practice of their lives. It is not yet a real experience of these truths, but a spiritual food that prepares and gives newborns the strength to accept it and then practice it until they become an integral part of their lives.

Therefore, it is very important at the beginning of the Christian life to drink and accept the fundamental truths of the word of God, which are presented in the church through the servants of the word, i.e. evangelists, pastors, teachers, preachers and other members of the body of Christ. In the New Testament, we read that Timothy grew rapidly in the spirit, feeding on the milk given to him by the apostle Paul. Paul called Timothy his son in the faith, fed him, encouraged him, and taught him, presenting healthy teaching and demonstrating it in the practice of his life.

If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, **nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching** that you have followed. (*1 Timothy 4:6*)

Why do many newly believed Christians return to the world after a short period of time or grow up in the spirit? Very often this happens only because they do not receive proper spiritual milk, i.e. the pure word of God. Some people think that it is enough just to say the prayer of repentance, raise your hand, accept Jesus into your heart, and it's over. Many spiritual babies dear to God are left for spontaneous growth with the slogan "God gave birth, God will raise", so it is not surprising that already at the beginning of the faith, having not received proper spiritual food, they are disappointed in God and return to the world. The provision of spiritual milk is not a transfer of rules

and knowledge, but a supernatural and sincere care for spiritual babies. Just as in the natural life, so in the spiritual, the provision of milk requires patience, understanding, love and care from spiritual parents. As the baby grows stronger, his sight, hearing and ability to walk begin to develop. For this reason, the life of a Christian begins to reflect the fundamental truths of God's word enshrined in his heart, and he becomes capable of eating solid spiritual food.

Some Christians do not want to leave infancy, despite the fact that they have teeth to shew and legs to walk. They still want someone to carry them in their arms, take care of them and do everything for them. Spiritual babies of ten or twenty years old, still require special attention and care, although according to time, they should already take care of others. Then they resent and demand constant attention, they want everyone to ask questions and talk only about them, so that all prophecies are addressed only to them, and the pastor constantly invites them to dinner and devotes long evenings to their comfort and encouragement. When such baby sees a pastor or other Christians devoting more time to a newly believed brother, he, immediately, resents and murmurs: "*He no longer loves me, does not call me, does not inquire, ignores, does not come, does not talk.*" Then he begins to accuse the church of losing the first love, and he sees himself as a rejected and ignored child of God. Milk is not for you to stay in infancy, but to grow up in salvation and be able to produce milk yourself and feed others with it.

Is spiritual milk only for spiritual babies? The milk of God's word is needed not only for babies, but also for mature Christians. It protects us from pride and leaven, called "I already know." Sometimes spiritual self-sufficiency spreads among Christians under which, in fact, rebellion and pride are hidden.

The Christian then ignores the ministries of God's word in the church and begins to feel like he knows and is capable of everything. Spiritual milk causes laughter for prideful Christian, and those who drink it experience humiliation coming from self-sufficient Christians. However, sometimes happens that a Christian full of knowledge, stumbles and sees that he needs to establish himself in the foundational truths of the word of God, now no longer, as in knowledge, but, as in real spiritual experience. When we stumble, the Lord exhorts us to return to the milk of the pure word again so that, as we drink it, we may be restored and strengthened.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus counsels the Sardis Church to remember the foundational truths of God's word that they heard at the beginning of their faith. Due to the fact that this church left simple truths of the word of God, spiritual death came to this Church.

Remember, therefore, **what you have received and heard**; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. (*Revelation 3:3*)

In his epistle, the apostle Peter constantly recalls simple and many times preached things. He reminds all Christians of this, without distinguishing them by spiritual age. The pure word of God will be needed by us every day. Even if you devote a lot of time to the word of God, chewing and digesting it, do not let pride and knowledge of everything shut you down from other children of God, to whom the Lord can reveal spiritual truths and present it in the form of concentrated milk.

- **Bread**

Another necessary food in the life of a Christian is spiritual bread. The Bible contains many parables and examples related to bread. For example, when explaining to His disciples about the prayer, Jesus emphasized that they would constantly ask for daily bread. Bread in a person's life implies not only a specific product, but an answer to the constant need to maintain physical life. A person's physical life depends not on the abundance of wealth, strength or abilities, but on whether he will have bread, i.e. the right food, in order to quench hunger and gain physical strength. Without bread, a person's physical life is impossible. However, Jesus spoke of another food, i.e. spiritual bread, which is intended not for the physical body, but for the newly reborn human spirit. Jesus, as a person, is the bread that ensures not physical, but eternal divine life.

Then Jesus declared, **“I am the bread of life.** Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. (*John 6:35*)

However, how can this bread feed a Christian? Until His death on the cross, Jesus explained to all Israelites that He is the living bread. However, many did not understand what Jesus was talking about and hoped to receive the next miracle with the multiplication of bread. Although Jesus explained that He was the living bread, no one knew how to eat it. Neither miracles, nor healings, nor the teaching taught by Jesus, were yet the spiritual bread that the Lord promised to give. In the Gospel of John, Jesus explained that spiritual bread is His body, which He will give to every believer. Despite the miracles, healings, deliverances and numerous sermons that occurred, no one had

tasted this spiritual bread until Jesus's death. Therefore, it is not surprising that many Jews, and even some of His disciples, did not understand when Jesus explained to them that His body, like bread, would not only be broken, but would also need to be eaten. Hearing the teaching about eating the body, the Israelites thought that Jesus went crazy. This spiritual truth was incomprehensible and covered up until the crucifixion of Jesus, during which His physical body was whipped (broken) and hung on the cross so that all those who desire could access and eat through faith the bread that gives eternal life.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven.
Whoever eats this bread will live forever. **This bread is my flesh, which I will give** for the life of the world.” (*John 6:51*)

Why Jesus's death on the cross is a daily bread, and why should it be constantly eaten? Many Christians imagine that the acceptance of this spiritual truth is only necessary at the beginning of faith, when we accept the sacrifice of Jesus by faith and receive a forgiveness of sins. Therefore, very often, having tasted one bite of this bread, the Christian sets out to run and work for God, and after a while, exhausted in the spirit, he does not understand why there is no strength to follow Jesus. If we limit the sacrifice of Jesus only to the forgiveness of sins, then we ignore this priceless spiritual food.

When the apostle Paul fed Christians with spiritual food, he constantly preached the message of the cross of Jesus, so that by accepting, living, and nourishing by this spiritual truth, Christians would grow into the knowledge of God. Why is this message so important not only at the beginning of faith, at critical periods in our lives, or when we sin, but also every day?

Why does this message unleash God's power in our lives? When a Christian stops feeding on the truth about Jesus' death, he begins to starve and weaken.

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (*1 Corinthians 2:2*)

Jesus's sacrifice is the door to all spiritual truths and the reaches of knowledge. No spiritual truth can be known, understood and experienced in a real way, bypassing the sacrifice of Jesus. It is only through the crucified Jesus that every spiritual truth, with the power of the Holy Spirit, becomes a reality in our lives. As we hear and receive Jesus' sacrifice at the beginning of the Christian life, we receive forgiveness of sins, peace, righteousness, love and other gifts from God. Then Jesus' sacrifice is to us, like the portal. However, later, the Holy Spirit begins to reveal that Jesus was not crucified alone. We were also crucified with Him. This truth frees the Christian from unnecessary efforts to repair, change, improve or punish himself. After this revelation, we see that half of the prayers become unnecessary, and even more of the deeds are meaningless. If the Holy Spirit is not allowed to feed us with Jesus's crucified body, all the spiritual truths we try to understand with our minds remain on the margins of our lives, and true spiritual food is replaced by our own efforts, and deeds.

If you do not ignore or underestimate the image of the crucified Jesus and let the Holy Spirit reveal that you too are dead with Jesus, then His death begins to work in you. The victory over the world and yourself becomes real, thanks to spiritual food, i.e. the body of Jesus. You are dead to yourself and to the world, but alive to God. If a Christian tries to create this death and

divine life for himself by various persuasions, confessions and willpower, but not through the sacrifice of Jesus, then he, in fact, leaves the real bread and feeds on food that cannot satisfy his spirit. Such Christian does not understand why he is unhappy, often falls and cannot receive, what God promised in Jesus Christ. However, everything is accessible only in Jesus Christ, i.e. through His crucified body.

Jesus' sacrifice opens up not only the truth that you are crucified, but also the path to His resurrected life. Healings are also available through the sacrifice of Jesus. Many Christians are looking for especially anointed servants of God, go to various conferences and do not understand that healing is easily achieved by eating His body.

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; **“by his wounds you have been healed.”** (*1 Peter 2:24*)

When the Holy Spirit reveals that sickness is condemned and crucified in the body of Jesus, the healing power of God begins to work in your life. When true spiritual bread is replaced by psychological means, persuasions, confessions and various formulas, then healing moves away from us.

When we do not ignore Jesus's crucified body as food but stand patiently and wait for the Holy Spirit to reveal the even greater riches that God has placed in Jesus Christ, other spiritual truths come into our inner being. When we eat spiritual bread, i.e. Jesus's death begins to act in our life, while His resurrected life pours into others. The Christian becomes fruitful only thanks to the spiritual bread, when he eats it constantly.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. **If you remain in me** and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (*John 15:5*)

It is impossible to list all the riches of knowledge and glory that are placed in Jesus Christ and accessible through an open door, i.e. the crucified body of Jesus. Therefore, Jesus explained to the disciples that asking for daily bread from God does not mean being constantly concerned about the physical food. Jesus made it clear that the Father knows that we need such things and gives them without reproach and even before asking for it. However, Jesus counsels to ask daily for spiritual bread and wait at the open door, i.e. the crucified body of Jesus, so that the Holy Spirit may open even deeper meaning and practical application of what Jesus' sacrifice is.

Why did the first Christians and apostles have so much spiritual strength, wisdom, and why they were so fruitful? Did they have a very strong character, distinguished by eloquence or did they have the Internet, big auditorium, cars and influential relationship with the government? The New Testament reveals that the disciples of Jesus did not have special qualities, often stumbled and made mistakes, but, nevertheless, were very fruitful. Does Jesus have clever and exceptional people? The only reason that enabled them to be fruitful in Jesus was to stay in Him, namely, what Jesus emphasized before His death. Jesus revealed to His disciples the secret of how to stay in Him. The only thing that ensures the Christian's constant presence in Jesus is the daily eating of spiritual bread, i.e. identification himself with the sacrifice of Jesus and through it the constant acceptance of God's life.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. (*John 6:56*)

The sacrifice and death of Jesus on the cross was the daily bread of the disciples. They did not try to crucify themselves, did not copy Jesus and did not work where everything was already done. However, in the daily spiritual diet of the disciples, the body of Jesus was always served. By remaining in Him, they would allow the Holy Spirit to reveal what God did in Jesus Christ. It was not the apostles and the first church that were fruitful, but the sacrifice of Jesus still bears the fruit. If you remain in Him and eat this daily bread, it is only a matter of time before the sacrifice of Jesus begins to bear fruit in your life as well. There is only one real seed that bears fruit. This is the sacrifice of Jesus.

God's will

Another very important spiritual food in the life of a Christian is the will of God. Why does it happen that, despite the number of good deeds, intensive activities and efforts, a Christian can feel tired, exhausted and unhappy? Then he quietly resents, murmurs, and reproaches God for not helping to bear such a heavy burden of deeds and to do God's will.

Many believers think that fulfilling God's will is hard work that requires tremendous effort and strength. This thinking is based on the mistaken belief that the fulfilment of God's will is hard work, as if, serving and working for Him for the gifts and grace He has given. However, the opposite is true. The fulfilment of God's will do not exhaust but nourishes the Christian. When you do what God has called you to do, you are built and grow in the spirit. The fulfilment of God's will is not a burden, but a

blessing. Many Christians are afraid to know God's will in their lives, thinking that He will tell them to do it on their own. It is not surprising that then the Christian hides from God and does not accept from Him one of the most important spiritual dishes, i.e. knowledge of God's will. Very often, the reason for the stagnant spiritual growth is the withdrawal from the spiritual diet of an important nutrient called "the will of God".

In the Gospel of John, we read that as the disciples travelled through Samaria, they left the tired, hungry and thirsty Jesus at the well and went to the villages to buy food. When they returned to Jesus with food, they found Him happy and satiated, not paying any attention to the food they brought. Jesus then revealed to the disciples the secret that God's will, in fact, is true food that does not exhaust, but strengthens. A conversation with a Samaritan woman, during which she was rebuilt and reconciled with God, strengthened and fed Jesus.

“My food,” said Jesus, **“is to do the will of him who sent me** and to finish his work. (John 4:34)

The fear of knowing and doing God's will is associated with the wrong thinking that came from the Old Testament, in which God's blessing came only after the rules were fulfilled. Following the rules, a person was not fed, but tried to fulfil the will of God, being hungry, and only after that hoping to receive a blessing. In the New Testament, the opposite is true. In the will of God there is a hidden blessing and reinforcement. In the fulfilment of the word of God, the Christian feeds and grows stronger. The blessing comes not after that, i.e. after the fulfilment of the will of God, but in the process itself. In the Old Testament, the purpose of fulfilling God's will was to receive a blessing, and in the New Testament, God's very will is the food

that holds a blessing within itself. Therefore, anyone who listens to God's word and applies it in his life is blessed and grows in knowledge of God's will.

He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." (*Luke 11:28*)

However, why sometimes good deeds do not strengthen a Christian? It's like a ship standing by the shore and not knowing which side to go to, because there's so much water around and there is such a wide horizon. Often before our eyes we see thousands of possible good deeds, various initiatives, activities and advice, but it is impossible to fulfil them all. How to know which direction to take? If a Christian tries to do any good deeds, to copy the ministries of others and to compare himself with others, he can get lost in this ocean of good deeds and options. It is not surprising that sometimes a Christian does good deeds, serves and works, but inside he feels tired, depressed and perplexed.

In the New Testament, we read that God has prepared good works for each of us in advance that he wants us to do. These are works that are personally prepared for every Christian, which no one else can do, but only the one to whom they are assigned.

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which **God prepared in advance for us to do.** (*Ephesians 2:10*)

When a Christian, being placed in the body of Christ as an eye, tries to hear and copy what the ear does, he feels unhappy. As much as he tries to hear and compare himself to the ear, he will

constantly blame and reproach himself for not being able to hear and will think that he is a hypocrite who has no desire to step in the service of the ear. Many Christians feel unhappy being out of their place and doing the things they have chosen for themselves, or that others have imposed on them. In the eyes of men, these works may seem good and even correspond to the works described in the word of God. However, such works will be contrary to the Spirit of the word of God, who distributes it to each according to the calling.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. (*1 Corinthians 12:11*)

The works that God assigns to you always are accompanied with God's power, grace and supernatural ability. The apostle Paul wrote in his epistles that he was empowered to perform the assigned service by God, giving him appropriate grace and strength. When an evangelist tries to be a teacher and a teacher an evangelist, the church suffers, and the servants feel foolish and do not understand the resistance they meet on the path of the ministry. They try to beat their heads against the wall, drive the devils and "push" everything forward with their own strength, but do not get blessed results. When a Christian with the gift of an administrator tries to be a pastor, and a pastor an administrator, then the grace of God cannot flow, and everything is built by human efforts, earthly wisdom, marketing and other secular means. Then the results are unstable, human, and, despite the number of people in the church, the character of Christ and the glory of God are not manifested.

When Christian serves not according to his call and tries to copy others, he feel as if he feeds others with their deeds, while

himself he feels exhausted and tiered. Then, he asks why the will of God he tries to fulfil is not feeding and strengthen him? At that time, there is a silent reproach to God, and then, to others, complaining about the lack of results, insufficient desire and help from others. Without eating God's will, the Christian is exhausted, disappointed in God, becomes irritable and reproaches others. Such Christian pours out the inner discomfort by pressing and demanding others to serve and help him to do what he is not called to do.

Knowing God's will and eating it is not a one-time knowledge of whether you are a spoon or a knife in the body of Christ, but a constant search and remain in the works that God does in your life. As soon as a Christian allows the Holy Spirit to direct his ship of faith to that part of the ocean where he is to sail, the Christian begins to grow in spirit while the service to others brings supernatural satisfaction, happiness and peace. Then the Christian does not demand good deeds from others but is perfectly happy to do what God has assigned him to do. Then there is the grace in his life, which God is pouring out, so that these works and service may be performed not by human efforts, but by the power of God.

The apostle Paul revealed in his epistle to the Corinthians that it was only by God's grace that he was able to do so many good works. He did what he was called to do.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. (*1 Corinthians 15:10*)

Therefore, never compare yourself with others, do not copy the works that others do, do not judge brothers and sisters who, perhaps, do not serve like you, but eat the knowledge of God's will directly from the hands of Jesus, so that you can walk in the grace that is assigned to you. You are a unique member of the body of Christ and there is no one like you. Be happy in the service of a living God, because the service assigned to you does not take away your strength but rather gives it to you.

- **Solid meat**

Another spiritual food that the Holy Spirit serves to maturing Christians is a solid meat. This meal is not suitable for spiritual babies, not because they are ugly or disregarded by God, but because the spiritual practice of their lives is not yet ready to bear some spiritual truths. Among Christians, there is sometimes a misconception about solid food, when "super spiritual" Christians begin to share special revelations that are not in the Bible, go deeper into the spiritual world, discuss the appearance of angels and demons, the structure of the heavens, special revelations about the behaviour of other Christian, motives and secret tasks from God. Solid food is not new revelations or hidden information not yet described in the Bible. These are the simplest truths, but their real experience and practice is possible only at a certain spiritual age.

But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (*Hebrews 5:14*)

How does solid food come about? Solid food differs from milk. In order to assimilate it you need to devote time and chew it. The assimilation of food does not occur immediately, but

must go through a certain process, i.e. takes time. This is not a one-time reading of a verse of God's word or placing information in the mind. When a Christian reads the word of God and bends his ear to hear what the Holy Spirit wants to say, the revelation and understanding of spiritual truth does not come immediately. When a Christian begins to apply the truth, he hears into practice, the spiritual meaning of this truth opens before his eyes. When we apply the revealed spiritual truth, then we begin to understand this not as a theory, but as a reality and truth spiritual meaning. The mature Christian resembles to an "clean" animal (described in the Old Testament), which, at first, swallows food, and then, once again sews it and assimilates in small portions. In the Old Testament there is description and categorization of clean animals, which were allowed to be eaten. One of the signs of the clean animal was the ability to sew. This image points to how we listen to the word of God. The swallowed truth we hear, after the process of rethinking go back to the surface of our hearts again and again and consequently reveal to us the truth meaning of it.

Solid food indicates the fact that there is also a certain consistency in the spiritual diet. A Christian eats food according to his spiritual age and assimilates spiritual truths in the consistency provided by the Holy Spirit. Despite the fact that Jesus taught and interpreted the word of God, some truths could not yet be accepted by His disciples. At the Last Supper, Jesus told the disciples that He no longer called them servants, but friends because He had revealed everything to them. But at the same time, He warned that they could not yet bear everything. For example, Peter knew and wanted to follow Jesus, but could not practically bear the truth that the path after Jesus leads to the cross, so he disowned his teacher three times.

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. (*John 16:12*)

Likewise, the apostle Paul wrote in a letter to the Corinthians that he could not speak to them as spiritual and nourish them with milk because among them there were still jealousy, divisions and other carnal works. Strong food is not some kind of new and special information, but a spiritual truth about the cross of Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? (*1 Corinthians 3:1-3*)

At the beginning of the path of faith, spiritual truths are revealed to the Christian about what he has in Jesus Christ. In order for a Christian to become a blessing to others, at first, he must experience that he himself is blessed. Therefore, the Holy Spirit, at first, feeds on food, telling him about the fact that he is blessed, loved and wonderful. At that time, carnality is still manifested in the life of a Christian. However, later God begins to show that not only the Christian is blessed, but he is called to be a blessing to others.

Then the Holy Spirit begins to reveal the spiritual truth not only about the death of Jesus, through which the Christian received everything, but also about the death of Jesus in Christian himself, through which others will receive God's blessing. The

outer cross of Jesus becomes the inner cross, and the word about the cross becomes the truth inside, which constantly feeds the Christian. An immature and carnal Christian cannot digest this truth with his heart, because inside him there is still a desire to grab, take from others and to use it for his own interests.

How do you know when spiritual food gets inside? Often, a Christian is faced with the question: "*How do I know whether, when reading the Bible, I eat, how to distinguish, whether I just have read the simple information or actually have eaten it?*". The first sign that food gets inside the Christian is the acceptance of spiritual truth as the PERSONAL revelation. As long as the Christian thinks that Christ forgave all sins and died for everyone, but not for him personally, then this spiritual food is still outside, but when he sees that Christ died personally for his sins, that he was personally forgiven, and that he was personally healed by God, it means that the food has gone inside. Then the food becomes part of the Christian, which no one can steal. It is impossible to separate the eaten food from the body.

and all it takes is one. Mary has chosen the best part that will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:42)

CHAPTER IX MAIN BATTLE

The main battle in which the Christian experiences the resistance of the devil has to do with the image, what kind of God the Christian sees through the eyes of his heart. The main purpose of the devil's deception is to distort the true image of God and convince the Christian that God is not what the word of God (the Bible) tells. In the Bible, the devil is called the father of the lies. What lies are being talked about here? This is a lie spread by the devil, distorting the character of God. With our physical eyes, we do not see the spiritual world, so to know God based on what we see, or feel is impossible, or it will be a false and distorted image of Him. Only the word of God reveals the true character of God as well as the ways and motives of His action. The New Testament tells us that Christ is the word of God that has become in flesh and who has revealed to us what God and His character really are.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the **exact representation of his being**, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (*Hebrews 1:3*)

However, Christ did not reveal the outward appearance of God but revealed His character. Therefore, it is possible for us, who were born two thousand years after Jesus's life on earth, to know God not by looking at Him with physical eyes, but by opening the eyes of the heart, through the written word of God so see the truth character of God. The devil wants to interrupt or infect with the virus the truth image of God trying to paint the corrupted and distorted image through various circumstances,

feelings, and lies. The battle for the correct image of God takes place constantly. The devil is not afraid to plunge Christians into a battle against sin or the world. Many religions are struggling with sins and their consequences. Even unbelievers fight against various sins or shortcomings, trying to change the world and make it better. It is not surprising that many Christians are distracted from the main battle of the faith and dragged into side battles. The devil knows that by inserting into the program of your heart several wrong features of God and distracting you from the main battle, he can make your life difficult and without spiritual fruits. If he succeeds, then, despite great efforts and desires, you will be dragged into an intensive marathon of self-improvement, the fight for justice in the world and various religious works and traditions, which will rob you of joy of the victory over sin, the world and the devil. The key to a victorious life lies in the right image of God that you carry in your heart. If the seal of God's character coincides with the original, your life will be accompanied by the power and grace of God.

The fall of men began not with their disobedience to God, when they ate the fruits forbidden by God from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but when the devil managed to convince Eve, and then Adam, that God is not what His word is. Eve and Adam lost the battle for the right image of God and, for this reason, could not resist the temptation. The further life of the people and the growing authority of sin were only a consequence of the defeat of the main battle, in which God was not drawn in their hearts as His word is.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “**Did God really say**, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” (*Genesis 3:1*)

So, what kind of image of God is in your heart? At the beginning of the Bible, we read that the devil's first account about God, given to Eve, was a lie. The devil drew a picture of God who was insecure and hiding something from Eve. He argued that God hides the power of divinity from people and fears competition, so that man cannot become like God and acquire His attributes.

“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (*Genesis 3:5*)

Seeing such God, Eve was frightened and tempted to decide for herself what is good and bad, i.e. to live an independent life. For this reason, not only the lie, but robbery and finally death came into people's lives. The devil always acts in the same order. Without lies, he cannot steal, so he always begins with the lie presenting God in a corrupted way. Having believed in the wrong character of God drawn by the devil, a person starts to see himself naked, and, finally, is separated from the life of God.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (*John 10:10*)

In the Old Testament, we read about how the Israelites did not enter the Promised Land because of fear and disbelief. The reason for this was the wrong image of God painted in their hearts. Seeing the difficulties and unfavourable circumstances on the way to the Promised Land, they believed the wrong picture of God, draw drawn by someone. This picture was very different from the original one. Someone else, pointing to

difficulties and obstacles, drew in their hearts the features of an angry and hateful God.

You grumbled in your tents and said, “**The LORD hates us**; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us.
(*Deuteronomy 1:27*)

The Lord, who on his wings carried and guarded his people in the wilderness, showed great signs and miracles, fed, healed, and provided for them during the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land with love and patience, was painted in the eyes of the Israelites as a God who hated them. Where does this misinformation come from? It comes from the father of lies. Pointing to unfavourable circumstances, difficulties, mistakes and failures, the devil tries to convince every Christian that God is bad, not loving and not caring for his children.

The devil does not need to show the Christian the attractiveness of sin or scare him with various difficulties. It is enough for him to distort the character of God and convince the Christian of this. It is not surprising that at the moment the most frequently asked question among Christians is - "**Does God love me?**". His love is doubted not only by newly believed Christians, but also by Christians who have been believing for ten or twenty years. Where does the impression and persuasion that God does not love His children come from? Uncertainty about God's salvation, His love, and His power becomes the most basic and common lie traded by the father of lies. In the hearts of many Christians to this day, the image of a God who hates, punishes, is suspicious and selfish is being drawn. Who draws this image? This is the virus that the devil is trying to place in the hearts of Christians. Thus, the battle for the correct image of God in the

life of a Christian is the most important. We are called to know and carry the true image of God in the plates of our hearts.

and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge **in the image of its Creator.** (*Colossians 3:10*)

In the Old Testament, God forbade His people to draw, build, sculpt and look at any external form representing God. Why? Having created the wrong image of God, man is robbed of the blessings and then, killed. All human attempts to frame and outwardly portray God ended in an even greater breakdown of the human character. Looking at the idols created by their handwork, people became greedy and enslaved by ever greater sins. This was because the inside of a person changes according to the image he is looking at. When the people of Israel began to worship fake idols, paintings and other beautiful images of God, robbery and death came into their lives. Looking at temples and idols decorated with gold and wealth, they became like golden - greedy idols, and their insides became more and more greedy, frightened and unhappy.

To this day, the devil is trying to paint in the hearts of Christians a distorted image of God in order to steal and kill. Why, even among Christians, it is often said - "*God did not allow, took, did not give, punished, demands, does not love, is angry.*" The devil forces the Christian to look at circumstances, feelings or the fruits of his handwork (ministries, projects, and good deeds created on the initiative of man) so that, after having convinced him of the evil image of God, he can manipulate Christians through fear.

God forbade creating and looking at His image until the moment when Jesus came to earth and revealed to all what God really is. One of the main purposes of Jesus' coming to earth was to show everyone clearly and accurately what a God is like, about whom so much is talked. Now, Jesus has shown everyone what the Father is like. God, who forbade for a long time to look at the image of God produced by mans, now allowed to look and admire Jesus Christ. Jesus is the image of God. It is not only possible now to look at the truth image of God but even encouraged and asked to do.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. (*Hebrews 1:3*)

How do we see the exact image of God? Why is it so important to see the exact and true image of God? The Bible describes one spiritual truth that a person's character changes and depends on what he is looking at. The image that a person looks at begins to act in his life. If a person looks at an evil and insecure God, he tries to protect himself. Gradually, such a person becomes irritated, insecure, angry and nervous. Looking at the life of every Christian, we can say what kind of God he carries in his heart. If an unreliable and weak God is drawn in your heart, then you will be insecure, dissatisfied, enslaved by all sorts of fears and habits, and you will understand the relationship with God as formalities that do not change anything.

The apostle Paul writes in his epistle to the Corinthians that the essence of the ministry of the New Covenant is to paint an accurate image of Christ in the plates of the Christian's heart by

the service of the spirit, so that the Christian becomes a true reflection of God.

You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 *Corinthians* 3:3)

Why can't several Christians, trying to change and perfect themselves through various deeds and efforts, achieve anything? The apostle Paul reveals that it is not we who change ourselves, but we are changed by another person. God changes us only when we look at the image of Christ. It is only by raising our eyes boldly to the image of Christ and not letting them go down. Being set free from shame or fear, we are changed without any effort, simply because of the correct image that the Holy Spirit draws and presents in our hearts.

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 *Corinthians* 3:18)

It is not surprising that the main weapon of the devil against the Christian is an attempt to block and direct his gaze to anything but Christ. The Christian is tempted to look at his works, his ministry, his results, the stars of the Christian world, his blessings, and his own dreams, so that his gaze does not turn to the author of the faith, Jesus Christ, who alone can perfect our faith and make us like Him. The only condition is to look at Him.

Why did Peter go on the water? Because he saw Jesus walking on the water. Why did Jesus perform signs and miracles? Because Jesus saw Father working and doing. Abraham saw the heavenly city, so he walked out of his earthly city. They saw, **BECAUSE THEY LOOKED** in the right direction.

Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, **fix your thoughts on Jesus**, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. (*For the Jews 3:1*)

The stolen principle of reflection. The principle of reflection, which is described in the Bible and used by many men of God, is one of the most important blessings dedicated for the life of a Christian. This principle was revealed by God to Jacob in a dream in order to protect him from the deception of Laban. Jacob put striped sticks in the front of the sheep, so that the sheep would constantly look at the limped sticks during the mating season. Because of this, all sheep gave birth to a spotty. This principle shows that what you look at is what you become.

they mated in front of the branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. (*Genesis 30:39*)

Why did God reveal this principle and describe it in detail in the Bible? Did he care only about Jacob's well-being, or does this principle mean something for today's Christians as well? The devil cannot reverse this principle but distorts it and thus steals one of the greatest blessings. The Lord, through His various servants, has restored the principle of reflection at the church again, showing how to see with the heart what God is showing to you. But at the same time, the devil is trying to distort this

truth. He does not argue that it is important to see but suggests directing the gaze of the eyes of the heart elsewhere. The Christian is encouraged to look at the cars, big apartments, dreams he has created, and thus, with God's help, to get what he wants. And it works. The Christian gets what he looks at, but imperceptibly his heart also changes and resembles those things that he receives. When a Christian looks at a luxury car, he becomes greedy (in our days often it is called a "blessing"), when he looks at his dream list, he becomes selfish, when he looks at the crowds flowing to listen to his preaching, he becomes proud.

But the principle of reflection was reserved to look at Jesus Christ. The eyes of our hearts were created to look at the Lord. In his epistle to the Galatians, the apostle Paul exhorts believers to look at Christ crucified, because as we look at Him, His death and the power of His resurrection begin to work in us. Then this blessing actually comes into our lives.

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?
**Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly
portrayed** as crucified. (*Galatians 3:1*)

Who are you OR who are you in Him? There is a big difference between when we look only at ourselves and try to see ourselves better, more beautiful and stronger, and when we look at Jesus and, at first, we see only Him, and then ourselves, perfectly created in Him. So, there are two ways to see and understand yourself:

1. Who are you?
2. Who are you in Him?

Sometimes psychological methods begin to be used in churches, when a Christian is encouraged to look and see himself as he wants. It is based on various methods of self-conviction, persuasions and confessions. If a Christian mixes up the sequence set by God and begins, at first, to look only at himself, without looking at Christ, then he tries to change himself by various means of self-improvement, to see himself better, more beautiful and more powerful, for example, "*I can, I am strong, I am beautiful, I am perfect, I have friends, I have a good car, I will take it, I will reach, I will be able to, etc.*" Such self-conviction is very similar to the "popular psychology" so common in the world, with the help of which people try to imagine in their hearts what they want to have or to be. This self-awareness often penetrates Christianity, and in churches there is an unsettling use of the means of popular psychology, titled "*See yourself as you want to be, see what you want, and it will happen.*" When these principles begin to be used in the Christian life, then the Christian tries to change himself and makes tremendous efforts, yearning to see himself good and perfect, but nothing changes from such a method, and the Christian falls into the trap of illusions, which gradually leads to disappointment. But in reality, we are called to look not at ourselves, but at the image of Christ. As the consequences, later we will find ourselves in Him discovering our truth identity. When the eyes of our hearts look at Jesus, then the Holy Spirit shows us who we are in Him. Instead of dissatisfaction with ourselves and a desire to change ourselves, we are filled with gratitude to God for what He has done and how beautiful He has created us in Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, Jesus very often encouraged His disciples to remain in Him. In the epistles of the apostles we often find such seemingly incomprehensible and theoretical

expressions as "in Him", "in Christ", etc. Why does the Holy Spirit everywhere emphasize the need to abide in Him and look at Him? What does it mean? When we direct the desires and imaginations of our hearts to Christ and refuse, at first, to concentrate on ourselves, after a while God begins to reveal to us who we are in Christ. However, at first, we see only Jesus. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit invites every Christian to identify with Christ, i.e. with His death, burial, resurrection, reign in heaven, etc. We are inseparable from Christ, so if you look at Him, you will also begin to see yourself in Him. Never look at yourself separately from Christ. Then you will see a distorted image of yourself, and you will be tempted by the devil, to embark on a marathon of self-improvement.

Why does a Christian sometimes not find his calling and didn't see God's plan and action in his life? Very often, the reason is that a Christian tries to discover his calling, not looking at Christ, but analysing his life. The Holy Spirit, at first, directs the eyes of our hearts to the person of Jesus and invites us to analyse, admire, and observe Him. Then, without taking our eyes off the pioneer of our faith, we gradually also notice ourselves, wonderfully created in Him, having a certain function, plan, calling and future. When, at first, we read the word of God, we see only Jesus, but later the word of God fills us so much, that when we read about the Lord, we read, as if, about ourselves. Then, in the word of God, we begin to see ourselves as an integral part of Him. Finally, the calling and the purpose of our life begin to appear in our hearts.

The main contradiction. Why is it so important what you look at and what you analyse? Why is there such a strong spiritual struggle for the gaze of your heart? The devil will strive to direct your spiritual eyes from Jesus to other objects, such as service,

miracles, calling, good deeds, blessings, provision, cares, pleasures, and in every possible way try to overshadow and cover up the spiritual image of Christ shown to you by the Holy Spirit.

The struggle for the gaze of your eyes takes place not only inside, but also on the outside. Reading the New Testament, we see that the main contradiction was not between unbelievers and believers, but between Christians. This is still the case today, when the fiercest quarrels, confrontations and struggles take place between Christians, and the cause of these struggles, disagreements and anger, in most cases is a different vision of oneself. The main struggle takes place between those who look and analyse themselves separately from Jesus and are dissatisfied with themselves and, therefore, strive to change and become better, and those who see what they are **ALREADY IN CHRIST**. You will be persecuted and hated not because of what you have done, but because of who you are. If you identify with Christ and see yourself as an integral part of Him, then you will be persecuted for Christ.

From birth to death, Jesus was persecuted, chased, and hated for no reason, although no one could find guilt in Him or accuse Him of doing a bad deed. Jesus was persecuted not for what He did or taught, but for who He is.

“We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” (*John 10:33*)

When the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness, at first, he tried to bring doubts and uncertainty to Jesus that He was the Son of

God. The devil did not propose to sin or do evil, but to question who He was.

The tempter came to him and said, “**If you are the Son of God**, tell these stones to become bread.”
(*Matthew 4:3*)

Jesus was sentenced to death not because of what He did, but because of who He is. Neither the scribes and elders, nor Pilate could find any guilt or bad work in Jesus, but they still sentenced Him to death. For what? The main cause of Jesus' death was His identity. Jewish priests condemned Jesus to death for being the Son of God.

But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us **if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.**” “You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” “**He is worthy of death,**” they answered. (*Matthew 23:63-66*)

And the secular authorities, with Pilate at the forefront, sentenced Jesus to death for being a king.

So Pilate asked Jesus, “**Are you the king of the Jews?**” “You have said so,” Jesus replied. Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd,

“I find no basis for a charge against this man.” (*Luke 23:3-4*)

Thus, the reason for the hatred towards Jesus was His identity. The devil hates the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and the King. Jesus was convicted and betrayed by the most religious representatives of the Jewish people, who actually sought on the basis of the law to become better. They carried within themselves the same inexplicable discontent, anger, resentment, and hostility toward Jesus that the devil has. Why? The devil fell and was thrown out of the heaven because he sought to become somebody. He did not look at God in whom one can be perfect and happy but sought to become like God.

You said in your heart, “**I will ascend** to the heavens; **I will raise** my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. **I will ascend** above the tops of the clouds; **I will make myself** like the Most High.” (*Isaiah 14:13-14*)

To this day, the devil keeps in himself a grudge that he is not like God. He hates Christ for who He is, so the sons of disobedience inspired by the devil are unhappy with themselves and resent those who know who they are. They cannot stand those who know who they are in Christ.

Thus, to date, the greatest conflict is taking place between religious Christians who are improving themselves and trying to become Christlike in their efforts, and those who look at the Lord and see what they are already in Him. We also see this contradiction in the life of the apostle Paul, who was persecuted and hated not by the ungodly pagans, but by the most religious

and zealously seeking Jewish people. Paul was persecuted because he identified himself with Christ and perceived himself as an integral part of Him, so the same hatred that was shown to Christ fell on Paul.

After faith is born in the heart, two processes lie in front of Christian. If a Christian allows the Holy Spirit to turn his eyes to Jesus, the **process of knowing Christ begins**, but if he directs his gaze to himself, then the **process of self-improvement** will begin in his life. Therefore, do not stop looking at Jesus, because only in this way can you see yourself perfectly happy and have a different life.

CHAPTER X THE MIND

The word of God reveals the secret that all visible things came from the invisible. Before the creation of the world and the salvation of man, God already had all this within Himself. When the time came, He, simply, uttered the word and emerged visible from the unseen things hidden in God. They arose through the spoken Word of God.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that **what is seen was not made out of what was visible.** (*Hebrews 11:3*)

The fact that invisible things are the cause and source of the visible, we can also observe in nature, when, looking at a tree, we do not see its seed and roots, but we see big branches, trunk and fruits that have grown. The same is the case with man. External behaviour and life reflect the invisible part of a person, i.e. his inner being. As we read about the lives of the first Christians and apostles, we see their works, their sacrifice and the power of God, but we don't see the hidden part of where it came from. The visible behaviour, deeds and manifestations of God's power were a consequence and visible expression of their inner lives. Therefore, the most important thing for a Christian is to seek and look at what is invisible and to establish himself in the unseen things from which the visible things come.

For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body. (*2 Corinthians 4:18*)

Thinking is a hidden laboratory in which visibility is produced. One of the main and invisible instruments for the construction of divine life, is our mind. You see how a person behaves, but you do not see his thoughts. But, namely, thinking mostly influences external behaviour. Often, Christians focus on the visible part of life and try to change their external behaviour and increase the number of good deeds, but God's life does not grow from this. The reason for this is that one of the fundamental and most important hidden and invisible areas of our life, i.e. thinking, is ignored. Our thinking is like the root of our live with the help of which God's strength, peace, His will and supernatural life manifest itself in various forms. Thinking, opened to the word of God, brings into our lives divine nutrients that influence and change external life.

The mind is the channel through which the power, knowledge, and the will of God come into our lives. The mind is not the source of God's power, but only the channel. However, if this channel is blocked or set in the wrong direction, God's life will not be able to flow, manifest itself and erupt outwards. The renewal of the mind and the change of thinking in the New Testament has a very important part. This is because thinking affects our feelings and feelings influence decisions. Thus, all our decisions that shape the direction of our life are based on thinking and the thoughts.

The apostle Paul writes in his epistle to the Romans that empty thinking misleads a person. The unleashed mind is darkness. Darkness begins not with bad deeds, but with empty thinking, which is filled with junk. Letting in empty thoughts, a person begins to feel a whole amplitude of lusts, and the feelings that have erupted cause stupid decisions. Therefore, having given his

mind to empty thoughts, every person will be led away from God.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their **thinking became futile** and their foolish hearts were darkened. (*Romans 1:21*)

Every Christian yearns to be a spiritual person who experiences the power of God and the character of Christ in his life. However, if the channel through which divine life is to flow is blocked and used not for its intended purpose, then the clean water, simply, will not be able to flow from the spirit. This is also the case with the spiritual life. It is not spiritual works that draw us closer to God, but spiritual thinking, which brings from spirit to surface the character of Christ.

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the **mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.**
(*Romans 8:6*)

The purpose of the mind is to be a helper in understanding God's will. Many Christians, freed from various sins and useless habits, having experienced the strength, kindness, love, revelations and grace of God, after a while return to the old way of life again, become frustrated, tired and are filled with worries, activities and "normal" secular life. This happens not suddenly, but gradually. When, after the experience of God's strength and the cleansing of the heart, Christians leave their thinking to drift and be a passive observer. As the consequence, it is not God's thoughts but those of the world that begin to rush into his thoughts. The mind, left unattended, will always automatically fill up with junk. Therefore, it is very important that our thinking

is active and in search of God. Then the Holy Spirit will fill our inside with an understanding of God's will and knowledge of His ways. For this reason, our feelings and judgments will change as well. Along this path, the life of Christ, lying in our spirit, will gradually rise to the surface and manifest itself in the visible judgments and events. The reason for the failures of many Christians is not the lack of good deeds, but the thinking left to be passive towards God.

Therefore do not be foolish, **but understand** what the Lord's will is. (*Ephesians 5:17*)

The Holy Spirit encourages us to seek and actively use the mind to know God's will. Very often He speaks, as if through a smoked glass, presenting God's will in small pieces or hints, so that our minds let themselves run after Jesus, trying to understand His will. In acts of the Apostles, we read about how Peter saw a vision in which he saw various creatures coming down from heaven on the sheets and heard a voice telling him to eat it. This happened three times in a row.

“I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles and birds. Then I heard a voice telling me, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.’ (*Acts 11:5-7*)

Why did the Holy Spirit need to speak to Peter three times in this way? Later in Acts of the apostles we read that this is how God wanted to show Peter that he would not be afraid and hesitant to preach the Gospel to the gentiles. Why

couldn't the Holy Spirit tell Peter specifically and clearly, that he would not be afraid to preach the Gospel to the gentiles, but gave him an obscure vision that invited him to think and seek to understand what God meant? Why often does God speak to us not as clearly as we would like?

Peter began to think and tried to understand the will of God. Namely, when he began to use his thinking to know God's will, the Lord gave Peter an understanding.

While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate.
(Acts 10:17)

Very often, a Christian expects to hear the clear voice of God, to see and learn in detail every step of God, and, for this reason, misses God's call. God always invites us to use the invisible roots of thinking to get into the word of God and the knowledge of His will. The Lord desires to draw our attention to His word, so that we do not superficially, as if in a fast-food restaurant, read the word of God, but that we may seek to understand and know His will, heart, and character. The Holy Spirit will always help and guide us along the path of His knowledge if we give our minds, as an instrument, into His hands. When our thinking is active, then the Holy Spirit gives us an understanding. God desires not to inform us of His will, but to fill with it, so that as we think, and let our roots deeper into the word of God, our thinking, our hearts and our lives are changed. For God it is more important to change our thinking than to inform and provide quick and simple information about His will. Therefore, do not be surprised if the Lord begins to speak to you, as if through a fog pouring small details about His will. He will invite

you to take the hint and start following the track. In the process, your thinking will be changed, and you will be renewed and made Christlike.

Renewing the mind by the word of God. God does not inform us about His will but invites us to understand it. Therefore, in order to understand His will, we need to renew our thinking using the only instrument - the word of God. Our old thoughts, reasoning, arguments, beliefs must be shattered and replaced by completely different beliefs and thinking attitudes. The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans invites Christians to renew their minds so that they can know God's will. Without a change in thinking, it is impossible to correctly understand the will of God.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (*Romans 12:1-2*)

One of the main reasons that misleads sincere Christians who desire to serve God, is the belief that having a sincere heart is enough to know God's will. Sincerity is not the basis for knowing the will of God, but only the conditions. Without realizing this, many sincere Christians stray into "super spirituality," being separated from communities and drifting for a long time in the waters of faith, wandering around and looking for a port to dock. The main reason for such a delusion is a casual attitude to the need to renew thinking and the

construction of Christian life on an unreliable and unstable foundation called "*I am sincere.*" But God's word reveals to us that sincerity and devotion are not enough to know God's will. In the Bible, we see many examples, when men of faith, who were devoted to God, but who did not renew their thinking, made gross mistakes, despite having received impressive revelations from God.

In the Gospel of Matthew, we read that the apostle Peter received a true and powerful revelation from God that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus Himself recognized that Peter received this revelation not by his logical thinking or conclusions, but by the revelation given by God.

Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. (*Matthew 16:17*)

Peter was sincere, seeking God, loving and devoted to Him, i.e. leaving everything for Jesus' sake. However, unsettled thinking understood the revelation differently, so Peter called on Jesus to save His life and not to go the way of the cross. We see that sincerity, devotion and even the right revelation are not enough to understand God's will correctly. God's will for Jesus was to go on the cross and die for the sins of all men. God's way for Jesus was to lose Himself. Revelation without renewed thinking misleads many Christians who are in a hurry to implement and follow the revelations they have received but use unresolved and human-based thinking. Unsurprisingly, this kind of thinking encouraged Peter to move in the opposite direction to Jesus.

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to

you!” Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; **you do not have in mind** the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” (*Matthew 16:22-23*)

Very often, a Christian seeks to hear precisely the voice of God and be led by detailed commands and instructions but not renewed thinking can lead such Christian in the exact opposite direction, regardless of his sincerity or the revelation. Despite how strongly committed and ready we are to follow Jesus, often we do not understand what He wants and what His will is in a given situation? Then, guided by our own experience and old thinking, we begin to sculpt God's will from various coincidences, human conclusions and commands in our minds.

In order to be able to hear God's voice clearly and specifically, at first, a correct and firm thinking must be formed, i.e. a clean channel must be prepared by which understanding and clarity of God's will would come. Therefore, before sending His disciples to serve, the Lord gave them time to learn the secrets of the kingdom of God, so that the disciples' thinking would be renewed and prepared for service. Jesus, at first, prepares new wineskins, and only after that pours new wine. However, often, a Christian does the opposite: putting the new patch (the voice of God) on an old garment (old thinking). For this reason, the received revelation not only does not help, but even more tears life apart. Churches are full of examples of when a Christian who receives true revelation from God begins to implement it in accordance with human wisdom and logic, and divides not only families, but also the entire communities. Others wonder how such a devoted and sincere Christian can make such big mistakes? Why does God allow this to happen, after all, such a Christian is sincere and seeking God? God takes His word very

seriously and has no darlings. If Christian thinking is left behind the word of God, it is in a danger zone and is not yet suitable for service.

The life of men of faith described in the Bible also are not the exception. In the word of God, it is written that, at the age of forty, Moses decided to identify himself with the people of Izrael and to experience the suffering of Christ, then to rejoice in the temporary pleasures of Egypt. He left everything behind and decided to sacrifice his life to God. This dedication was real and sincere.

He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. (*Hebrfews 11:25*)

However, Moses' devotion and sincerity lacked renewed thinking because he misunderstood God's will and His ways, despite having a revelation about his calling. Moses hoped that such devotion would provoke God to begin acting, and the nation would understand it as a sign of God. However, he was severely mistaken, so it took him another forty years to reconcile his thinking with God's thoughts and ways.

Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. (*Acts 7:25*)

Thus, before the understanding the God's will, the Holy Spirit forms a new way of thinking in us and cleans the channel, so that the knowledge of God's will could flow without hindrance and fulfil the revelation received, which becomes not as an instrument of division, but as a blessing. Therefore, the apostle

Peter urged the first Christians to prepare the mind for action and let it graze in the pastures of the word of God. So, after the decision to follow Jesus, our mind must be renewed by the word of God. Although you may be a sincere Christian, but an unrenewed mind will not allow you to correctly understand, and at the same time to live in the will of God.

Therefore, **with minds that are alert and fully sober**, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. (*1 Peter 1:13*).

Strongholds of thinking and reasoning When we accept Jesus into our hearts, our spirit is reborn and becomes like Jesus, but our thinking remains old. Therefore, at the beginning of the Christian life, the renewal of our thinking begins. The apostle Paul writes in his epistle to the Corinthians that the weapons of our faith are intended to destroy strongholds.

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We **demolish arguments** and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **we take captive every thought** to make it obedient to Christ. (*2 Corinthians 10:4-5*)

What are these strongholds? How do they appear? These strongholds are a way of thinking, consisting of various arguments, reasoning and thoughts that are built, glued together and established in our lives. We begin the Christian life with a renewed spirit, but we still use from the old way of life various strongholds built in the mind, i.e. thinking that is contrary to the

understanding of the kingdom of God. Therefore, at first, a struggle takes place inside of us, during which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, old strongholds, wrong beliefs and imaginations are being destroyed.

Various experiences, grievances and an old way of life in each person form an appropriate system of arguments and thinking, for the destruction of which one sermon or prayer is not enough. It requires constant hearing of the word of God. For example, if before the faith the son did not experience the love and attention of the father in the family, but was hurt and offended, in his mind the devil forms a false understanding about relationship between the son and the father. When such person gets saved, he unconsciously applies the wrong thinking towards relationship between him and the heavenly Father. The Christian then perceives the heavenly Father as distant, unreliable, capable of offending and punishing. For such Christian, the Holy Spirit, at first, reveals God as the Father and nourishes him with the right word of God. For this reason, brick by brick, the old fortresses of the mind are destroyed, and divine thinking is laid in it's place.

In the world, thinking is directed to seek the attention, recognition, usefulness, self-expression and fame. If such thinking is not replaced by the word of God, the Christian strives to serve God and get rich with the gifts of God in order to be useful and accepted, seeks attention and recognition from people, wants always to feel good. Very often Christians, whose "inferiority complex" is not destroyed, and who have experienced rejection, loneliness and non-recognition in their relationships with others, are pushed back to "super spirituality" by their unrepentant thinking. Then the Christian tries to "make up" for the lost years, rushes to serve and to do good deeds in

order to feel accepted and recognized. Works, service and efforts are directed to self-expression, but not to the Lord, do not reveal the person of Christ, but only human wisdom. In such cases, one wants to achieve special spiritual results and heights in order, after all, to become accepted, recognized and useful to others.

A Christian who in the past was insecure, afraid of communication or was unfairly offended, tries to protect himself from such insults in the church by controlling others or seeking to constantly maintain and defend his position. The preacher tries not to lose the attention of the crowd, the prophet seeks to find a word that suits those around him and wants to make them dependent on "his" prophecies, etc. This is due to the fact that, despite the rebirth from the spirit, the unrepentant thinking forces the Christian to behave and live not the life of God, but his own. Serving with unabandoned strongholds does more harm than good.

Strongholds of wrong thinking can also be built during the period of Christian life. This most often is associated with thinking and reasoning based on traditions and certain established forms of faith. These strongholds begin to be built from single bricks, i.e. incorrect thoughts that come to our minds. If a Christian does not separate and accepts thoughts contrary to the word of God, the latter begin to form appropriate arguments, beliefs and reasoning, which are already becoming similar to a connected stronghold. Therefore, it happens that a sincere, converted and loving Christian after a while becomes a religious fanatic who can offend, divide and even kill "for God". How such cardinal change is possible? It doesn't happen suddenly. The construction of strongholds in our mind occurs gradually. If we casually look at what we are thinking about, in

the long run we do not notice how a system of thinking is formed in us, based on all sorts of arguments and reasoning that lead in the opposite direction from the word of God.

Therefore, from the very beginning of faith, the Holy Spirit invites every Christian to carefully bend his ear to the word of God, so that this word may destroy the old strongholds and lay the rails in the mind on which the train of God's blessings and knowledge may arrive. At first, the construction of the rails seems to be an unproductive process, but later it will last for a long time, and the revelations of God will not stop coming into our lives.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—**think about such things.** (*Philippians 4:8*)

The Christian is similar to the city of Jerusalem, in the centre of which is the temple of God. However, Jerusalem must be protected by a defensive wall, so that only those who bring love, peace and joy can enter the city. In the Bible, we read about the city and the temple of Jerusalem, which was destroyed and rebuilt several times. After the restoration of the temple, the city walls continued to be rebuilt. They are very important. If the temple is not protected, then it will quickly be destroyed. It's the same with Christians. The walls of Jerusalem, similar to our thinking, which must protect the spirit inside of us from the thoughts and arguments offered by the devil. Therefore, mere rebirth from above and baptism with the Holy Spirit is not enough to reveal the life of Christ through us. Walls of thinking

must also be formed that do not let in the thoughts of the enemy but are always open to the word of God.

In the Old Testament, we read that God's main instruction to Joshua before conquering the Promised Land was to fill his mind with the word of God. Joshua was prepared for great victories, which are impossible without constant staying and "immersing" his thoughts in the word of God.

Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (*Joshua 1:8*)

CHAPTER XI

HOW DOES A CHRISTIAN GET COLD?

When one talks about the need to renew the mind and importance of thinking, one might wonder why the scribes and experts of the Law, who paid so much attention to understand the Holy Scriptures, did not know Jesus, and, in the end, killed Him? Why are there so many people in today's Christianity who study the Bible, graduate from several Bible colleges, think about the word of God, but are cold in the spirit? One of the reasons why the use of reasoning and thinking can turn into a misadventure, is that independent thinking satisfies human curiosity and develops pride but does not build the spirit. If a Christian thinks that the mind is the source of God's strength and wisdom, then he is mistaken. The mind is only a channel and an instrument that must be used in conjunction with spiritual desires. Thinking, which is independent from spiritual desires, in fact, misleads and makes a Christian a religious expert of the Bible's text, whose inner life is different from the reality of God's word. Therefore, it is very important to understand how to use the renewed mind so that it is not empty, but rather a useful instrument for the knowledge of God.

Thinking and desires. Human thinking is naturally linked to the desires of the heart. Those desires are inherited by man from his parents, who inherit it from grandparents, and the latter from their ancestors. In this way we can come as far as Eve and Adam, from whom we have inherited the human desires that lie within us. These desires are looking for how to satisfy the pleasures of the body, the lust of the eyes, seek to experience as many different emotions as possible and gain human wisdom, which seeks to be proud and boastful. These desires were sown in the

in man by the devil. Inside the first people, Eve and Adam, these desires, at first, did not exist, but when Eve walked in the Garden of Eden, the devil directed her thoughts to the tree, the fruits of which God had forbidden to eat, and offered desires that at that time were not inside of her, but outside.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was **good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom**, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. (*Genesis 3:6*)

When Eve and Adam accepted the devil's offer and tasted the fruit of the forbidden tree, this package of desires entered the inner part of man. It consists of bodily pleasures, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life, i.e. a person's boasting about what he has or who he is.

For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. (*1 John 2:16*)

Since then, each person is born with carnal desires inherited from Eve and Adam within him, to which human thoughts and thinking are directed. An unbeliever who does not have the spirit of Christ is, like a prisoner who has no choice. Regardless of how hard he tries, still his thoughts return to the desires that lie inside of him. Therefore, if an unbeliever would try to live the life of God, it is impossible for him, because carnal desires prevail and force him to think and satisfy the various forms of carnal desires.

However, when a person turns to the Lord and invites Him into his heart, the spirit is reborn and other supernatural desires come inside. These are the desires of the spirit that come from heaven and are contrary and uncharacteristic of human nature. It is a desire to know and love Christ, to sacrifice and live for Him, to trust in Him, to love others with this love, to deny oneself for the sake of Jesus and others. After conversion, a “competitor” to carnal desires appears inside of the Christian, and now the Christian is no longer a prisoner, where only the monopolist carnal desires lives. In addition to the carnal desires inherited from his parents, he receives the desires of the spirit inherited from Christ. Now there is an opportunity to choose: to live according to the flesh or to live according to the spirit.

For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. (*Galatians 5:17*)

So, after the faith, the Christian has two packages of desires within himself that contradict each other. Namely, here the thinking plays a very important role. Thinking directed to spiritual desires pulls God's life out of our heart, and thinking directed toward carnal desires extinguishes the spirit and can return the Christian to the old way of life. Therefore, it often happens that a believing, cleansed and burning Christian after a while goes out and returns to the old way of life, despite being baptized by the Holy Spirit and reborn from above. How is this possible? The apostle Paul explains in his epistle to the Romans that every Christian can live according to the spirit and according to the flesh. Which life he chooses to live is determined by the way of thinking.

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. (*Romans 8:5*)

Our mind is a sensor capable of connecting and pumping energy from two sources, i.e. the desires of the flesh or the spirit. If our thinking is directed to spiritual desires, then the life of God begins to manifest itself in us, but when we direct this sensor to carnal desires, then the old sins and way of life return again. At the same time, our mind cannot be directed to both sources.

The apostle Paul writes that if we think and direct our minds to spiritual desires, then automatically our carnal desires will not be satisfied. If a Christian thinks about the love, strength, and kindness of Christ, a spiritual response is born in him and the character of Christ begins to manifest itself. However, if a Christian directs his thinking to old sins, memories, discovers and notices the carnal desires in himself, then his spirit weakens and an old character begins to creep to the surface, and the Christian, gradually returns to the old way of life. The longer he looks and thinks about carnal desires, the more they express themselves.

Religious thinking is equally directed to carnal desires, only it seeks not to satisfy them, but to control them. However, the result is still the same – the life of Christ remains closed in the spirit and cannot manifest itself. In both cases, old human nature manifests itself, only in the first case old sins return to the surface, and in the other - the old nature manifests itself (even with suffering, restrain) as well. The centre of spiritual thinking must not be you and your efforts to change yourself, but Christ

in you and the desires of the spirit (love expressed through faith).

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (*Galatians 5:16*)

Therefore, if a Christian directs his thoughts to spiritual desires, he no longer thinks about how to control himself, improve or prevent him from doing something bad. There's no more time for him to think about it. The main object of his thoughts is Christ. Such thinking brings life and peace of mind. Therefore, when a Christian begins to think about the love, kindness and grace of Jesus, peace and certainty come into his life. Is it all that simple? God's word says yes. Change your thinking and direct it to the spiritual desires inside of you, and you will notice that in just a few minutes God's peace in you will increase, temptations will recede, and certainty in His love will fill your heart.

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the **mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.**
(*Romans 8:6*)

Spiritual food is essential to the desires of the Spirit. After rebirth from above, inexhaustible desires of the spirit appear inside of us, but, at first, we do not understand them. The desires of the Spirit must be nourished so that we can understand and express them. Spiritual babies very often cannot explain in words how good it is for them, do not know how to use, direct and feed spiritual desires. The desires of the Spirit need to be understood. Therefore, we need a mind that looks at the desires of the spirit and understands them through the word of God.

Thus, thinking is the mediator between the word of God and spiritual desires.

One of the reasons why sincere Christians are misled or extinguished, is the live with misunderstood spiritual desires. The spiritual desire left unattended for a long time, gradually, can be extinguished, so it is necessary to care for it. **The main food of spiritual desire is the word of God.** When we are reborn from above, we receive an inexhaustible thirst for the knowledge of God, but we do not know how to satisfy and express it. If a Christian does not understand that this inexplicable desire leads him toward the word of God in order to be fed and understood, he begins to chase feelings, experiences and sensations to maintain that hot spiritual desire. If such Christian does not direct and link the desire with the word of God, he can stray into "super spirituality", begin to chase strange experiences, visions, angels and judging everything by the feelings, which, like a chameleon change and lead to unpredictable behaviour. However, God, by giving us a thirst for His knowledge, leads us toward the word of God, so that as we think of Him, we allow the Holy Spirit to explain the desires of the spirit and direct it in the right direction.

Like newborn babies, **crave pure spiritual milk**, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, (*1 Peter 2:2*)

Spiritual desires need the spiritual food, i.e. the word of God. Desire is nourished by listening to the word of God, but not by performing work. The works are the result of a Christian who has already eaten. This is how our spiritual person grows.

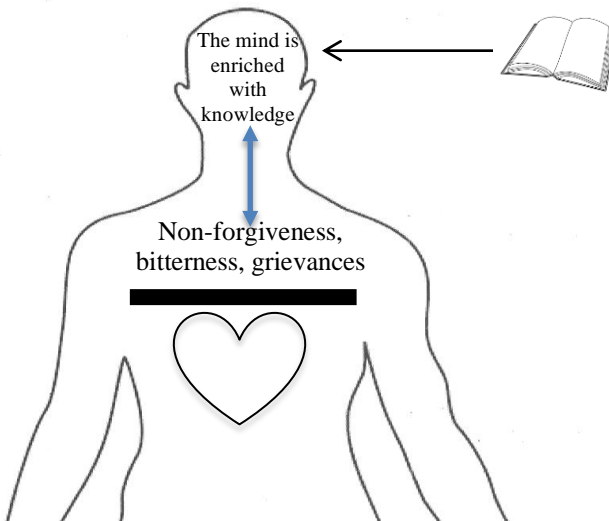
How does the desire disappear? There are two ways in which the devil tries to extinguish a Christian. One of them is the separation of a burning Christian from the word of God. Nothing disappoints a person so much as unanswered and unexplained desires. Therefore, if a Christian ignores the need to renew thinking through the word of God and nourish the desires of the spirit through it, then his desires degenerate or, having burned for some time, go out. When a Christian has the spiritual desire, but that desire is not answered, it is replaced by disappointment, criticism, and apathy. **Misunderstood spiritual desire = unanswered spiritual desire.**

Another reason for the Christian getting cold, is when a certain screen appears between his mind and the spirit. Such separation of spiritual desires, in fact, means the loss of the ability to accept it. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Christians, whose heart and mind is separated by an invisible wall, cannot accept the word of God, His grace and help. Then the word does not feed the spirit but only satisfies human curiosity and gives information.

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, **circumcise your hearts**, you people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, or my wrath will flare up and burn like fire because of the evil you have done— burn with no one to quench it. (*Jeremiah 4:4*)

Lost spiritual of desire - lost ability to accept it. When a wall appears between our spiritual desires and our mind, then the burning Christian turns into an expert of the Scriptures. The word getting into the mind stocks before the wall, which separate the spirit and the mind. As a results, the word of God becomes only the information stored in the min without

reaching the spiritual desire. In this case, the word of God satisfies human curiosity, gives correct information, but does not change the life and does not reveal the character of Christ. The main reasons for the appearance of a separation wall between the mind and the spirit are hurts, self-righteousness, worries, the deception of wealth and the pleasures of life, unforgiveness, offences, pride, etc.



The devil in churches fears not the preached word of God, but the heart open to this word. For this reason, he tries to spread gossip, hurts, insults, self - righteousness and worries, so that the Christian listens to the word of God with a closed heart. Then the audible word of God bounces into the wall of the heart and, stuck in the mind, enriches the Christian with the correct information, but does not change life. The devil tries to harden

and injure the hearts of Christians, so that the word of God loses its true effect. It is possible to attend church, prayer gatherings, hear the best sermons or offer money, but if the heart is separated from the mind by bitterness or other grievances, then this wall will hold back the word of God and make it ineffective. Then Christianity becomes boring, and the reality of God is just a distant fairy tale. But as soon as the wall is removed from the heart, the same word of God, which has been heard many times, will touch the heart so much that just a few words will be enough for the Christian to run after Jesus again and rejoice in the Lord.

CHAPTER XII DISCIPLESHIP

The true Christian life begins with the words of Jesus spoken to you personally – "Follow me." This is the main calling of your life and the key to fruitfulness in the kingdom of God. But very often, newly believed Christians begin to build the foundation of a new life on their desires to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and eminent servants of God, who would influence the whole world and have glorious service. As a result, it is possible to miss a narrow, but real path, i.e. the example of life set by Jesus, according to which you are invited to live. From the words "Follow me" begins discipleship, which continues throughout life. The Holy Spirit guides us and teaches us the life that Jesus lived on earth. Therefore, the basis of your Christian life is not signs, miracles, or glorious service, but discipleship. Only the disciples, influenced and taught by Jesus, became servants, and then apostles, prophets, and other members performing the functions of the body of Christ. But first, they were and remained disciples of Jesus throughout their lives. At the beginning of their lives, the words "Follow Me" uttered by Jesus sounded to them for the rest of their lives and became the basis for successful discipleship.

What do Jesus' words mean—"Follow Me"? What do these words mean to a Christian living today who did not see Jesus who lived two thousand years ago? Jesus in the Spirit utters these words to anyone who desires to know God today. These words are an invitation to be His disciple. Jesus set an example of what type of life actually leads to the Father. It is impossible to live without the Holy Spirit in this way, but Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the earth, who enables every Christian to live

according to the example shown by Jesus. This means that the Holy Spirit will lead and shape our lives in such a way that a self-sacrificing love for Jesus, humility, meekness, joy, love and other qualities of Jesus's character are revealed in us.

A Christian is not called to be a believer or part of a crowd traveling or occasionally coming to Jesus. Around Jesus, there were different types of people who were eager to see the glory of God, to be healed, to get freedom, or, simply to observe what miracles Jesus performs. People who accepted the teachings of Jesus became believers, but did not always stay with Him. To the Jews who believed, Jesus offered to become His disciples, but many of them resented and left Him, or having walked and believed for a while, withdrew.

I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you are doing what you have heard from your father." (*John 8:31*)

There was also often a crowd with Jesus, which had many problems and needs. They would come with their problems to Jesus or travel with Him, believing and waiting for healings, miracles and refreshment. But the crowd did not stay with Jesus all the time. After receiving answers and healings, many withdrew and returned to their own lives. This often happens to today's Christians as well. All that holds them attached to Jesus is their needs and unresolved problems. As soon as the answers come or the critical situation of life is solved, they left Jesus.

Few, in fact, responded to the call to follow Jesus and become His disciples. Although their number was small, they were constantly with Jesus, watching and learning a new life, admiring and resenting Him, making mistakes and enjoying

success, stumbling and getting up, but always staying with their teacher. We are not called to be great men of God and His eminent servants. Likewise, signs, miracles and healings are not the primary calling of a Christian. We are called to follow not the works of Jesus, but the life of Jesus.

The greatest deficit of Christianity today is not the signs and miracles, but the authentic life of Christ. Therefore, authentic discipleship and becoming His disciple is the greatest deficit and the costliest offer. We are not called to follow the signs and miracles. On the contrary, in the word of God it is written that signs and miracles will accompany Christians. Therefore, the main question remains: then what are we following? We don't have to chase the signs and miracles that God does. They themselves will persecute and accompany anyone who follows the life of Christ. Therefore, our main calling is to follow Jesus, and signs and miracles will come from behind if the life of Jesus, which we follow, is in us.

And these signs **will accompany** those who believe:
In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.” (*Mark 16:17-18*)

By inviting you to become His disciple, Jesus wanted to say that if you allow the Holy Spirit to guide you and shape the character of Christ in you, and His example of life becomes your main goal, then the works and signs of Jesus will also accompany your life. Therefore, only discipleship opens the door to God's power and works.

Therefore go and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching** them to obey everything **I have commanded you**. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The beginning of discipleship

Discipleship begins not with your admiration for God's works, miracles and spiritual perspective of becoming somebody great, but with the words of Jesus heard in your heart – "Follow me." This is enough for your whole life to be subject to the grace of God. For many of Jesus' disciples, these words were enough to set out on a lifetime journey. They did not need Jesus' pleadings, persuasions, evidence, signs, and miracles. Jesus did not "sweat" and did not force them to follow Him. He would simply utter these words, and it was enough for the true disciples to follow Him. Today, to make disciples of Jesus, it would seem that such words are no longer enough. On the contrary, efforts are made to lure people with a beautiful environment, promises and social and other stimulating means, trying to somehow "lure" them, and then keep them in the church. Then we jump and serve them to satisfy their desires and wishes, promising to solve all their problems, satisfy all their dreams and fulfil all their desires, in the name of Jesus. Then one wonders why it is necessary to "sweat" so much as to make one of the believers a disciple. Then he becomes not a disciple of Jesus, but a disciple of ours, who hopes to use Jesus to complete his dream list.

However, only one who is called by the Lord Himself can become a disciple of Jesus. You cannot force to become His disciple the one who has not heard personally the Lord's call to

follow Jesus. In this case, it will only be a futile effort to take down the disciple with your own hands and make him follow the one whose call he has not heard personally. He will not understand what is required of him, what to do and then whom to follow. All he will be able to do is copy you and follow you, attracted by various programs, charitable projects or opportunities for self-expression. Therefore, the most important thing is to seek in your heart and hear a personal invitation to follow an invisible person who wants to be active and teach you the kind of life that He himself has publicly shown in the Gospel.

The word of God indicates that there are no special darlings or people with special qualities for God. As we look at the beginning of the lives of Jesus' disciples or as we try to understand why Jesus called them, we find no distinctive qualities in them that would make them better than us. On the contrary, when we look at the first steps of the disciples of Jesus, we notice in them pride, selfishness, and their mistakes and falls are openly described in the Gospels. In this way, the Holy Spirit wanted to show that the basis for becoming His disciple is not our past, our talents or our qualities of character. God Himself perfects us and makes us worthy of the kingdom of God. Anyone can become His disciple, regardless of age, experience, education, gender or character. This is God's work. But discipleship begins with a simple decision and your reaction to the personal invitation you hear. On this path there will be everything: falls, ups, joy and disappointment, struggles and victories. But during travel and discipleship, the Lord will make you like Him.

Features of the disciple

Jesus's disciples are different from others who believed, traveled with the crowd or came to Him because of their needs. The main feature of the disciples is *the desire to learn*. Their life is focused not on what to get, what to ask for, what jobs to do, but on what to learn. In the Gospel of Luke, we read about Martha and Mary, in whose house Jesus was a guest. Martha's life was focused on how to serve Jesus as much as possible. In the eyes of man, this is a very good life. But in the eyes of God there is a better part, i.e. life is directed to the desire to learn something from Jesus by listening to His words. Jesus said that Mary herself chose the better part, which would not be taken away from her. The services and works pass, but the character of Christ, formed by listening and putting His word into practice, will stay with us forever. Therefore, the main characteristic of the disciples is the desire to constantly learn from their teacher. When Mary saw the risen Jesus, the first word that came to her at that moment was "Rabuni!", which means: "Master, Teacher."

But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. **Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.**" (*Luke 10:40-42*)

Another key characteristic of the disciple is *the thirst for God's word* and the desire to apply it in practice. The disciples of Jesus

were thirsty to hear the word of God. This desire was not human curiosity, but a real need to learn and live as Jesus spoke. Very often a Christian reads the word of God only with the desire to learn about Jesus or in order to satisfy his intellect or curiosity. Then the word of God remains closed, and the Christian cannot understand the spiritual meaning of the word. The spiritual content of the word of God is revealed only by applying it in practice. In the Gospels, we read that large crowds gathered to listen to Jesus. Jesus spoke to them in parables, and He would explain them to the disciples. Why?

He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything. (*Mark 4:34*)

The crowd came to Jesus not driven by a thirst to learn, but in order to solve their problems. But the disciples longed to live by the word of God. In the Gospels, we can observe the mistakes and successes of Jesus' disciples by applying the words of Jesus in their life. Why did Jesus choose Peter to become a pillar of the church? Peter was very active and immediately tried to apply the word of God in his life. When the disciples' boat was smashing in storms, Peter was the first to ask Jesus to pronounce the word "Come" so that he could go down on the water. Peter was the first to receive the revelation that Jesus was the Christ, but he was the first to speak "nonsense" in order to protect Jesus from the death. He was first mentioned by Jesus when he talked about the construction of the church but also was the first whom Jesus called "Satan", seeing Peter's openness to the ideas from the devil. Peter was the first to try to follow Jesus by his own strength before His crucifixion but was the first to renounce Him three times. Comparing the disciples of Jesus with the crowd,

we find that the disciples of Jesus immediately tried to apply the word of God, longing to learn, although they often made mistakes, did not understand or misapplied the word of God. The Lord did not condemn them for this, but on the contrary, sought to clarify, reveal and show the true meaning of the word of God. It is only for those who desire to live by His word that the word of God becomes accessible, understandable and life changing. Only the word of God makes disciples like their Master.

Therefore, it is very important how a Christian reads the word of God: is it with thirst to learn and accept it personally, or only with the desire to learn something, to develop his intellect or to apply it to his neighbour, to find an additional argument for self-justification?

Another characteristic of the disciple of Jesus that distinguishes him from the crowd is *the desire to learn to pray*, i.e. to communicate with the heavenly Father. Jesus never forced His disciples to pray but waited for their hearts' desire to commune with God. The disciples who watched the life of Jesus themselves asked their Master to teach them to pray.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, **teach us to pray**, just as John taught his disciples.”
(*Luke 11:1*)

In Christianity, persuasion of the need to pray has never been a problem. And Jesus Himself did not try to prove the need to pray. When we read about the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees, we see that they prayed for a long time. The main difference between the disciples of Jesus and the Pharisees in

the life of prayer was not that some prayed for a long time and others briefly, but the need to learn to pray. The most important question is not whether you prayed, but HOW you pray? Now there is a huge deficit not in the desire to pray, but in the desire to learn to pray. When a Christian does not want to learn to pray, but concentrates on the time of prayer, his prayers become a tedious ritual, secret murmur and boredom. However, prayer is not intended to "pray", but to actually commune with God, i.e. to receive answers, strength, grace and revelations. Prayer does not change God, but you. It is not a manipulative instrument of persuading, embarrassing or pushing God to do something, but a channel for communicating with the Father, who changes and makes us in the image of Jesus. Therefore, the life of Jesus' disciples is always full of desire to learn to pray, i.e. to know the will of God, to seek His authority and kingdom, and to glorify His name.

Ability to learn. There are many students in everyday life at school, but for some reason, hearing the same thing, being in the same class and having the same teacher, some students are able to learn, while others are not. Despite the fact that everyone has the same Holy Spirit, the same Bible, and is washed by the same blood of Jesus, some are able to learn and the character of Christ appears in their lives, while others remain the same position for years and, despite a great desire to learn, are unable to know the truth.

They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, **always learning but never able** to come to a knowledge of the truth. (2 Timothy 3:6-7)

What determines the ability to learn or assimilate the character of Christ and other spiritual truths? What determines the ability to live the life of Jesus and follow Him? In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus says that many will try to follow Him but will not be able or will not have the ability to do so. Why?

“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. (*Luke 13:24*)

When Jesus was followed by large crowds, He warned them that in order to start learning, you need to take something on a journey, without which learning is impossible. Some Christians imagine that Jesus will lead His disciples to stadiums to preach to the crowds, to perform powerful signs and miracles and to be recognized as God's powerful men, but He warns that the path we will follow and on which He invites us to follow, will not be what we imagine. This path will lead where we will not always want to go, on this path we can lose a lot, experience not only glorious, but also unpleasant things. On this path, you will not be the master of your life, but someone else will lead you. In some places, this path will be so steep that all your inside will resist Him. There are no one who wants to follow such a path, so Jesus offers one instrument that is necessary on this path. He suggests taking a cross, an instrument that puts your interests, opinions and abilities in a position of death, so that God's life can flow through you.

And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me **cannot** be my disciple. (*Luke 14:27*)

If you don't take the cross on a journey, you won't have the ability to learn something from Jesus. This, quite simply, is

impossible, because then the journey of discipleship will continue only until the first obstacle. However, by looking at Jesus, who during His service on the earth carried an invisible inner cross (the decision to depend entirely on God and do nothing from Himself), we too having our inner cross can go further than our capabilities, desires, and understandings. When your will and God's will intersects during the journey, carrying the cross you can go further (the decision to reject your interests in the name of the lesson offered to be learned). The cross it is a symbol of freedom. He sets us free not only from sins, but also from the source of sin, i.e. ourselves. This freedom is possible only by carrying a cross, i.e. a burden that is light and gentle. Jesus, walking in front of us, sets us free from various habits, attachments, feelings, and wounds. Our inner man is liberated and becomes active for God. The cross helps to get up after mistakes and move on. There were many painful and gross mistakes in the life of the apostle Peter, but faith in Jesus' forgiveness, love and His sacrifice gave him the strength to rise and overcome the failure and error. The cross of Jesus is stronger than you, your shortcomings, and mistakes.

The disciple is a pilgrim.

Discipleship is a process that continues throughout our lives. It's not a one-time push of a button or an answer to a hot prayer. A disciple of Jesus within himself is a constant pilgrim, ready to learn and go from one class to another. Some Christians, after several attempts to become powerful men of God, become frustrated with Christianity and leave the church. When a one-time attempt to become like Jesus ends in failure, and the promised blessings do not come after the laying on of hands or the sermon of a powerful preacher, then the Christian returns to "his own affairs" by resenting Jesus that He, like some coffee

machine, did not produce the promised spiritual gift or other blessing after the correct combination of buttons.

In the Gospels, we read that Jesus instructed His disciples to make the people of all nations His disciples. Jesus did not call to make people believers. His main calling is discipleship. However, what is the difference between a believer and a disciple? **With disciples you need to live, believers you need only to converted.** Believers occasionally came to Jesus when there were more interesting miracles or when they were oppressed by trouble, but the disciples of Jesus constantly travelled with Jesus. Jesus did not reproach them for too slow spiritual growth, stupid and rude mistakes, but patiently led and taught them. Also, in the epistles of the Apostle Paul we see that he did not seek only to evangelize people, but desired them to become disciples of Jesus, i.e. those with whom connections arise for life. Therefore, in his epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul shows how strongly discipleship unites Christians. Believers occasionally came to Jesus when there were more interesting miracles or when the troubles and problems oppressed them, but the disciples of Jesus constantly travelled with Jesus. Jesus did not reproach them for too slow spiritual growth, stupid and rude mistakes, but patiently led and taught them. Also, in the epistles of the apostle Paul we see that he did not seek only to evangelize people, but desired them to become disciples of Jesus, i.e. those with whom relationships are set for whole life. Therefore, in his epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul shows how strongly discipleship unites Christians.

I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die **with you**. (2 *Corinthians* 7:3)

CHAPTER XIII SEEKING THE LORD

When we accept Jesus into our hearts, our lives get the meaning. The most important and fundamental goal of every Christian's life, for which we are built into a spiritual home, is to **know our Lord Jesus Christ**.

At the beginning of the Christian path, the Holy Spirit directs our motives and efforts to one point — the person of Jesus Christ. Looking at this goal, we begin to run the race. If we do not lose this goal and do not exchange it for less important things, then our spiritual life grows and retains all storms and winds, and at the end of this race we receive a prize, which is the Lord Jesus Himself, whose character, attributes and glory we will inherit and carry in all eternity. Spiritual construction, which is based on and strives for the knowledge of the person Jesus Christ, never collapses, or disappoints. Jesus is the cornerstone of spiritual construction.

As we read the epistles of the apostle Paul, we see that his main goal was not to evangelize the entire world or become a mighty man and apostle of God. His whole life, the struggles and efforts of faith were directed to the only goal worthy of all life and losses, i.e. to the greatness of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing **worth of knowing Christ Jesus** my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that

comes from God on the basis of faith. (*Philippians* 3:8-9)

However, why is a Christian, despite great effort and zeal, often doesn't grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, being led astray by false teachings and doctrines, or kept in spiritual infancy? The main reason for this is a deviation from the correct goal. Regardless of how much strength you have, how sincere and wilful you are, if all this is targeted in the wrong direction, then the result will also be wrong. Therefore, the devil tries to tempt a sincere and devoted Christian not by offering sins, pleasures, or human glory, but by directing his gaze to secondary things. This occurs when a Christian turns the means of spiritual growth into goals. Then prayer becomes a goal, and the Christian makes tremendous efforts to become a man of prayer, prolongs the time of prayer and seeks to "pray." But prayer is only a mean of communion with the Lord, with the help of which we grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. In the same way, reading the word of God can become a goal and push the person of Jesus Christ to the secondary place. But we are called to seek the person of Jesu in the word of God, not to seek to enrich ourselves with knowledge and information about God.

It is also common for a Christian to make awakening, signs, revivals, miracles, service, the voice of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit the purpose of his life. For this reason, he slowly drifts away from the real person of Jesus. The Christian then weakens and becomes susceptible to false teachings and doctrines, because the only safe place in the heart of a Christian is the person of Jesus. The guidance of the Holy Spirit and the voice of God is not our goal. These are just God-given means that lead toward Jesus.

One of the most common mistakes among Christians that the devil can eventually take advantage of, is **attachment to results**. If the purpose of a Christian's life becomes results, then it is only a matter of time before the "great disappointment" knocks on his life. When we read the Bible, we see that all the servants of God have gone through failures and, in the eyes of man, have not achieved great and significant earthly results. After forty years of service, Moses not only did not enter the Promised Land, but for most of his service time he saw the uprising of the people of Israel, the their unfaithfulness to God. He saw and knew that only two persons out of all nation from his generation will enter Promised Land. Likewise, our Lord, after three and a half years of glorious service, was left with twelve disciples, one of whom betrayed Him and the other publicly renounced Him. On the contrary, the crowd that sought results followed Jesus, but only as long as He performed miracles and was a successful servant. As soon as He refused to perform a miracle or began to talk about carrying a cross and denying himself, the crowd would rapidly disperse or change their minds and demand His crucifixion.

From this time many of his disciples turned back
and no longer followed him. (*John 6:66*)

None of the God-approved men of faith have made the pursuit of results the most important thing. On the contrary, we read in the Bible that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other men of faith seemed to have wasted a lot of time in vain and did not use it effectively. They spent their time searching for God, but not for the results. The results were given by God and most of it only after their death.

Jesus is the centre of the target. If you turn all your strength and attention not to the centre of the target, but just a little bit aside, the shot will be unsuccessful. We have only been given one shot that invites us to hit the centre of the target— Jesus Christ. If the purpose and forces of your life are directed away a little from Jesus Christ (to awakening, prayer, results, saved people), despite the fact that these things are of God and are good, but - they are secondary. Never let someone else turn your look away from Jesus, regardless of how majestic and beautiful it may look in your eyes or in the eyes of others.

The goal is achieved by searching. So, you have received from God a true and eternal purpose. How is this goal achieved in practice? In the Bible, we read that this goal is being pursued by the quest. We are all called to seek the person of Jesus. For some Christians, the search for God is incomprehensible. Why seek God if I already know He is? One can often hear among believers the saying: "*Why do I need to seek Christ? I have already received Him in my heart, now you need to rejoice in His blessings and live.*"

But the Bible is full of examples and an invitation to constantly seek the Lord. It's not about seeking confirmations or proof that God exists. This is not a search for salvation. When you accept Jesus in your heart, then you are fully saved, and you do not have to be saved again or seek salvation anew. Likewise, God does not play with us "catch me if you can", does not hide or runs away from us. He desires to reveal Himself and share His glory with us. So, why do we need to keep searching for the Lord?

No one, then, should treat him with contempt. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me.

I am expecting him along with the brothers. (*1 Chronicles 16:11*)

The search for the Lord is the constant attention and the focus of the heart on Jesus Christ. The Lord goes ahead and constantly does something in our lives. It is not a dead monument or tradition. During His ministry on earth, Jesus Himself emphasized that we would seek the kingdom of God, and when He talked about the life of prayer, He encouraged us to pray with prayers of searching and knocking. Only by seeking you can meet Him, have relationship and follow Him. Without a constant search, it is impossible to follow the person who is moving and walking in front. If you look at yesterday's Jesus, He is no longer there. He's already somewhere in front of you.

Means of searching. Every Christian is faced with the question of how to search for the Lord in practice? Very often, as we read the Old Testament, we begin to look for the Lord by physical and visible methods that do not work in the New Testament. In such cases, the search for the Lord is understood by the Christian as the burning of old photographs, the throwing away of things reminding of the sinful past, the repeated and deeper confession of past sins, the separation from communion with unbelievers or carnal Christians, the change of place of residence, the performance of some ritual, the abandonment of certain food, etc. However, it is revealed in the New Testament that the Lord is worshipped in spirit and truth, and therefore His search is spiritual. The desire to physically see Jesus, the pursuit of physical and emotional experiences and supernatural manifestations in the visible world, mislead many Christians distancing them from the real person of Jesus, who is the Spirit. Therefore, it is very important to understand, how really we can seek the Lord.

To achieve each goal or to perform work, a special instrument or tool is required. If you are digging a well, you will need a shovel or other instrument with which you can dig the ground. The same is true in the spiritual world. The search for the Lord requires a special **spiritual** instrument that no person, tradition, or effort can offer. The apostle Paul writes in his epistle to the Ephesians that as soon as he heard about their faith and love, he didn't stop asking for a very important thing, with the help of which they would be able to know God. This is the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you **the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.**
(Ephesians 1:15-17)

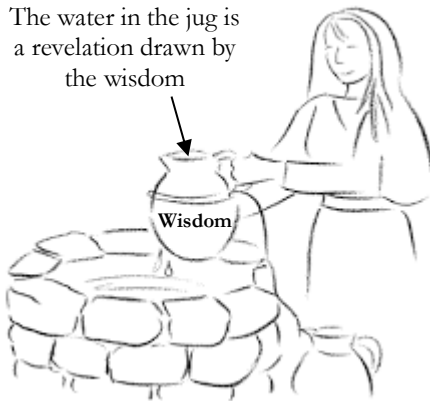
Here the apostle Paul reveals the secret, that although a Christian can have sincere faith and love, he needs a spiritual instrument that enables him to know the Lord. God is the Spirit, and therefore the means must be spiritual. Every Christian need spiritual wisdom and revelation, with the help of which he can grow in the knowledge of the Lord. If this is not the case, Christian activity can turn into a tradition, ritual, obligation, and religious activity.

The apostle Paul writes in his epistle to the Ephesians that he asks constantly for the spirit of revelation and wisdom. However, why is it not enough to ask once or "by faith" to accept it in one action? Why does Paul constantly ask for this to

believers, who have faith, love and are baptized with the Holy Spirit? Does this mean that the Ephesians received an incomplete gift from the Holy Spirit? Or do they need to ask for another spirit? Not realizing the importance of this request, Christians ignore the most valuable tool by which it is possible to grow in the knowledge of Jesus.

When we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the only and full-fledged, flawless Holy Spirit enters our hearts. We do not need to ask for another Holy Spirit. It's like a well inside of us, full of inexhaustible water, but for everyday life we need to draw this water every time and refresh ourselves, so that we can live the life of Christ. The drawing of water requires a special tool, i.e. a bucket, so that a real knowledge of God comes into our lives from the well of the spirit in us and that knowledge is just information in our mind, but real manifestation and practice of spiritual life.

The water in the jug is a revelation drawn by the wisdom



The riches of Christ's that lie deep in our spirit

Wisdom is a jug, while the water is the revelation that comes from the deep well of the spirit. Only the spiritual revelation of Christ, which is brought to the surface from within us and transformed into a practical experience of Christ, is the true knowledge of God.

Without revelation, it is impossible to know and live spiritual life. Therefore, the apostle Paul writes in a letter to the

Corinthians that only the Spirit of God reveals something from God. Revelation is a real spiritual experience by which we know the Lord.

these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. (*1 Corinthians 2:10*)

In the spirit of every Christian there is an inexhaustible well of revelations, which will not end and will not exhaust during the eternity. However, it can lie in the deepest part of our hearts, never manifesting itself and rising to the surface of our lives. Therefore, we need spiritual wisdom to accumulate the revelation into our practical life.

Why did the apostle Paul relate the revelation with wisdom? And why, without wisdom, cannot revelation rise to the surface of our lives and become a practical experience of the person of Jesus? The apostle Paul gives the answer in the same epistle to the Ephesians, describing wisdom.

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but **as wise, making the most of every opportunity**, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. (*Ephesians 5:15-17*)

Wisdom - is our attitude towards time. In this letter, wisdom and time are linked. Some Christians think that revelations come suddenly and at any time, but Paul writes something else. It is impossible to receive revelation if there is no time given to search for it. Therefore, when a Christian acts wisely and invests his time in the knowledge of the person of the Lord, the deeply

hidden treasures of the person of Christ begin to arise from within him. Then the Christian begins to understand the revelation spiritually and acquires the ability to put it into practice.

The epistle to the Corinthians tells us that the spirit of God reveals to us the depths of God and shows how the Holy Spirit does it. Revelation comes through the searching process.

these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. **The Spirit searches** all things, even the deep things of God. (*1 Corinthians 2:10*)

Searching is not a one-time action or request. It is a constant penetration deeper into the person of God, devoting the time to it. Therefore, first, we need wisdom that knows how to manage our time and set life priorities. A Christian who, after the first superficial reading, does not drop God's word as a toy, but penetrates and uses time to know Christ inside him and live in Him, indeed has in his hands a jug with which he begins to draw water from a supernatural well. The searching opens the way for the revelation. Without wisdom, it is impossible to receive revelation, because revelation comes when we spend time with God, when we seek Him to understand His will. And that takes time. Thus, our attention and time spent searching for the Lord is directly proportional to the depth and quantity of revelation. Therefore, the apostle Paul exhorts the believers of the church of Ephesus to use their time wisely so that when they seek the Lord in their spirit, they will know and experience Jesus in reality.

The cost of the search. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is the greatest value in the life of a Christian. Valuable things are not

cheap. This does not mean that we can buy the knowledge of Christ, His revelation, and wisdom, but in order to experience it in practice, we must show by faith what value for it we put in our life. In the material world, shops with cheap things are always full of people. If a promotion, discounts or a sales are announced in the store, then people flock to them, but only a few people come to the gold, gemstone and brilliant stores, because in order to buy valuable things, you need to pay a high price. The same is true with spiritual things. Many Christians value God's miracles, signs, healings, manifestations of the Spirit of God more than Christ and His knowledge. Therefore, sermons on the gifts of the Spirit, the anointing, the voice of God, miracles, healings, the end of the world, and other supernatural things attract many believers. Such gatherings and conferences bring together hundreds of Christians who are promised for free the miracle, double anointing, the calling of evangelist, apostle, prophet, financial success and various blessings. There is no need to pay for it, and the action of God becomes a cheap and free commodity, to which the crowd flocks. However, the knowledge of the person of Christ, His revelation and wisdom receive attention of only a few Christians, because it is about self-denial, following Jesus by carrying the cross, and at a high price. The value of Christ is limitless. Therefore, a Christian who sees the invaluable value of Christ is ready to pay the price of knowing Him. These sermons do not receive much attention and are spoken in person, as is the apostle Paul, who walked from home to home and taught the secrets of the knowledge of Christ. The Lord repeatedly emphasized to anyone who wants to follow Him the value of this process. He often used the words: "worthy or unworthy of Me."

Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (*Matthew 10:38*)

So, how do you grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and how do you gain wisdom and revelation? The Bible is full of counselling and exhortations how to get wisdom. The acquisition is always associated with the search and the price of the desired item. First, there is a search, and when you find it, you pay the price, which shows how much you value the item.

Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. The beginning of wisdom is this: **Get wisdom.** Though it cost all you have, get understanding. (*Proverbs 4:6-7*)

The same is true with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We begin to look for Him and during the search we are faced with a price that we set for ourselves. How much is Christ worth to me? How much do I want to know Him?

One of the currencies with which we pay the price is time. Everyone has time. Therefore, there is no Christian on the earth who is richer or has less chance of finding time and growing in the knowledge of the Lord. Everyone has the same twenty-four hours. How much of this currency we will be willing to spend, eager to find and acquire wisdom and revelation, so much we will be filled with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The time spent in seeking the personal relationship with the Lord shows the magnitude of our jug of wisdom, by which the revelation of the person of Christ and His manifestation in our daily lives come into our lives.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to the treasure hidden in the soil, which man seeks. In order to actually use this treasure, a person first looks for it, and

when he finds it, he sets a price and finally buys it. Only after the price is paid, he can actually use it.

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. **When a man found it**, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and **sold all** he had and **bought** that field. (*Matthew 13:44*)

Every Christian who accepts Jesus in his heart, truly finds a treasure that he hides in his heart. It is a treasure inside us that we have found, but in reality, it has not yet manifested itself in our lives, i.e. we cannot actually use it until we determine what is its value for us. After that, the Christian determines the value of this treasure by selling what he has. One of the things that every Christian has is time. He determines how much time and attention he will devote, in order to buy not the treasure, but the soil, in which the treasure is located.

After we get the faith, we begin to lose our time for the sake of the treasure. At first, it may seem to a Christian that he is wasting time on thinking, searching with his heart and spending time for a person he does not see. At first, we do not see quick and tangible results, only constant time costs. However, after some time, having overcome the frustration, the fear of the absence of results, we accumulate enough time to buy the soil. The time spent searching for the Lord later pays off and we are surprised when His knowledge changes our behaviour, and the revelation from within begins to flow outwards and manifests itself in our lives. Therefore, never be disappointed if spending ten minutes searching for the knowledge of the Lord does not bring immediate results. Also, do not despair and do not lose sight of the goal if for several months or years you have been spending time searching for His reality and expressing your desire to

know Him. You will be surprised when, unexpectedly and suddenly, your life will begin to bear the fruits of His knowledge. Although in the eyes of others all this will be "suddenly", but you will remember the price that you paid when you sold time. For you it is not "suddenly".

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that **he rewards those who earnestly seek him.** (*Hebrews 11:6*)

It was the same with Jesus. He grew up by the grace of God for thirty years, until the time when the knowledge of God began to manifest itself on the outside. Then many wondered and asked where Jesus got all this wisdom. For them, that treasure appeared suddenly, but it was not an unexpected thing for Jesus. He grew with that. Quite a few Christians still believe in the God of the lottery, which for them is a sudden awakening, a sudden knowledge of Him, a sudden answer to one prayer, a sudden anointing, a sudden one sermon or a principle of faith that solves all problems and clothes them with the spiritual fruits. However, if you are constantly looking for Him, it will not be a sudden event for you.

When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?" (*Mark 6:2*)

Obstacles to the search for the Lord. Every Christian face obstacles in his life and schemes drawn up by the devil, which

are aimed at stopping him from seeking the Lord. The devil knows what inexhaustible riches and treasures are in the heart of the Christian, what a great power, wisdom and character of God is hidden in his spirit. Therefore, he tries his best to divert the attention and time of the Christian from the search for the Lord to other things, so that the great treasure of the knowledge of Christ remains unused.

I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. (*Philemon 1:6*)

The devil tries to replace the search for the Lord with various "Christian" supplements, which steal the time. Many Christians spend hours sitting at the computer and looking at the awakening taking place beyond the screen, watching Christian films and testimonies, browsing through all social media networks, discussing ongoing ministries and church news. Others, immerse themselves in all-time devouring ministries, projects, jobs, charity campaigns, conversations and run all day in a carousel of good deeds.

The time devoted to the search for the Lord among Christians is often seen as time spent in vain, because the spirit of the world puts pressure on the Christian to always be busy and useful. Serving God without the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the carousel of good deeds slowly displaces the so precious and important time dedicated for the search for the Lord. For this reason, the Christian does not understand how to seek the Lord and the first question that comes to his mind when he hears the exhortation to seek the Lord is "**What works should I do?**". But indeed, the search for the Lord is a time spent personally with

His word in order to know Him and be taught not in his own conditions and ways, but in His conditions and ways. Therefore, nowadays, finding the Lord for ten minutes is much more difficult than communicating online with Christians for three hours or watching a good sermon. Even in the world, a person cannot stay for ten minutes in silence without the background of music, TV or the Internet. Time in solitude is fearful to many and is understood as time spent uselessly. But the search for the Lord is precisely when the bustling environment is "turned off", lists of prayers and requests and the noisy voice of one's own "I" with their own desires, concerns and plans are set aside. Then the main focus of the heart is directed to the person of Jesus Christ.

The search for the Lord is not a one-time prayer or a solution to a problem. It is a constant knowledge of the person of Christ, which works through the search for His person. The Holy Spirit, through the word of God, exhorts us to seek Him continually.

Look to the LORD and his strength; **seek his face always.** (*Psalm 105:4*)

The constant search for the Lord is a necessity to follow Jesus and be fruitful. Christians who ignore this truth are very often deceived by the devil and entrenched in yesterday's revelations or yesterday's awakening. Following Jesus is possible only with a constant search for Him. The devil, on the contrary, wants to establish us in yesterday's revelation and movement. He always uses what God did yesterday. He can't create, so he always copies. He suggests stopping where God was yesterday. Christians then establish themselves in the truth revealed yesterday and turn it into a tradition. Then a doctrine is born, where only yesterday's smell of the spirit is felt. Jesus is never

behind us; He always goes in front. Therefore, if you are looking for Jesus in a place where He was yesterday, then He is no longer there. Life with yesterday's memories, miracles, revelations and glorious stories truly imprisons a Christian in the wilderness and memories of the awakening that took place forty years ago.

When we stop looking for the Lord, we begin to live on yesterday's food. Many of the powerful awakenings that occurred and the movements of the spirit of God were extinguished simply because they were stopped and established in the truth that was highlighted by the Holy Spirit during the awakening. An attempt to repeat, to use the same means and techniques, ended with the creation of a new denomination or idolatry. In the Old Testament, we read about the copper serpent that God commanded Moses to do, so that the Israelites, who were bitten by a poisonous serpent, would receive healing when they looked at the copper serpent. This revelation was given to Moses by God. It was a true and powerful revelation of God. However, later in the Bible we read that the same copper serpent, which God used as a symbol to heal the Israelites, became the cause of idolatry and alienation from God.

He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.). (*2 Kings 18:4*)

This is also often the case in the life of a Christian, when he copies yesterday's awakenings and uses the same means that God used yesterday. Then the form is taken without content. For this reason, many of the means used during the past

awakenings turned into the reason for the establishment of new denominations.

Thus, the search for the Lord is not a one-time act. If the Lord works and does something today, that doesn't mean He will always do so. None of the healings recorded in the Gospel were the same. For some, the Lord would put His hands on, for others he would apply dirt mixed with saliva, and still others he would touch with His thumbs. But the result was the same – they all were healed. Attachment to the form may have been a good reason for establishing a denomination that would treat all diseases with mud baths. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit shows that the search for the Lord is a continuous and daily process. It is communication with a living person who moves, speaks, and has His own will for your life. Therefore, true safety and certainty is in the constant search for His face. Only in this way the knowledge of the Lord grows. May you not be stopped by yesterday's revelations, glorious experiences, or the failures you have experienced. The Lord has a new manna for you today that will give you the strength to live His life today.

My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face,
LORD, I will seek. (*Psalms 27:8*)

CHAPTER XIV JESUS'S DEATH AND LIFE IN US

When we are born from the spirit two essential spiritual revelations begin to work in our lives. It is the death of Jesus and the life of Jesus. These are the most important revelations to which the Holy Spirit leads us. If the death and the life of Jesus begin to function in the life of a Christian, this indicates that he is nourished with a full spiritual food. Without the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to experience the death and the life of Jesus, because it becomes real only under the influence of the Spirit of God.

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. (*2 Corinthians 4:10*)

But how is it possible for such seemingly opposing and incompatible revelations to work in the same Christian at the same time? Without realizing this, some Christians go to extremes and turn all their attention only to the death of Jesus or only to the resurrection of Jesus. The former emphasize self-denial, hardship, humbleness, sacrifice, carrying the cross, loss and persecution, while others emphasize reign with Christ, the power of His resurrection, conquest, victory and life. But these spiritual truths and revelations are indivisible. It is impossible to distinguish them, because without the death of Jesus there is no resurrection, and the force of resurrection will work where there is an authentic death of Jesus. Therefore, when we try to separate these truths and make them self-sufficient, then we remain only with the right knowledge, but without the spiritual content and the power of God. In order to understand how these fundamental truths can work simultaneously in the same person,

it is important to see what kind of life we carry inside ourselves and how it works.

The life of the soul. On the earth, there are various life forms that differ from each other in their properties and quality. In nature, we can observe various forms of life, ranging from small bacteria and ending with various animals. In addition to these forms of life, there is another type of life – it is the human soul.

Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man **became a living being.** (*Genesis 2:7*)

After sin separated the soul of Adam and Eve from the life of God, the life of the soul became the only and dominant force of human existence, the main motive and source of which is the "I". The cornerstone of the soul is the life directed towards itself. Everything that happens, what is sought, feared, cared for or expressed is connected with oneself. This is an ego-central, self-sufficient and selfish life. This life does not necessarily manifest itself in great sins. This may be a person's self-expression in order to be useful, to show and present himself as a loving, sincere and good person. Therefore, both an open sinful life and good deeds and religious practice are the fruits of the same tree of knowledge of good and evil, which God had forbidden to eat. Just because you taste good fruits does not mean that it is different tree. It is the same tree of knowledge of good and evil, the fruits of which are eaten by both a murderer, a harlot and a thief, and a man who looks nice, does good deeds and refrains from great and open sins. **But the lives of both revolve around the same axis, called "I".** This is the same tree of soulish life, the main purpose of which is to satisfy and express oneself. The

life of the soul is characterized by pride, the raising of one's own value, independence, self-assurance and the search for various forms of self-expression in order to **become** someone great or **to have** something.

The life of the Spirit. But there is something more than the life of the soul. In the heart of each person is embedded the thirst for a different life. Trying to quench and satisfy this thirst, people climb the mountains, rush into good deeds, quench emptiness with alcohol and drugs, try to find love in sexual relationships or make sense of themselves with various and useful activities, but the only Jesus is the answer to this thirst. Jesus is a gift from God, in which lies another kind of life that man desires. The life of God is hidden in Christ.

For the wages of sin is death, but the **gift of God is eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Romans 6:23*)

This life is given by God to everyone who accepts Jesus into his heart. Just as the life of the soul is characterized by certain qualities, so too does the life of the Spirit manifest itself in a certain way. The life of the Spirit revolves not around an axis called "I", but around the person Jesus Christ. This life works in the person of Christ and manifests itself in His humility, unconditional love, devotion, joy, peace, faith, and the search for God's glory. This is not our personal manifestation, but a residence of another person in us.

In his epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul writes that Jesus Christ, like the last Adam, became through His resurrection from the dead (He died, like the last Adam), a life-giving **Spirit**, i.e. a giver of a different life. By accepting Jesus, you accept into your interior a different form of life, i.e. spiritual

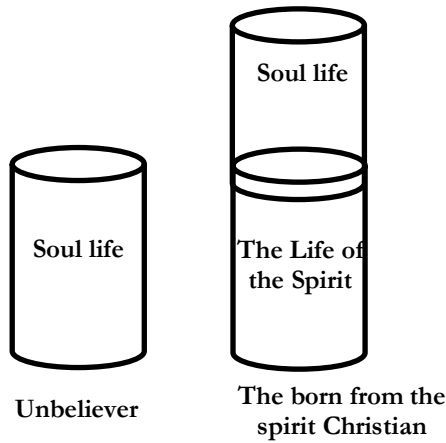
life. Therefore, God gives the Holy Spirit to everyone who receives His Son Jesus, so that it is possible for him to live a spiritual life. Just as it is impossible to live a carnal life without a body, it is impossible to live a spiritual one without a spirit.

So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being” ; the last Adam, **a life-giving spirit**. (*1 Corinthians 15:45*)

The Bible reveals that after Jesus's death and resurrection, a person can accommodate two types of life in himself: soul and spirit. A person who does not believe, or who does not accept Jesus's sacrifice and the gift of the Holy Spirit, lives only the life of the soul. Despite the fact that in his speech or thoughts he can use spiritual terminology and reason about religion and good deeds, he will not be able to live the life of God. The life of God, which is in Jesus Christ, is possible only if a person accepts into his heart the Holy Spirit as the bearer of the life of Christ.

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, **if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you**. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. (*Romans 8:9*)

A person is similar to a container filled with certain contents. The container of an unbeliever is filled with the life of the soul, while the container of the Christian comprises of two parts: one part filled with the life of the soul, and the other with the life of the spirit.



The primacy of soulish life is driven out by the death of Jesus. One of the misconceptions about rebirth from above and spiritual life is the belief that when we receive the Holy Spirit, we lose the life of the soul. However, this is not the case. Indeed, in our interior we accept a competitor for the life of the soul, i.e. the life of the spirit. Next to the life of the soul, inherited from the parents, we receive the life of the spirit, inherited from Christ. After the conversion starts the great struggle and competition inside of Christian. If, before the faith, a person did not have the freedom of choice about what kind of life he had to live and had a "monopolist" in himself, i.e. the life of the soul, then having believed, he has the opportunity to live according to the body or according to the spirit. When Christian gets the faith, the struggle between two lives begins inside of him. These lives compete with each other and resist each other.

For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are

in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. (*Galatians 5:17*)

Therefore, very often a Christian is surprised that after he believed, an internal conflict and confrontation begins inside of him, which did not exist before. So, we can't live two lives, so we have to lose one. Jesus warned that in order to live His life, one must lose one's own. This is not a one-time event or decision, but a path. It is the reason, why Jesus said about Himself that He is the way, the truth and the life. Christianity begins with the constant emptying our soulish life and filling with life Of God that comes to empty throne. This is an ongoing process that leads to a real spiritual life.

For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. (*Matthew 16:25*)

Thus, God's life grows, increases, and fills our inner being thanks to the shrinking and going away from the throne the life of the soul. In order the life of Christ could manifest itself through us, we are constantly losing ourselves. It is a process initiated and sustained exclusively by the Holy Spirit, who counsels and convinces us of our own free will and out of love to give way to Christ. It is a free decision, uttering the simple words "Let it be not my will, but Yours."

However, how does the life of the soul give way to the spiritual? Why, it would seem, sometimes so difficult to deny yourself and choose Christ? Why sometimes do you want to be so intuitively immersed in your life and the desire to preserve it? The answer is that the transformation of the soulish life with the spiritual is possible only through the revelation of the death of Christ within

us. No other means, good deed and efforts help. Only the death of Christ can influence our soulish lives and convince us of our own free to give way to the spirit. God never invades or conquers our hearts. He is always invited and comes where the place is prepared for Him. Therefore, one of the first revelations of the Holy Spirit is the revelation of the death of Jesus. The revelation of Jesus's death affects our soulish lives and encourages us to lose it, exchanging it for something better.

The apostle Paul was taught by the Holy Spirit how to win Christ so that God's life could flow through him. In a letter to the Philippians, he revealed the secret of the reality of the life of Christ. Paul was constantly under the influence of the Holy Spirit and lost his own life. For this reason, God's life has gained more space to express itself through it.

What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake **I have lost all things**. I consider them garbage, **that I may gain Christ** (*Philippians 3:8*)

How does Jesus's death work in us? Jesus was humbled and refused to act on His own. He could express Himself, but He did nothing of Himself. He wasn't bad or unhappy that He should be ashamed. However, He wore human nature, so He also needed to carry the death of human nature and seek the glory of the Father. Jesus has done nothing of Himself and has repeatedly said that He cannot do anything of Himself. Jesus renounced His own decisions, will and desires during His life on the earth, even though they were not evil. Jesus was a grain walking on the earth and falling to the ground as an invisible and hidden source of eternal life, so that through Him, the Father would produce

many sons of Gods. Therefore, even in our lives, the Holy Spirit will first act and influence the soulish life, so that it is pushed aside through the death of Jesus, and in its throne, there is a free place for another type of life.

The revelation of Jesus's death is the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit as we hear the word about Jesus' cross and death. Hearing this word, we are exposed to the supernatural power of God and gain the strength to identify ourselves with Jesus's death. The revelation of Jesus's death begins not with good, or self-denial works, but with hearing the word of God under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Without realizing this, some Christians plunge into self-punitive actions, renouncing material things, humiliating themselves, separating themselves from communication with unbelievers and immersing themselves in other religious works that seem so attractive and ascetic in the eyes of a man. Such Christians twist the word of God and replace the power of the Holy Spirit with human efforts. They desire to die like Jesus but refuse to be hidden in the already existing death of Jesus. Only under the influence of the Holy Spirit can one identify with himself with Christ and, for this reason, begin to live the life of God.

Spiritual life is brought to the stage by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we hear the word about Jesus's death, the Holy Spirit reveals to us God's love and His unconditional goodness, which He expressed through Jesus's death. Then, out of love and free will, convinced by the Holy Spirit, we enter into Jesus's death, identifying ourselves with Him not out of fear or desire for power, but out of a love that responds to His love. This motive brings into our lives the power of Jesus's resurrection as a faith acting in love.

For Christ's **love compels us**, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. (*2 Corinthians 5:14*)

In order the power of Christ's resurrection could work in our lives, we need our own lives to be drawn aside through Christ's death. God will never forcibly do this and will not manipulate us. He will never pull us out of the scene of life if we do not withdraw ourselves. And to withdraw from the scene of one's life and give way to another person is possible, only by lovingly answering the love of God. It is a step taken from the free will and from the persuasion of the Holy Spirit, which then turns into the second, third step, until it finally becomes the path... Neither spiritual ambitions, nor strong will, nor desire to serve, nor sincerity, nor any humanity work here. The only acting motive is the love of God, and it is possible to obtain it only by looking at Christ - the crucified One, who gave Himself to God on account of you.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (*Galatians 2:20*)

The power of Christ's resurrection and the life of God come to the empty place where we were before. God's power seeks and resurrects what is dead in Christ. There is no resurrection without death. Any effort to deny oneself that is not initiated by the Holy Spirit by pointing to Christ crucified, does not receive God's approval. It is not surprising that there are so many "super spiritual" Christians around who think that their heroic deeds will attract the power of God. However, only an empty space attracts the supernatural force of God. What is an empty space?

It only works through a love relationship, in the same way that it worked between Jesus and the Father. We are called to the same relationship when, out of the love we receive the God's live through Jesus's death.

The Bible is full of examples that prophesy and testify about the life God gives in response to someone else's death. It is the death of Christ, which makes Abraham out of Abram, Peter out of Simon, Paul out of Saul, Israel out of Jacob, and the church out of sinners. New names in the Bible point to a new person and a new life. Therefore, many men of God have two names in the Bible. They received their second name as a new inherited life because of their faith in God. But before that, they were led in such a way that their own life was lost.

Why God's life sometimes doesn't work? Many Christians shrug their shoulders when reading about God's promises, His works and gifts, asking why the reality of these gifts is sometimes only "on paper." In his epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul writes that God in Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings, and the apostle Peter confidently asserts that God has given us everything we need for life and godliness.

His divine power **has given us everything** we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. (*2 Peter 1:3*)

Thus, the word of God clearly and unequivocally indicates that God did not spare anything and gave us everything. But why is our life so often poor with God's blessings and gifts?

When we believed and accepted Jesus in our hearts, next to the capacity of soulish life we received the capacity of spiritual life. This life is full of spiritual blessings, gifts and power. But as long as some empty space in the container of our soulish life is reserved, those blessings and gifts will remain lying "on paper." The New Testament speaks of exchange, not acceptance. We pour out and give our lives to Christ, He gives us His life. We give sicknesses, troubles, and He gives health and peace. We give our weakness, disgrace, afflictions, and He gives His encouragement, comfort, reinforcement. The New Testament talks about sowing, when we sow losing what we have, despite the fact that it is very little, and later we get incomparably more. The seed at first looks very small compared to the future harvest.

But why is it so difficult to lose or let go of our life, despite the fact that it is not already so attractive? Our old nature is such that we are hooked under any circumstances and try our best to maintain our lives. For this reason, we fear the future and try to protect ourselves. Our soulish life agrees with everything, so that only it does not have to retreat and give power into the hands of the spirit. Soulish life is ready to pray a lot, fast, sacrifice, work and do anything and in any way, just so that you do not have to step aside and get off the scene as the main player. The soulish life wants to be seen, express himself and live. Therefore, if we do not lose or give up space for God and do not surrender to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will be dressed in religious clothes in order to preserve what is old. Then it becomes an imitation and copy of the spiritual life.

Such Christian has a spirit and all the blessings and gifts of God inside of him, but for fear of letting go of his old life, he tries to imitate the spiritual life and puts to the old clothes a new patch. Such Christian very often gets tired of serving, murmurs and is

dissatisfied and doubtful of the love of God, complains that he is not loved, that others do not understand and reject him, that the church is bad and carnal, etc. He is very eager to serve and seeks to express himself in good deeds, but very often he feels inner discomfort and accuses himself of hypocrisy, realizing that religious practice does not coincide with his inner being. Some continue to grow in their righteousness, while others plunge into self-blame, depression, or return to old sins. The only reason for such failures or **artificial spiritual growth** is misunderstanding and refusal to surrender to the action of the Holy Spirit, which helps to lose one's life through the revelation of Jesus's death and discover a new life of the spirit.

He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. (*Luke 5:36*)

Holy Spirit leads to weakness. God knows our old nature and knows that without help we cannot let go of our lives. The stronger a person and his will, the more difficult it is for him to let go of his life. In his epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul writes that our lives are sown when it is weak. When we are less strong and confident, then letting go of ourselves is easier. Therefore, the Lord very often leads us to weakness, where we feel insecure, wrong, and the results created by our efforts fade away. When a person is weak, he more easily releases what he is clinging to. When the church grows, miracles happen in it, then we hold ourselves in with confidence and say, "*this is our church*", but when it begins to decline, and the service becomes unprofitable, unattractive and without results, then we humbly pronounce – "*God, in Your hands I give this flock, You art its Lord, this is Your church.*"

it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; *it is sown in weakness*, it is raised in power; (*1 Corinthians 15:43*)

The example of the apostle Peter shows that despite his efforts, sincerity and devotion to God, he kept clinging to his life, trying to adapt it, repair it and imitate it as spiritual. Despite the fact that he received the correct revelation that Jesus was the Christ, he was not able to live and understand that Jesus was going to death. Despite Peter's efforts and sincerity to follow Jesus, his clinging to his efforts and decisions ended in complete failure – he even renounced Jesus three times in public and with swear words. Peter after these events saw that it was not worth trusting himself. Becoming weak, Peter accepted the forgiveness of Jesus and after His resurrection obediently followed the Lord, having lost the main pillar of his life, i.e. himself.

Likewise, in our service, God often leads us to weak circumstances to help release and push us out of the container of the soul ourselves and to make an empty space for the power of God that comes from the container of spirit. This is not a one-time solution and action, but a constant step, of which the path consists of.

This secret was understood by the apostle Paul and he no longer resisted the Lord when there were difficulties and circumstances before his eyes that seemed to lead to weakness. This helped Paul lose himself so that the knowledge of Christ would fill his life.

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”
Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my

weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.
(2 Corinthians 12:9)

Serving without losing oneself. One of the most common false practices of spiritual life among Christians is serving God without losing oneself. Such service prevents others from tasting spiritual fruits, does not reveal the person of Christ, strengthens and cultivates one's own righteousness, and leads to an imitation of spiritual life. Refusing to surrender to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and trying to serve God on his own by drawing strength from the container of the soul is dangerous and most often gives birth to Pharisees or "super spiritual" Christians. Therefore, it is very important at the beginning of the faith to allow the Holy Spirit to speak, teach, and lead to the revelation of Jesus's death, so that God's power may flow within us. Some Christians are in a hurry to serve and do not want to waste time with the teachings of the Holy Spirit. They are afraid of losing time and strive to be always visibly active. However, there is no need to be afraid of losing the time that the Spirit of God devotes to the revelations of Jesus's death and resurrection, because without this, serving God can only become a religious practice. Do not be afraid of sowing, during which you see nothing, only falling seeds on the ground...

Nothing is so deceiving and disappointing than the imitation of the spiritual life that our old self is so willingly ready to carry out. Then religious works not only do not help to lose ourselves and prepare a place for the power of God, but, on the contrary, - strengthen and cherish our old man. Then it is possible to deeply delude ourselves, thinking that we are living a spiritual life, while our old self is decorated with his own good deeds.

Such errors occur when an unbalanced message is preached and heard. If one hears only about reign, conquest, strength, power, blessings and supernatural events, then one can easily fall. Service without the loss of one's own life will sooner or later give birth in us not Christ, but pride, one's own efforts, and will lead to the worship and admiration of man. Despite how beautifully and powerfully the ministry began, if it overlooks the loss of ourselves, it ends in a fall.

The word about the cross, the loss of ourselves, gives us balance in following Jesus and gives the Holy Spirit the instruments of the word to reveal in us the death of Jesus and His resurrection. The cross helps us to maintain a balance, so that we do not fall into pride and do not grow ourselves as a virtuous and good old man. In the eyes of heaven, good works do not make sense if they are done outside of Christ. The main question is not how much to serve, but to WHOM serve. The essence of the service is to allow Christ to fill us and serve others. In this way, the person next to us is drawn to Christ, tastes the fruits of our spirit and, for this reason, falls in love with Jesus. When we allow Christ to serve others through us, then such service brings true blessing. Then we do not build our kingdom, service, and success, but we remain hidden and invisible, allowing the Holy Spirit to highlight Christ in us and in others.

My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains
of childbirth until Christ is formed in you,
(*Galatians 4:19*)

CHAPTER XV LIFE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

It often happens that despite personal communion with the Lord, reading the word of God and prayers, the Christian feels inner discomfort and some inexplicable lack of God's life. Then the question arises: why there is so little God's life around me, despite the fact that I have a personal relationship with Jesus? One of the reasons why a Christian may feel dissatisfaction and a lack of God's life, is that the fulness of the life of Christ is possible only in the His body. Just as human life on earth is impossible without a body, so too is the life of God is possible in the body of Christ.

Each member of the body has in himself the life of God. However, if he is separated from the body of Christ, the life of God will not manifest in its fulness. Despite how important and necessary personal communication with the Lord is, it works fully only when the Christian is in the loving relationship with the whole body of Christ. God's life does not manifest fully in just a single member. The finger of the hand will have life in itself and will function fully only when it is in the hand, and the hand is in the body. If we separate any of these members, then life will remain only for a short time, since an individual member of the body **cannot sustain life**. This also often happens to Christians who separate and choose to improve and grow alone. For a while, God's life is still manifesting itself, but it becomes impossible to maintain it in the long run. For this reason, a number of sincere Christians, having moved away and distanced themselves from other imperfect members of the body of Christ, are slowly fading and God's life in them is replaced by the soulish life, which begins to manifest itself in various hurts, pride, impatience, ambition and self-improvement. Then

the Christian strays either into "super spirituality", thinking about himself higher than about others, or gradually goes out into the world. It is impossible to keep the life of Christ alone. For the maintenance, growth and revelation of God's life, the whole body of Christ is needed. Therefore, for your spiritual growth and knowledge of Christ, other Christians will be constantly needed, regardless of their level of spiritual knowledge, faith, love, or imperfection. Both strong, and even more weak members of the body of Christ will be essential for God's life to grow in you.

On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, (*1 Corinthians 12:22*)

In the New Testament, we read that at the Last Supper, Jesus made an eternal covenant with God, as the Son of Man. This covenant cannot be broken because it is made between Jesus and the Father. However, Jesus included and invited His disciples into this covenant. Jesus did not make a covenant alone with Peter, James, John, and other disciples, but invited them to participate in this covenant all together as members of one body. In this way, Jesus showed that in this covenant Peter's relationship with Jesus is unthinkable without Peter's relationship with John, Andrew, James, and other Apostles. It is a collective covenant in which an individual is not separated. At the Last Supper, an eternal covenant occurred in which the whole body of Christ participates. It is only possible to be together in this covenant.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, a glorious and new period began, when God began to reveal His fulness and glory through something unheard of, misunderstood and unthinkable by anyone, i.e. through the church. In the Old Testament, God

acted through individuals (kings, judges, prophets), but during the New Testament, Jesus revealed that now the limited action of God through individuals has come to an end. Now the indefinite revelation of God's glory and His FULL functioning through the church begins. Through the body of Christ, in which the main emphasis is the relationship between the members of the body, God expresses His love and grace.

From the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus changed the consciousness of His disciples, trying to erase self-sufficiency and individualism and grafting dependence on God and other members of His body. Jesus gathered and maintained around Him such opposing and incompatible personalities that no force or psychology on the earth could have done so. Jesus changed His disciples and installed in them the love of God as the basis of a new life, which works and manifests itself not only in them, but especially AMONG THEM.

From the beginning of Jesus's service on the earth, and especially after His death and resurrection, God's main focus is directed not to a single Christian, but to the church. Most of the apostles' epistles are written to the churches, and those personal letters to Titus, Timothy, and others are written to explain how to behave in the church. Why is the church the main focus of the New Testament?

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. (*Matthew 16:18*)

In the Gospel of Matthew, we read that Jesus foretold that the church would be the place where Christ's victory over the devil would be revealed and established, and the full and final

crushing of all spiritual forces of evil. Also, in his epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul writes that through the church God will reveal all His fulness, strength, and authority.

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (*Ephesians 1:22 -23*)

Unsurprisingly, the devil's main goal is to stop not individual Christians, but to prevent and at least save some time in order to delay God's strength, authority, and victory in the church. Therefore, at the moment there is so much criticism, false teachings, cynicism, misunderstanding and ignorance associated with the church. The church has become synonymous of controversy, divisions, and sin. Especially among Christians, the teaching about the church, relationships and the glory of God suffered the most damage. On the contrary, there are so many teachings and sermons on anointing, individual victories of faith, personal development and spiritual careers achieved through various confessions of faith and manipulation. However, when it comes to the teaching about the church, some strong, inexplicable resistance and wall meet Christians in their thoughts and feelings, in which the stereotype of a weak, arguing and divided church, arises.

Why is this happening, why are the forces of hell particularly unhappy when it comes to teaching about the church and God's life in the body of Christ? The devil knows that no general of God or an individual spiritual giant will bring a final victory over him, except the church. The devil believes in the word of God and takes it seriously. Therefore, he is a good tactician and strategist. As a chess player, he can sacrifice certain things to

save the game's lot and extend his time, despite knowing he's a loser. He can allow you alone to grow in God, to serve and even cast out demons and heal the sick. The scariest thing for him is not individual prominent Christians or leaders of awakening, but a church inspired, cultivated and surrendered to God.

So, the main attack of the devil is not against your success, spiritual career, service or even salvation. His main attack has always been and will be directed against the church. **What are the main misconceptions, schemes, directed against the church in order to alienate and isolate Christians from being together?**

The spirit of the world. One of the ways in which the devil tries to seduce and influence God-seeking and sincere Christians is the spirit of the world, which dressed in Christian clothes, introduces itself as a counsellor. The world is dominated by the cult of personalities, show stars, celebrities, success stories and fame. This spirit wants to penetrate the church through individual members who set goals for personal development, who wants to become famous men and generals of God, successful servants, and without realizing it seeks attention, fame and recognition. For this reason, the church becomes a theatre, where the audience gathers to look at the stars of the Christian world, and the latter seek to attract and retain the attention of believers in various ways. Then the audience becomes picky, striving for higher knowledge or a greater emotional charge, something special and new in the church ministries. It is becoming increasingly difficult for servants to attract spectators, to please and satisfy them. Preachers sweat, run, joke, tell funny stories, try to embarrass and apply non-standard methods in order to make the viewer always satisfied. Then the preacher's main question becomes "How was the

service today. **Did you like it?**". Having heard the answer that nothing new and interesting has been said, the preacher prays, fasts and looks for ways to interest the picky viewer. The viewer, not finding satisfaction for his mind and feelings, walks from one church to another and murmurs, criticizes and shares his expert knowledge accumulated through migration in various communities. In every Christian, then, the desire to become someone important is cultivated. Some begin to believe in success and try to achieve the much-desired success on the principles of faith. In this struggle, the church loses time, there is a lot of divisions, because everything is built on the secular spirit, which slips into Christian clothes and terminology. **The cult of personality and fame (despite the use of the term Glory of God) becomes the cornerstone of the service and aspirations.** Beneath the quest to see the miracles and signs of God, there is often a human desire to be the instrument of that glory.

Online and virtual Christianity. Since growing up in God requires personal and collective communication, which often requires the fruits of the spirit (patience, humility, meekness, endurance), so the devil offers copies, and especially in the times of technology. True relationships of love, devotion, patience are offered by the devil in virtual Christianity, when communication is done through the screen. Then the illusion of a real relationship and spiritual life is created, and the Christian can independently, when he likes and as much as he likes, communicates, connects and disconnects. He is the manager of relations. In virtual Christianity, carnality is mainly manifested, which is precisely what is encouraged and nurtured. At first, having joined virtual churches, you become full of criticism, quarrels, anger and fragmentation. Because to this, the life of your soul becomes satisfied and gets a chance to manifest itself.

Here all the conditions are created for the manifestation of your old man, who wants to be seen, respected and listened to. The computer becomes the main member of the church, and Jesus - moves from the heart beyond the screen. It is difficult for such a Christian to be without the Internet, but it is easy without Jesus. The devil slowly forms and gives him the illusion that he is growing up in the spirit, resolving disputes through discussions on the Internet. But as soon as the internet connection disappears for a few days, the Christian begins to feel discomfort, not realizing that Jesus longs for a real relationship, when you do not come to church online and on the phone but are led into a real relationship. Maintaining an online relationship does not require patience, love and faithfulness. Here you do not need to die for yourself and live for God. Why did the first church, despite having neither the Internet, nor transport, nor a telephone, managed to reveal Christ in such a large territory? The secret is that they would go from home to home and showed Christ in reality through their relationships.

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah. (*Acts 5:42*)

Separation from the body. Every Christian sooner or later faces one of the greatest temptations of the devil, directed to isolate and bring him out of the body and thus separate one function of the body from another. This happens through the devil's schemes, when he distorts and puts personal revelations and callings that are true and received from God above the calling of the church. When a Christian grows up in the body of Christ, a certain function of the body and gifts begin to manifest itself in him. These gifts are real and so bright that there is a

temptation to breathe more freely and serve on your own. Each function of the body also requires a certain limitation. A hand or a leg cannot do everything and be everything, so their service has certain **limits**. Therefore, very often, when God's gift and calling in the body begins to work strongly, at the same time every Christian is faced with a certain limitation, as if resistance or even disapproval of his service in the church. It is at this moment of success of service that the devil quietly begins to whisper in his ear and offer to withdraw from the body and begin independent service with the gift of God. If you start listening to this voice, it becomes very logical, because you notice that your service is being hindered, so it would be very logical to be widely inspired and separated from the unpleasant and limiting relationships that cultivate the character of Christ. If you are "hooked", then the evangelist separates himself from the church and begins to serve freely alone. The gift of God does not disappear anywhere and works, so souls are saved, and the evangelist remains satisfied and convinced that now without any restrictions, the new church is growing, and he is free to serve as he wants. However, this new church is built on one gift and for this reason it is separated from the gift of teachers, apostles or administrators. The growth of this church after a while stops, discontent arises, divisions arise, or the church becomes one walking leg.

The devil has made many separations between the strong-acting gifts of God. Such churches survive, but they are never filled with the fulness and victory of God. The devil may allow and even offer to serve you, but he will definitely try to take you out of the community, divide and separate one gift or function from another. When a Christian's goal is to have successful service, but not the glory and fulness of God, then he is content with individual divided communities, where there are enough people

to serve. If you want to, you will definitely find opportunities to serve, and if this is your goal, it will soon be fulfilled. However, if your goal is the glory of God, then you will need to step over yourself and leave behind your ambitions.

The perverse guidance. One of the most common and difficult mistakes that are made by sincere but immature Christians is the abuse of the personal guidance of the spirit. The devil knows our old nature well, so he will not offer a sincere Christian to go stealing or watching pornography. He will offer something great and similar to the life of the spirit. Most often, he suggests striving for personal spiritual guidance. Then the purpose of the Christian's life becomes not Christ, but the voice of God or His guidance. If your goal is no longer Jesus, but only His voice or guidance, the devil can easily mislead you by offering a whole collection of voices, coincidences or feelings. Fascinated by the personal guidance of the spirit, the Christian no longer reacts and hears God's voice in the body, but is confined to his personal space, which is also full of feelings, coincidences and voices. Such admiration, as a rule, sooner or later (if not stopped and enlightened by the word of God), will give birth to a "super spiritual" and unpredictable Christian. The main feature of this misadventure will be the expulsion from the church or the preservation in closed groups of like-minded Christians, in which true sectarianism spreads, repulsing people from Christ.

The reason for this is usually the wrong teaching about leading of the Holy Spirit and putting it above Jesus. Before His death, Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost, who would lead His disciples into all truth. Jesus said nothing about personal guidance but promised that the Holy Spirit would lead not a sheep, but a herd. Jesus did not say that the Holy Spirit would introduce Peter or James into the truth, but emphasized that He

would lead them all. A healthy leading will always be in the herd, i.e. in the body of Christ.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (*John 16:13*)

God does not speak only personally, but also to the congregation. Personal guidance must be seen in the context of the herd and serve not for personal development, but for the building up the church. If God's gifts, calling and manifestation are exclusively directed at the individual and devoted to his spiritual growth, then most likely such guidance is already mixed with human imaginations. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is always directed to relationships in the body of Christ. Therefore, it is very dangerous, being separated, to trust exclusively in the guidance of the Spirit. He will never lead without being in the body of Christ. Therefore, the apostle Paul, speaking about the gift of prophecy, emphasized that every prophecy must be judged by the whole body.

Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should **weigh carefully** what is said. (*1 Corinthians 14:29*)

Grievances, injuries, unforgiveness. Jesus said that it is impossible to avoid resentments, i.e., there will always be unbelievers and Christians around us who will hurt or put the stumbling block. When a Christian is looking for a perfect church, then he becomes disappointed and for this reason easily enticed in the devil's scheme. It is impossible to avoid insults, grievances and problems in the church. But it is the Holy Spirit

who puts us in the body, so that in Him we may grow into the character of Christ and have the opportunity to learn forgiveness, patience, humility, and obedience to one another.

Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! (*Matthew 18:7*)

These things are not gifts, they are fruits that grow through the process of discipleship. We learn to love, forgive and obey each other. This is not a finished product. Therefore, some Christians, having incorrect expectations and reasoning about the perfect church, wander and look for a ready-made church, thereby missing the opportunity to grow in the character of Christ. Perfection is cultivated but not found. When a Christian, because of various resentments, comes out and leaves the body of Christ, and especially distances himself from weak faith and weak members, at first, he may feel a certain relief, because he no longer must deal with unforgiveness, injustice, offences and other problems within himself. Then it is much easier to turn on the computer and sit down in front of the to a dead text that does not require either forgiveness, patience or meekness to maintain the relationship.

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, **bearing with one another in love**. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (*Ephesians 4:2-3*)

In his epistles, the apostle Paul urged us not to flee from challenges and problems in the church, but to solve them and thus grow in the knowledge of Christ. When we read letters to

churches, it is very common to see imperfect and with great problems Christians. But Paul still communicates with them and teaches them. Likewise, Jesus, in the book of Revelation, has remarks and reproaches to five of the seven churches, but He still walks among them and cares for them. Even for the church, about which He says that it is dead, He does not tell other members to get out or begin to look at it with contempt. For Jesus, the church is His body, and He cares for and nurtures it without leaving it.

The devil takes advantage of the inability of Christians to forgive, to overcome grievances and resentments, so a number of unjustly hurt, accused or wounded Christians leave, separate and close themselves. But the service of the spirit is not about inflicting wounds, but at healing it. If a Christian stands on the base and understands that the main thing for Jesus is the church, then he will not run away, but will ask for strength to forgive and maintain relations. Then he will receive anointing, strength and help from God and will be recognized in the eyes of God, for he will stand on a solid foundation, grow in the character of Christ, and serve as a blessing in the church. Some Christians do not endure the test in relationships. Every connection and relationship are tested when circumstances, emotions, and difficulties come.

No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. (*1 Corinthians 11:19*)

So, knowing the devil's schemes, let's see what spiritual truths help the church gain power, victory, and fulfil its main calling.

You are a member of the body of Christ. Another misconception that the devil seeks to perpetuate in Christianity is the understanding that the Christian has the fulness of Christ. However, this is not the case. When Christ walked and served on the earth, He acted in all gifts and had anointing without limit, but before His death and resurrection, He broke Himself and gave to each a piece of Himself. This means that an individual member will never have the fulness of Christ, all the gifts, and all knowledge, or will know the full and detailed guidance of the Holy Spirit. We receive only a portion of Christ's ministry and anointing, so the apostle Paul writes in his epistle to the Corinthians that we are all body of Christ, but that individually only members. For many Christians, the realization that he is not the fullness, but has limits in anointing, is very painful.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (*1 Corinthians 12:27*)

Alone, we do not and cannot act in the fulness of Christ. For Christ to be revealed in all the glory of service, it is necessary that the members of His body act together. An individual Christian can be filled with the spirit of God, but in order God could move with glory, a relationship between Christians is necessary. Very often we can hear how a Christian boasts that he was filled with spirit in his room, went through great things, got an understanding, etc. It's like when you touch an apple with your finger. So often we want to be able to feel "this touch" again and again. However, this is only the beginning that leads to church and relationships. Christ can walk and move not when He is in us, but when He is AMONG us. Filling with the Spirit of God is necessary, but it is intended to express Christ, who is among us.

You have the limits in the body of Christ. When someone preaches about faith and its unlimited possibilities, the verse of the Bible he often quotes is: "everything is possible for the one who believes". But the faith has boundaries, and this very often is forgotten. The faith of each member of the body has limits or the measure. The faith of salvation has no limits, because it is complete, i.e. you are saved without limits, but in the service and relationships in the church, God distributes and gives the to each of us the measure of faith.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, **in accordance with the faith** God has distributed to each of you. (*Romans 12:3*)

Therefore, before serving, the Lord teaches us humility, so that our thinking may be renewed with the right attitude, which says that our faith and its expression in the church have limits. The hand has its own limits and function, the eye - its own. When we renew our thinking and clothe ourselves in humility, we are introduced into the service of the Spirit. When the Lord fills us, it seems to us that our ministry is the most important, that the revelation we receive is the greatest and the best. This is because everything that the Spirit of God reveals is so personal and real, that it seems to us the most important.

Therefore, often in the church, the evangelist says that nothing is more important than the salvation of the soul, the pastors – that the most important thing is to take care of and look after the disciples, the teacher – so that everyone grows up in the knowledge of Christ, the prophet, so that everyone

hears and understands what God says, the giver, that the sacrifice and mercy are the most important thing. However, every service is important, and in order for the body to work harmoniously, the Lord teaches everyone the view that he is not the whole body, but only a member.

The epistles of the apostles encourage Christians to think about themselves and their service in a humble and sober way. It protects the body of Christ from divisions, jealousy and allows all its members to function. Then the eye does not take all attention and does not impose on others the need to do the same, and the leg does not fall into depression, that it cannot speak like the tongue, but quietly carries the mouth to the place reserved for it without murmurs and pride. These things are given by the Holy Spirit, who allow us to be corrected and instructed. It is impossible to learn it via the Internet or after reading a booklet. This is learned only by being in the practically functioning body of Christ.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
(Ephesians 4:16)

Connections in the body of Christ. During His service on the earth, Jesus promised to build a church whose gates of hell would not overcome. This means that construction is still going on. Therefore, do not be surprised if you have not yet found a perfectly built church. The word of God says that Jesus IS BUILDING IT NOW, i.e. construction is still going on. Although there are many important elements of construction, one of the most important is the connections and relationships in the Holy Spirit among the members of the body of Christ.

This construction is complex and possible only for the Holy Spirit. No psychology or human will can help. Only God knows us and understands how to cleanse people and put them in the right place. The Lord knows how to cultivate and strengthen Christians, so that grey mass of former sinners, through the power and wisdom of God, can turn into a glorious church. Nobody can take this challenge, except the Holy Spirit. This work is not completed, but it is still going on.

So, what does Jesus build? The Lord does not build a company, a structure, a spectacle, a social club, a circle of common interests, a charitable organization of sincere people, or individual believers who accidentally gather for the sermon. The Lord builds the church through connections and relationships.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
(Ephesians 4:16)

In the Church, the Holy Ghost develops two types of relationships among members of the body. It's a relationship of receiving and giving. In the Gospel of Matthew, we read that the main difference that Jesus will make on the day of judgment between a true and an imaginary church will be a relationship among them. Those Christians who saw and responded to each other's needs will be recognized as a suitable construction, and those who grazed themselves and did not respond to the needs of others will be recognized as a failed construction. So, what relationship does the Holy Ghost construct?

He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ (*Matthew 25:33-36*)

Every member of the body of Christ in the church has a need to RECEIVE. There is not a single member who does not need help or who receives everything from God directly, bypassing other members. Sometimes a Christian cannot rejoice in the answers to his prayers because he is separated from the body of Christ and does not accept help from other members. The loss of the ability to accept extinguishes the faith. Some "super spiritual" Christians reach such a level that they no longer accept any help and seek only to give and serve. They begin to understand the reception of the help as a lack of spirituality. Such a symptom is due to incomplete relationships. The devil often sows a misconception that it is shameful to accept, and a Christian all the time only has to earn money and load treasures in heaven. For such Christian, it is embarrassing and incomprehensible how it is possible to accept help from another member. But the Lord very often gives grace through small and insignificant members. Therefore, in the word of God it is written that He gives greater grace to the humble.

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.” (*James 4:6*)

Another, no less viable relationship is the giving, when a member of the body is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and allows to show the needs of other members. You are called to be God's answer and thanksgiving to someone. God responds to the needs of all of us through the members of His body. You are the legs to bring the Good News to others, you are the hands to help and provide for those in need, you are the answer to the prayer with which another Christian prayed to God.

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech
but with actions and in truth. (*1 John 3:18*)

Therefore, the Holy Spirit building relationships in the body of Christ, flows in each member in two directions, teaching, both to receive and to give. This is a full-fledged relationship in the church, where each member of the body of Christ equally cares for and accepts help from each other.

so that there should be no division in the body, but
that its parts should have equal concern for each
other. (*1 Corinthians 12:25*)

Through such relationship of acceptance and giving, life begins to flow in the body of Christ, bringing blessings, answers and other help from God. Then the various gifts and ministries of God begin to act and unfold in the body, which are distributed by the Holy Spirit as He wants. In his epistles to the churches, the apostle Paul writes about the importance of maintaining relationships in the church. These connections are the target of the devil, when he offers success, opportunities for a spiritual career or encourages Christian to get angry, not to forgive, to do something out of ambition. But we are called to maintain unity through the ties of peace.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (*Ephesians 4:3*)

Living in the body of Christ is not easy. It is possible only with the help of the Holy Spirit. It costs a lot, because in order for Christ's life to flow in the church, one must be baptized into His body. It will cost your whole life, all the efforts that will require all the patience and all the humility to endure. Baptism always points to death. What kind of death does baptism to the body of Christ speak of? It is death for personal interests, it is the exchange of personal revelations for the revelation of the church. You are called to be a member of the body of Christ, so do not let the devil isolate you through spiritual ambitions.

For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.
(*1 Corinthians 12:13*)

Without being in the body of Christ, it is impossible to experience the true and supernatural life of God. The life of God, like that of man, is possible only in the body. And the body of God is Christ in whom you have share.

EPILOGUE

Sometimes it seems that God is building too slowly and not in the way that we would like. The Lord does not use human methods and instruments. He takes Christ as a building material and, through His redemption work on the cross, builds new spiritual house. It is an eternal and glorious home in which you are one of the spiritual stones, harmoniously connected with Christ and decorated with His character and gifts. Construction from expensive materials takes longer and does not go so fast. The construction of God is radically different from the human one. Man is in a hurry, but God waits, man rushes, and God gives up, man seeks to save life, God loses, man stumbles, God rises, man grabs, God gives, man builds loudly, and God quietly, man seeks glory, God seeks humility, man wants heroism, and God obedience. We are so accustomed to the pursuit of human construction, effort and results, that the construction of God seems to us too slow, inefficient and without visible effects. But God builds consistently, patiently, and quietly, and His construction will survive forever.

If till now you have built the Christian life through your own efforts and used human methods and understanding, put yourself in His hands and trust in His plan for your life. If you see the ruins of your Christian life and after many years of construction you are disappointed in your construction, ways and methods, let the Holy Spirit resume the construction of your life. Your life is dedicated to Christ and His glory. Therefore, as the apostle Peter writes, feel free to draw near the Lord and let His hands sculpt you and build you into a glorious structure, i.e. the life of Christ in you and in His body - in the church.

you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (*1 Peter 2:5*)

If you are not a living stone but would like to participate in the construction of God, become a living stone, for He builds only using the living stones. A living stone is one that comes to the Lord and receives Him as personal Savior. Then a person moves from death to life and from a dead stone becomes a living. If you want the Lord to enter into your life and revive you, say these words to Him from the heart. He will change your life by implementing the most amazing and supernatural project of the new life, i.e. the life of Christ in you.

Jesus Christ,

I come to you as I am. I admit that I am a sinner. I beg You, save me! Wash me with Your holy blood. I repent and turn away from all my sins and decide to live a new life with You. I believe that You died for my sins and are risen to my justification. From this moment on, Jesus, You are my Lord, Master and Savior. I thank you, Jesus, that I do not need to save myself, because You are my Savior. Amen.

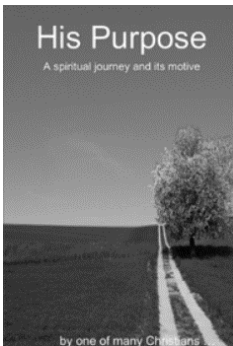
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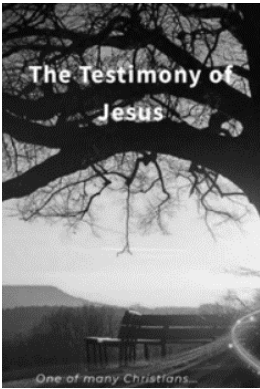
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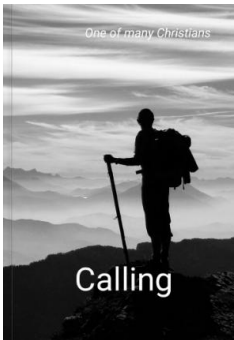
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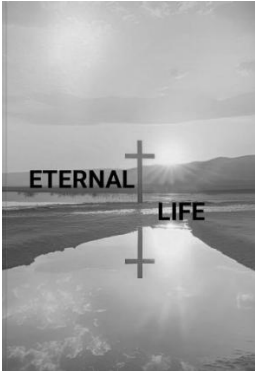
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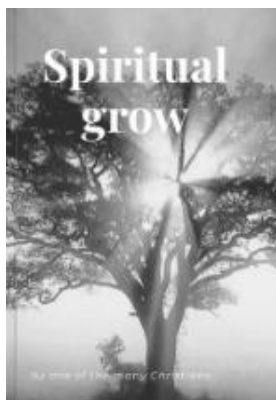
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How God builds our lives?

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