

A photograph of a stone church with a prominent steeple, set against a backdrop of vibrant autumn trees. The church features a gabled roof, a central entrance with a green door, and a bell tower. The scene is captured in bright daylight with a clear blue sky and scattered white clouds. The foreground is filled with colorful autumn bushes in shades of red, orange, and yellow.

Рустам Насыров

**48 sermon' topics  
for church growth**

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## 48 sermon' topics for church growth

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### **Аннотация**

“48 Sermon Topics for Church Growth” is a practical guide for pastors, leaders, and anyone who seeks to spiritually develop and strengthen their congregation. The book presents 48 inspiring sermon topics, each focusing on key aspects of the Christian life, such as faith, service, unity, and love.

The author shares not only deep biblical truths, but also practical recommendations for applying these principles in the daily life of the church. Each sermon includes reflections, real-life examples, and discussion questions, making the book useful for preparing for worship services and Bible study groups.

The goal of this book is to help churches grow not only numerically, but also spiritually, deepening the relationships between congregants and strengthening their faith. “48 Sermon Topics for Church Growth” will be a valuable resource for anyone who wants to see their church flourish and thrive.

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# Introduction

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## Sermon Plan for 2023

# **16 Reasons Why a Preacher Should Have a Yearly Sunday Sermon Plan (2025 Update)**

Peace to you, dear readers of the channel "World of the Bible". Well, the year has flown by unnoticed and January has come again. This is not only the time for buying gifts, New Year's mood and Christmas joy, but also the time to sum up the outgoing year. But in order to sum up, you need to look at what were the plans? What?! There were no plans? But how then can you fulfill your destiny and be happy?

So, here are 10 reasons why you need to have a sermon plan for the entire year:

1. A sermon plan for the year will allow you to see the "big picture" and will allow you to plan the correct "spiritual nutrition" and, therefore, the spiritual growth of church members.

2. Your existing archive of sermons can be divided into folders "January-December" with similar topics for each month and you can prepare more purposefully.

3. Sunday sermon should be oriented to answer the questions and needs of people, because no one fishes with sausage, but with maggots and worms, i.e. with what the fish like, not you. (Sermon plan for the Bible hour will be prepared later)

4. In preparing this plan, state and church holidays were used

to “tie” people’s earthly life to the heavenly one.

5. Having a sermon plan will allow you to better track your spiritual growth and adjust your sermons to the problems and needs of the church – what is most important at the moment.

6. Having a sermon archive will allow you to spend more time preparing your sermon and to do so more purposefully.

7. You can also break up your sermon archive into topics such as "spiritual transformation" or "biblical principles of financial management" and use them as needed.

8. With a systematic approach to developing sermon topics, listeners develop systematic knowledge that is easier to apply in life.

9. If you have a sermon plan, you can distribute topics in advance among other church preachers.

10. Having a plan for your sermons for the year also helps to improve their quality and impact on people.

I would be glad if you would suggest your topics or arguments for or against making a sermon plan for the year. In the nearest future – a three-year sermon plan for the Bible hour.

Addition 2023

Thanks to everyone who reads and supports our channel.

This year, using the sermon outline was helpful for the following reasons:

1. The problem with the topic for the sermon is removed in 90% of cases.

2. The cultural and historical part of the sermon is almost

ready.

3. It was possible to focus on updating the topic of the sermon, its argumentation and counter-argumentation, preparing a better premise, substantiating points and logical development.

4. It is possible to study in more depth the historical, social and cultural background of the era to which the biblical text belongs.

5. Focus on the outline of the passage and its analysis.

Addition 2024

Thank you to the preachers who use this plan or your own plans, I pray that your sermons will be more profound and transformative for you and for people.

1. It is recommended to prepare a presentation in PDF format for each sermon to understand the overall picture of the sermon.

Happy New Year to all! All the best in the new year and blessings in preaching the Gospel!

With respect, love and prayers for you

Rustam Kodash Nasyrov.

January. New Year's Sermon

# **The Purpose of Human Life: The Path from the Joy of Christmas to the Bliss of the Kingdom of God**

And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy that will be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord;

and this will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (Luke 2:10-12)

Peace to all good listeners of the Gospel, readers of the site "Answers to Islam" and any person seeking meaning for their life. In this festive time, filled with the joy of the Nativity of Christ and the expectation of the renewal of your life in the new year, a person especially acutely experiences the need for joy, happiness, love and meaning in his life.

Yes, dear reader, you are on the right track. Let us reflect on what meaning is embedded in your life, and what great joy you can experience by finding this meaning, realizing the purpose of your life, and starting to move towards its implementation, you will be able not only to experience the bliss of a relationship with the Most Loving Person, but you will also be able to bring this happiness of the highest standard to your loved ones, friends,

Whether we like it or not, our happiness and finding it are

outside of us, outside of our personality. Some people may find it offensive or hurt their “ego” (in the Bible it is called “pride”), but our happiness does not depend on us, as some people think. The principle “I am the architect of my own happiness” is a losing strategy. This does not mean that absolutely nothing depends on us, it would also be wrong to say so. The principle of our happiness can be illustrated by the following picture: you can fold your palms in such a way that someone will fill them with pure spring water, and you will be able to drink it and quench your thirst. It is up to you to come to the one who can give this water, it is up to you to fold your palms in such a way as not to spill this precious moisture, but we ourselves are not the sources of this life-giving substance of happiness. Next, we will consider who is the source of happiness in our lives.

Another important point is our constant development and knowledge of this Person. I think there are no parents who would want their child, no matter how wonderful and obedient he is, to remain at the level of a three-year-old child all his life. So God wants us not only to be happy, but also to develop and grow in the knowledge of Him, and this allows us to experience an even deeper state of happiness, which the Bible (the word of God) calls blessedness.

Someone might say: "But I don't agree! I want to be happy myself, on my own terms." But let's be honest with ourselves: we've already tried, we've already built "our paradise", we've already wanted to make ourselves happy, and I think we've had

enough of what came out of these attempts. At least I can say to myself in these words: "I've had enough of "my happiness", I want the real thing!

So how can we experience the highest joy in our lives, and how can we move along the path of developing this joy until it reaches bliss?

If the source of our happiness is not in us, then most likely it is in the One who created us in His image and likeness, and who has a wonderful plan of happiness for our lives, and if we move in His direction, in the direction of knowing His will and obeying Him, then we can discover for ourselves an amazing world of relationships with God, which can be designated by such a term as the Kingdom of God.

Where do we begin? Where does a person begin? Of course, from birth. When we find ourselves in difficult life situations, in suffering and need, it may seem to us that everything that happens to us is a chain of accidents, and there is no one who could help us in the situation we find ourselves in. And so it is. No one can help you, no one will come to your aid until you admit that you yourself are to blame for the current situation. That your sinful nature has brought you to the place and to the circumstances in which you now find yourself. No one is to blame for them: not your parents, not your friends, not your colleagues at work, and especially not the government and the president. Admit that you made decisions and you did these terrible things, and ask God for forgiveness for what you did. I

have good news: God loves you, and God wants to forgive you and wants to build a relationship with you.

Therefore, His angel came and announced to perishing humanity the birth of the Child, that God had given people a chance to start life with a clean slate, a chance to be not just happy, but more than that: blessed.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people: (Luke 2:10)

This is what we are looking for in the New Year holiday, in this Christmas time, and throughout our entire lives.

Let us look at the time when these words were spoken to the representatives of the human race: at that time they were shepherds guarding their flocks in the mountainous Judean region near Bethlehem, the city of David.

The dominant superpower of the time was the Roman Empire. It conquered many countries, and stretched its borders from Britain to India, around the Mediterranean Sea. It built roads that still exist today, it gave humanity Roman law, provided safe living for millions of its citizens, and united them with a single Greek culture and subjugated them to the pagan polytheism of a pantheon of Greek, Roman and other gods. What it could not do was make all people happy – it gave bread and circuses, it waged wars of conquest, but a person inside this empire, even invested with power, remained deeply unhappy, unsure of his life, and ignorant of the truth: this is well illustrated by the words

of Pontius Pilate, the representative of this power in the territory of the kingdoms into which the territory of Israel was divided at that time: having met Jesus and talked with Him for a few minutes, he said with a sigh: “What is Truth?”, but in his concern for preserving his life, maintaining power, he made the most terrible mistake of his life, which many people make today: he passed by Jesus, by the truth that he had so passionately sought all his conscious life, and it is important for us not to repeat his mistakes.

Thus, the darkness of spiritual ignorance reigned in the Roman Empire. How were things in the spiritual life of God's chosen people: Israel. Unfortunately, it must be stated that in this nation, too, there reigned not mercy and love, but the worship of the law and the fulfillment of human commandments that pushed aside and replaced the commandments of God, and those people who should have passionately awaited the Messiah, the messenger of God, they did not recognize Him, but moreover, rejected Him, handed Him over to the Roman authorities and demanded the death penalty for Him. Thus, despite the presence of the Temple and the Law, we can also talk about the spiritual darkness in which the Jews of that time also found themselves.

And for us, believers, it is important to remember that knowing the Bible and quoting it does not make us saved people, but also fulfilling the main Law of the Bible – the Law of love, gives us confidence in our salvation.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior,

who is Christ the Lord; (Luke 2:11)

And so the Gospel was heard – the good news of great joy – what did it consist of? In the birth of the Savior. Today we also passionately need the realization that we ourselves are not able to cope with our internal and external problems, we desperately need an external, more powerful force that can help us, lead us out of spiritual darkness into the light of God's truths. This is the joy of Christmas for us – a joy that is so strongly felt and experienced not only by children on the eve of the New Year and Christmas holidays, but which all people come into contact with: schoolchildren, rejoicing at the holidays, and adults, anticipating holidays and weekends, and older people expecting attention from their children and grandchildren, and if not their arrival, then at least a phone call from those to whom they have given their whole life and all their strength.

The greatest tragedy of man is to keep this joy outside himself, to not let the transforming and changing power of Christmas into his life and into his personality. God did everything for us – He gave His only begotten Son to be executed so that our sins could be forgiven, so that we could restore our fellowship with God, and so that we could become happy and begin our movement towards even greater knowledge of God and finding even greater happiness.

A good person may again object: “I believe in God!” “I even observe the rules of my religion, and perhaps God likes the way I do it, and my religion is the most correct and there is no other

way to the Almighty!” (At least this is how I calm my conscience, which for some reason bothers me from time to time).

But let us not rely on our deceptive feelings, for they sometimes let us down. What we can safely rely on, and be sure that we will not fall and will not be disappointed in our faith, is to rely on the word of God, on the Bible, the most published book on earth.

The Almighty, knowing our sinful human nature, knowing our unbelief and doubts, gives us clear instructions on how to be confident in our faith, in our salvation and in our eternal presence with Him, in His presence:

12 And this will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

(Luke 2:12)

God's Word is not fruitless. It always urges man to action. It says: go, see, check and be sure: I am not deceiving you, the Savior has really been born. He came to die for your sins, but God expects us to exercise our faith – to find the Baby lying in the animal trough, we need to go there, see and be sure that God's word has really been fulfilled. Very often we stop at just hearing God's word, or as we think that what we hear is God's word, but in order to understand that it is really it, we need to go and be sure of it.

I sincerely sought the Almighty, I went to the mosque, tried to observe all the rules of Islam, but I did not find the Almighty there, He did not answer me. And only when I prayed to the

Almighty and asked Him for forgiveness in the name of Jesus Christ, I experienced this forgiveness – a multi-ton slab of sins fell from my soul – and I had a desire to live on, the inevitability of suicide went away, and the Almighty, instead of the grave in front of which I was already standing, gave me the joy of life, family happiness, the opportunity to hold my children in my arms, but the most important thing that He gave was the opportunity to communicate with Him, because this is the meaning of our human life, only in this is our growing happiness, and only by living with Him in our hearts can we be truly happy.

God is speaking into your life. The whole question is, will we believe Him, will we go and look into the filthy stable of our heart, in which there is nothing but the dirt of our sins, lustful thoughts and serpents of evil plans, that God has put into our heart and the Birth of His Son – the whole question is, are we ready to let Him in there.

Today, now, and during this holiday season, God is knocking at your heart. Stop! Get on your knees. Listen. You will hear the knock. Just say, “Lord, I am so tired of being alone. I ask You to forgive me for living without You. Come into my heart and into my life and be my Lord and Savior!”

There may be tears, trials, losses and difficulties that come into your life. But as long as you have faith in Jesus Christ in your heart, as long as that faith is expressed in obedience to Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God will be present in your heart – and there will always be peace, rest, God's presence and support and

relief from problems.

I sincerely wish for you, and for myself, that this Kingdom be in our hearts all our lives, and that it be strengthened, and when our time comes to go to Him, He will meet us as His faithful subjects and as His beloved children. Let us be obedient to Him and let the joy of Christmas lead us to the bliss of the Kingdom of God.

With respect and prayers  
Rustam Kodash Nasyrov.

Christmas

# The Meaning of the Nativity of Jesus Christ

Many people think that the meaning of Christmas is a family holiday associated with family reunification, buying and giving gifts, some even attend Christmas concerts and services in churches and temples, most experience joyful feelings and emotions, but pass by the meaning of this holiday – the Birth of the Savior. You can meet and spend Christmas fifty or even seventy times, but if you do not understand the meaning of Christmas, and do not let this holiday into your mind, heart and do not change, then this holiday, unfortunately, will be for you just another holiday, a day off, which will not affect your eternal soul and its relationship with God, and its salvation, ultimately. Let's see what changes God expects from us, in our relationship with Him?

1 This is a true saying: If anyone desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work.

2 But a bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, sober, chaste, respectable, honorable, hospitable, a teacher,

3 not a drunkard, not a violent man, not quarrelsome, not greedy for filthy lucre, but gentle, peaceable, not a lover of money,

4 He who manages his own house well, keeping his children

in subjection with all honesty;

5 For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?

6 He must not be a new believer, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation of the devil.

7 He must also have a good testimony from those outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

8 Deacons must also be honest, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for filthy lucre,

9 keeping the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.

10 And such must first be tested, then, if they are blameless, admitted to service.

11 Their wives must also be respectable, not slanderers, sober, faithful in everything.

12 A deacon must be the husband of one wife, managing his children and his own household well.

13 For those who have served well obtain for themselves a high degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

14 I write these things to you, hoping to come to you soon,

15 that if I tarry, you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world,

received up into glory. (1 Tim. 3:1-16)

Personal relationships with Christ, who came into the world through Christmas, should influence our character. The person himself and all areas of his life (family, work, church) change. The main criterion for evaluation is time. A person's service is manifested through his deeds, his prayer life, his faith and character.

1. **The Birth of the Savior:** Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and his birth marked the coming of the Savior into the world. This event symbolizes the hope of salvation and forgiveness of sins for all mankind.

2. **Fulfillment of Prophecies:** Christmas is associated with the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. This gives the holiday special significance in the context of biblical history and its connection with all the events preceding the New Testament.

3. **Symbol of love and mercy:** Christmas emphasizes the idea of God's infinite love for people, which is expressed in his decision to send his Son into the world. This is the basis of the Christian teaching of love, compassion and kindness.

4. **Traditions and Cultural Significance:** Christmas has become an important cultural event celebrated in many countries and includes many traditions and customs that help strengthen family ties and community spirit.

5. **Spiritual Renewal:** The holiday of Christmas is often seen as a time to reflect on one's life's journey, an opportunity for

spiritual reflection and renewal.

The holiday of Christmas has many facets and deep meanings. One of the most important facets is the opportunity to establish a personal relationship with the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the opportunity for our further change during life and service in the local church.

Why are both aspects important to a person – the presence of personal relationships and the ability to change our character?

Possible counterarguments:

Here are some counterarguments against the idea of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and character change based on that relationship:

1. **Subjectivity of Experience:** A personal relationship with Jesus can be perceived as a subjective experience that is not subject to objective verification. This can lead to different interpretations and understandings, making it difficult to have a general consensus on the faith.

2. **Cultural Differences:** Different cultures and religious traditions may have different ideas about the divine, which makes a personal relationship with Jesus less universal and may cause conflicts between different beliefs.

3. **Psychological aspects:** Some critics argue that such relationships may be the result of psychological mechanisms such as projecting one's own desires and needs onto the image of Jesus, which may not be conducive to true character change.

4. **Ethical Dilemmas:** Relationships with Jesus can lead to

ethical dilemmas when personal beliefs conflict with accepted moral standards or scientific evidence.

5. Dependence on an External Source: Relying on a personal relationship with Jesus can lead to dependence on an external source for decision making, which can limit personal responsibility and independence.

6. Lack of Practical Basis: Some may feel that a personal relationship with Jesus does not provide concrete tools for solving real life problems and conflicts, such as social justice or economic hardship.

7. Division of Believers: Claiming a personal relationship with Jesus can lead to division among believers, as different people may interpret this relationship differently, creating conflicts within religious communities.

Let's look at the cultural and historical aspect of our passage to better understand the meaning of Christmas and its meaning for each person.

1 Timothy is one of the pastoral letters of the New Testament written by the Apostle Paul. It is addressed to Timothy, a young pastor serving in Ephesus. The text has important implications for both the early Christian community and modern understanding of Christian ethics and church government. Here are some key aspects of the historical and cultural analysis of this letter:

Let's look at the history of the writing of 1 Timothy.

### 1.1 Authorship

The authorship of 1 Timothy is traditionally attributed to the apostle Paul. The letter is part of the so-called Pastoral Epistles, which also include 2 Timothy and Titus. The main arguments for Pauline authorship include:

### 1.1 Internal evidence

- **Style and Language:** The letter is written in a style characteristic of Paul's other letters, using his typical themes and terminology.
- **Personal Address:** Paul addresses Timothy as his “true son” in the faith (1:2), indicating a close relationship between the author and the addressee.

### 1.2. Historical context

- **Life of Paul:** The time of writing of the letter is usually dated to the period after Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (c. 63-65 CE), when he was probably in or near Ephesus, which would fit the context of the letter.

### 1.3 Traditional Attribution

- **Church Tradition:** Early Christian writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others recognized Paul as the author of this letter. This consensus has persisted throughout the centuries in Christian tradition.

### 1.4. Authorship Debates

Despite the traditional recognition of Paul as the author, some modern scholars question his authorship on the grounds of:

- **Differences in style:** Some scholars note differences in language and style compared to Paul's other letters.

- Context and Content: Some aspects of the doctrine and church government expressed in the letter may reflect later practices and issues, which may indicate that it was written later.

However, most Christian traditions continue to regard Paul as the author of 1 Timothy, based on the above arguments.

The addressee of 1 Timothy is Timothy, a young pastor and companion of the apostle Paul. Timothy was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother, making him a unique figure in the early Christian community. He was a close disciple of Paul, and their relationship was very close, as is evident from Paul's address to him as a "true son" in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2).

1 Timothy was most likely written around 62-64 CE. This time period corresponds to the period when the apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome. The exact dates of the writing of the epistles can sometimes be a subject of debate among biblical scholars, but most scholars agree that this epistle belongs to this period.

In this letter, Paul gives Timothy instructions on church government, doctrine, and personal life, and warns him of possible threats and heresies that could arise in the church. Thus, the main purpose of the letter is to support and strengthen Timothy in his ministry and to help him lead the congregation in Ephesus.

## 2. Historical moments

1 Timothy chapter 3 contains important points concerning church government and the qualifications for ministers. Here are

the main historical and theological aspects of this chapter:

2.1 Qualifications for Bishops and Deacons: Paul sets forth criteria for the election of bishops (or elders) and deacons. These qualifications emphasize moral integrity, family responsibilities, and ability to teach. This reflects early Christian values and expectations for church leaders.

2.2 Family Relationships: The mention of a bishop being "unmarried" or "the husband of one wife" and of deacons ruling their homes well, speaks of the importance of family relationships in the early church. It also emphasizes the importance of the personal example of ministers.

2.3 Spiritual Qualities: Paul emphasizes spiritual qualities such as sobriety, godliness, peaceability, and teaching ability. These qualities are necessary for effective ministry and leadership of the congregation.

2.4 Church Structure: Chapter 3 demonstrates the development of church structure in early Christianity. The establishment of clear roles for bishops and deacons indicates the need for organization and governance within the congregation.

2.5. The Church as the Pillar and Ground of the Truth: In verse 15, Paul speaks of the church as the "pillar and ground of the truth," which emphasizes the importance of the church in preserving and spreading Christian doctrine.

### 3. Geographical moments

In 1 Timothy, especially chapter 3, geographical issues are not the main focus of the text, as Paul primarily discusses the

qualifications for church leaders and the spiritual aspects of their lives. However, there are several contextual issues that have geographical significance:

3.1 Ephesus: Timothy was appointed by Paul to minister in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). Ephesus was a major city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) and an important center of Christianity in the first century. It was also known for its pagan cult and temple of Artemis, which posed special challenges for the Christian community.

3.2 Roman Empire: The letter is written in the context of the Roman Empire, where Christianity began to spread. The geographical setting of the Roman Empire influenced the lives and ministries of the early Christians, including issues of persecution, cultural influence, and missionary activity.

3.3 Diversity of Congregations: Ephesus, like other cities in the Roman Empire, had a variety of ethnic and cultural groups. This diversity may have influenced the composition and dynamics of the local church, as well as the demands on ministers to effectively lead a congregation in such a context.

While the geographical details are not central to this chapter, they help us understand the context in which Paul wrote this letter and the challenges Timothy faced in his ministry.

#### 4. Cultural moments

In 1 Timothy, especially chapter 3, Paul discusses the qualifications and characteristics that bishops (or elders) and deacons should have. These qualifications were formulated in the

context of the cultural and social conditions of the time. Here are some key cultural points to note:

4.1 Authority and Respect: Respect for authority was an important aspect in Greco-Roman society. Paul emphasizes that church ministers must be above reproach and respected by believers and non-believers. This was important for the church to have a positive influence on society.

4.2 Family Values: Paul emphasizes the family qualities of ministers. For example, he says that a bishop should be “the husband of one wife” and rule his own household well (1 Timothy 3:2-5). In the culture of his time, the family played a central role, and the virtuous behavior of ministers in the family was an important indicator of their ability to lead the church community.

4.3 Moral Standards: The ancient world had different moral standards, and Christianity offered high standards of behavior. Paul lists qualities such as sobriety, chastity, kindness, and lack of passion for money. These characteristics were important so that ministers could be role models in a society where moral standards could be low.

4.4 The Role of Women: 1 Timothy 3:11 mentions “women,” which could refer to both deacons’ wives and women ministers. This shows the role of women in the early church and their involvement in ministry, which was quite progressive for the time.

4.5 Education and Knowledge of Scripture: Since the early church was faced with various teachings and errors, it was

important for ministers to have a good knowledge of Scripture and be able to resist false teachings. This highlights the need for education and spiritual maturity in the context of the early Christian community.

The literary context of 1 Timothy includes several key aspects that help us understand its content and purpose. Here are the key points:

5.1 Authorship and Addressee: The letter is written by the apostle Paul, who is writing to his disciple Timothy. Timothy was a young leader of the church in Ephesus, and Paul left him there so that he could instruct the believers and deal with the problems that arose.

5.2. The purposes of the letter: One of the main purposes of the letter is to instruct Timothy in matters of church management and the fight against false teachings that began to spread in Ephesus. Paul wants to strengthen Timothy in his ministry and give him practical advice on how to organize church life.

5.3 Themes and Structure: The message covers a number of topics including:

- The Importance of Sound Doctrine (Chapter 1).
- Prayer and Worship (Chapter 2).
- Requirements for bishops and deacons (chapter 3).
- Warnings against false teachers (chapter 4).
- Practical advice on various aspects of church life, including caring for widows, elders, and ministers (chapters 5-6).

5.4 The Context of the Early Church: The time of writing

(c. 62-65 CE) coincides with the growth of Christianity and the emergence of various teachings and sects. This creates the need for Paul to give clear instructions on how the church should function.

**5.5 Style and Language:** The letter is written in the style typical of ancient letters, using formal addresses and exhortations. Paul uses both personal examples and theological arguments to get his points across to Timothy.

**5.6 Social Context:** Ephesus had a variety of religious practices, including the cult of Artemis, which created competition for Christian teaching. This highlights the importance of clear and purposeful guidance for believers.

Thus, the literary context of 1 Timothy includes Paul's authorship, his instructions to Timothy on church governance, combating false teachings, and practical recommendations for community life in the early Christian context.

## 6. Genre

The First Epistle to Timothy belongs to the genre of pastoral epistles (or pastoral letters). These letters, written by Paul, are addressed to his disciples and church ministers, and their purpose is to instruct and guide them in matters of church government and spiritual life.

Here are some key characteristics of the genre:

**6.1. Instruction and Guidance:** Pastoral letters provide practical advice and direction for pastors and church leaders on how to manage a congregation, conduct worship services, and

deal with problems.

6.2 Theological Teachings: These letters also touch on important theological topics such as the nature of the church, the role of ministers, and combating false teachings.

6.3. Personal appeal: Letters are personal in nature, where the author shares his experiences, feelings and advice, which creates a more intimate connection between the author and the addressee.

6.4. Structure: The letter has a clear structure, including an introduction, main topics and a conclusion, which is typical for the format of ancient letters.

Thus, 1 Timothy can be characterized as a pastoral letter, containing instructions on matters of leadership, doctrine, and the practical life of the church.

Here is a rough outline of 1 Timothy that may help in your study:

Introduction (1:1-2)

1. Greetings from Paul

2. Pointing to Timothy as a true son in the faith

Main themes of the message

I. Instruction concerning false teachers (1:3-11)

1. The Call to Leave Ephesus

2. Warning about false teachers and their teachings

3. The meaning of the law and the correct understanding of its purpose

II. Paul's Personal Testimony (1:12-17)

1. Thanksgiving for mercy and forgiveness
2. Paul's example of transformation as a testimony of God's

grace

### III. Directions for Service (1:18-20)

1. Prophetic instruction to Timothy
2. Examples of those who rejected faith

### IV. On Prayer and Worship (2:1-15)

1. A call to prayer for all people
2. Instructions on the role of women in the church and their

behavior

### V. Conditions for Bishops and Deacons (3:1-13)

1. Criteria for the appointment of bishops
2. Criteria for the appointment of deacons
3. The importance of good reputation and family

responsibilities

### VI. The Purpose and Nature of the Church (3:14-16)

1. Description of the Church as the Pillar and Ground of Truth
2. Confession of the mystery of piety

### VII. Warnings of Future Apostasies (4:1-5)

1. Prophecy about the apostasy of some from the faith
2. Instruction on the correct understanding of food and

marriage

### VIII. Instructions to Timothy (4:6-16)

1. Instructions for ministry and personal life
2. A Call for Constancy in Study and Practice

### IX. Instructions about the rich and the poor (6:1-10)

1. Attitude towards slaves and masters
2. Warning about the love of money

#### X. Conclusion (6:11-21)

1. Call to righteous living
2. Final Instructions and Blessing

This outline can be used to study the text in depth, highlight key themes, and understand the context of Paul's letter to Timothy.

Our passage is located in the V and VI sections, which are central to this letter. They explain the necessary qualifications of ministers, as well as the role and purpose of the church in the light of Christian doctrine.

The recommendations presented in our passage provide church leaders with practical and actionable advice on appointing new leaders. These recommendations help keep Christianity in the safe hands of local leaders, ensuring its vitality, doctrinal purity, and the attraction of new followers.

1 {Qualities of leaders and their assistants} It is rightly said: it is commendable when a person strives to be a leader.

2 But the leader must be a man who is beyond reproach: the husband of one wife, self-controlled, prudent, respectable, hospitable, a good teacher,

3 not prone to drunkenness, not a fighter, but gentle in dealing with people, not quarrelsome and not having a love of money.

4 He must manage his family well and have obedient and respectful children.

5 For if anyone cannot manage his own family, how can he care for the church of God?

6 A leader should not be chosen from among the new converts, for such a person may become proud and then he will be condemned just as the devil was condemned.

7 He must be well spoken of by unbelievers, lest he be reproached and fall into the trap of the devil.

8 The same applies to deacons. They must be respectable men, sincere, not given to wine, and unselfish.

9 They must hold with a clear conscience to the mysteries of the faith now revealed.

10 These people should first be examined, and if nothing incriminating is found against them, they can carry out the ministry of deacons.

11 The wives of deacons must also be respectable, not gossiping, self-controlled, and trusted in everything.

12 A deacon must be the husband of one wife, and must rule his own children and household well.

13 For those who do their ministry well gain a position of honor and can speak with great confidence about their faith in Jesus Christ.

14 I hope to come to you soon and I am writing this to you for this reason,

15 so that if I am delayed, you will know how you should behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the support and foundation of the truth.

16 The mystery of our faith is certainly great: God was manifested in the body, was justified by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was proclaimed among the nations, was believed on in the world, and was exalted in glory.

(1 Tim.3:1-16)

I Qualities of Managers and Their Assistants

A believer is called to service

B Faith changes all areas of a person's life (work, family, church)

C His faith must be passed on to his children.

II One of the main evaluation criteria is time

A The leader should not be a new convert.

B Must be in good standing and not in church

C Must be checked before being placed into service

D It is also necessary for the family to support the ministry of the leader.

E To make a decision, you need to look at how the minister manages the family and children

III The Church belongs to God and must proclaim the Truth

A God was revealed in a human body

B He acted righteously

C He was also visible to the spiritual world.

D He was proclaimed among the nations

E They received him by faith

F He was lifted up in glory

Christianity has an amazing power of moral transformation

of a person, we can talk about his new birth. If we look at the requirements for a minister, then without internal rebirth and life with God, a person cannot demonstrate this level of holiness and correct behavior in the family, at work and in the church.

If you have not yet prayed the prayer of repentance, simply say, “Lord, I ask You to forgive me for my life without You, I ask You to forgive my sins in the name of Jesus Christ, come into my mind and heart, take control of my life and let me live for You.”

Your future life in the local church, your service and the change of your character in the process of this service will be an integral part of your faith. People do not see our words and proclamations, they see our lives, and this is the loudest proclamation of the Gospel.

I wish you a Merry Christmas!

May the Lord bless you in your search for Truth.

With respect, prayers for you and God's love

Rustam Kodash Nasyrov

Feast of Circumcision

# **The Law – What is it for? The circumcision of the Lord is the complete submission of God to the demands of the law.**

The purpose of preaching is to better understand the meaning of the law for our lives.

21 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the child, his name was called Jesus, the name which the angel had given him before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord,

23 As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be holy to the Lord,

24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, two turtledoves or two young pigeons.

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. He was a just and devout man, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

26 It was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by inspiration into the temple. And when the

parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him the custom of the law,

28 He took him in his arms, blessed God, and said,

29 Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, O Lord, according to thy word,

30 For my eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

32 a light to lighten the Gentiles, and glory to Your people Israel.

33 Joseph and his mother were amazed at these things which were said about him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that will be spoken against.

35 And a sword will pierce through your own soul, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

36 And there was Anna a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, who was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity,

37 a widow of about eighty-four years of age, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers day and night.

38 And she came at that time and glorified the Lord and spoke about Him to all who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem.

39 And when they had done all things according to the law of

the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

(Luke 2:21-39)

A person living in conditions of instability and constant changeability of the external situation needs to rely on something constant and stable. A person cannot be in conditions of constantly changing external coordinates of bad – good, because of this he is in constant stress. To get rid of this situation, we need to turn to the example of the Holy Scripture in order to update our own guidelines and return to the correct perception of the external situation. Why is this important for you and me?

1. Law and legality are the foundation of life in society in any state. Even on the islands in the Pacific Ocean and in the Amazon jungle, the tribes living there have established traditions of social life and way of life. For normal life and development of society, generally accepted external norms of behavior are necessary.

2. As a result of the fall, man lost communication with God and became the bearer of a sinful nature. Without external restrictions, he becomes a bloodthirsty killer. William Golding's "Lord of the Flies" describes a situation where a group of teenagers found themselves on a desert island, and without external restrictions, they become mad killers, and this often happens in our real lives.

3. External law and a set of rules are not only a limitation on the absolute freedom of the sinful nature of man, but they are also a source of our security and compliance with the law supports the stable development of society and the security of its

individual members.

Thus, it can be argued that maintaining and observing the rule of law is the basis for the security of life in any society.

Why did God, who came into this world 2023 years ago as a Jewish baby, completely submit himself to the requirements of the law of that time, which was in force in Jewish society, and undergo the procedure of circumcision?

Some might argue that these were the requirements of the time, and that any Jewish boy born went through all the legally required procedures.

But today we know for sure that it was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Spiritual Son of God, who was born. This is indicated by our chronology, which begins with His Nativity, and the presence of such a day as Sunday in our calendar, and the fact that Christianity is today the most widespread religion with approximately 2.5 billion followers. Why did He, the Supreme Lawgiver and sinless Person, need to go through all the procedures of the law established for man?

It is no coincidence that this holiday is celebrated next to the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. And we can recall the words of Jesus Christ when John tried to prevent Him from baptizing: "Suffer it now, so it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness!"

So, let us consider the historical context of the Gospel of Luke, which describes the events we are considering, in order to see with our own eyes that God not only sets requirements and standards for man, but He also completely subordinates Himself

to them.

The Gospel of Luke does not name its author. However, Luke 1:1–4 and Acts 1:1–3 clearly indicate that the same author wrote both books, addressing them to “the most honorable Theophilus,” perhaps a Roman official. According to early Church tradition, these two books were written by Luke, a physician and close associate of the apostle Paul (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11). This makes Luke the only pagan known to have written a book of Scripture.

The Gospel of Luke was most likely written between 58 and 65 AD.

As with the other two synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Mark, the purpose of this book is to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and all that He “began to do and teach...from the beginning until the day He...was taken up into heaven” (Acts 1:1–2). Luke’s Gospel is unique in that it is a “continuous account” (Luke 1:3), in keeping with Luke’s medical mindset – often revealing details that are omitted in the other Gospels. Luke’s account of the life of the Great Physician highlights His ministry and dedication to Gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinners, and others considered outcasts in Israel.

We see a historically important moment. The God for whom the temple was built and whose resting place it is, comes to it, but in the form of a baby. We often expect the action and presence of God, but more often than not, we do not notice Him.

The events described take place on Mount Moriah, where

Abraham sacrificed Isaac and on which the city was later built.

The family of Jesus Christ fulfills all the requirements of the law of that time for a newborn Jew. God comes into people's lives, but He does not violate the law He established, but obediently fulfills it.

The book of the Gospel of Luke is written in the genre of biography, maximally tied to the chronology of events.

Book plan:

I. Prologue to the Gospel and the Purposes of Writing It (1:1-4)

II. The Birth and Years of Maturation of John the Baptist and Jesus (1:5 – 2:52)

A. Announcements of their birth (1:5-56)

B. The Birth and Childhood of John and Jesus (1:57 – 2:52)

III. Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus Christ (3:1 – 4:13)

A. The Ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-20)

B. The Baptism of Jesus (3:21-22)

B. The Genealogy of Jesus (3:23-38)

D. The Temptation of Jesus (4:1-13)

IV. Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (4:14 – 9:50)

A. The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry (4:14-30)

B. Jesus' Authority Authenticated (4:31 – 6:16)

B. Sermon on the Plain (6:17-49)

D. Jesus' Ministry in Capernaum and the Surrounding Cities

(Chapters 7-8)

D. Jesus gives instructions to His disciples (9:1-50)

V. Jesus goes to Jerusalem (9:51 – 19:27)

A. Rejection of Jesus Christ along most of this path (9:51 – 11:54)

B. Jesus' Instructions to His Followers in Light of the Rejection of His Truth (12:1 – 19:27)

VI. Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem (19:28 – 21:38)

A. His Entry into Jerusalem as the Messiah (19:28-44)

B. Jesus in the Temple (19:45 – 21:38)

VII. The Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Chapters 22-24)

A. The Death and Burial of Jesus (Chapters 22-23)

B. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ and His Appearances (Chapter 24)

The second section speaks of the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus, of the miraculous circumstances of the announcement of their birth and of their birth.

Our passage is key in this section to understanding the need to keep the law and follow it with the utmost precision.

21 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the child, his name was called Jesus, the name which the angel had given him before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord,

23 As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be holy to the Lord,

24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, two turtledoves or two young pigeons.

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. He was a just and devout man, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

26 It was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by inspiration into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him the custom of the law,

28 He took him in his arms, blessed God, and said,

29 Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, O Lord, according to thy word,

30 For my eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

32 a light to lighten the Gentiles, and glory to Your people Israel.

33 Joseph and his mother were amazed at these things which were said about him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that will be spoken against.

35 And a sword will pierce through your own soul, so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

36 And there was Anna a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, who was of a great age, and had lived with

an husband seven years from her virginity,

37 a widow of about eighty-four years of age, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers day and night.

38 And she came at that time and glorified the Lord and spoke about Him to all who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem.

39 And when they had done all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

(Luke 2:21-39)

The plan of our passage

I Jesus was the firstborn and, according to the Law, was dedicated to God

A Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day

B Jesus was given the name given by the Angel

Jesus was brought to the Temple

D The ransom was paid and the sacrifice was made for Jesus

II In Jerusalem there was a man, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

A He was told that he would not see death.

B Simeon came to the temple as usual

With Simeon blessed God

D Simeon prophesies

III Here also was Anna, a widow who served God.

A I was in the temple day and night, in fasting and prayer

B She glorified the Lord and proclaimed Salvation

Having done everything according to the law, they returned

to Nazareth

The Christian religion is built on the substitutionary sacrifice. The Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself our sins and bore our punishment. But, according to the law, the sacrifice must be sinless. The priest carefully examined the lamb brought for sacrifice. So the life of Jesus Christ is presented to us in the Scripture for careful study for full compliance with the law of the Old Testament.

What does sacrificial submission to the law of the Lord Himself mean to us in these troubled times? I think we can see the following aspects here for ourselves.

1. We do not read or study the criminal code. The Ten Commandments of Moses are enough to live calmly, confidently and happily. We need to observe this law ourselves and teach our children. All other laws of society, state, morality are built on these Ten Commandments.

2. Unfortunately, a sinful person cannot fulfill the whole law, and the Scripture says that the law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Yes, we do not always keep the law, and if a police officer drives a hundred kilometers behind my car, she will notice some violation. What should we do? This is what grace and the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ are for. Where I am not able to fulfill the law, the grace (my undeserved forgiveness) of Jesus Christ “turns on” for a believer. If we again give an example from traffic rules, these are the 20 km/h by which I can exceed the prescribed limit. Not 21, and certainly

not 40 or 60. That is, grace has its own conditions when it works. But as the Scripture says, “If we sin willfully, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin.”

3. The law is not only our restraint, but also our protection. If the Scripture says that a false witness will die, then so it will be. We need to live holy lives to see the work of God's wrath on the wicked, but we also need to tell people the good news (the gospel) that the wicked can be forgiven, just as believers in Jesus Christ have been forgiven.

May the Lord bless you in your search for Truth.

With respect, God's love and prayers for you

Rustam Nasyrov.

# Why did Jesus add the Beatitudes to the already existing Law of Moses?

We are approaching the church holiday of "Circumcision of the Lord". In light of this holiday, let us look at the role of the Law in the life of Jesus, and what place should it have in our lives? The Ten Commandments are an amazing God's Law, sufficient for the legal provision of the life of society. Unfortunately, people were unable to fulfill this law, and it was given as a "schoolmaster to Christ".

1 And when he saw the multitudes, he went up on a mountain: and when he was seated, his disciples came unto him.

2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness'

sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

12 Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so they persecuted the prophets which were before you.

13 You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savour, how can it be salted again? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 Nor do men light a candle and put it under a basket, but on a candlestick, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

17 Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

(Matthew 5:1-17)

Believers in Jesus Christ are given a new Divine nature. The motivation of a believer in relation to the Law changes. It becomes not a set of prohibitions to observe, but the foundation of a new life, gives a new state of holiness, which is reflected in the Beatitudes. The Law itself cannot save us, we are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on Calvary. But the law is an indicator of our holy state, or the need to return to this state.

1. 2Pet.1:4 Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that through these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust:

2. Eph.3:6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

3. Heb.3:14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence firm until the end,

4. Heb.6:4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,

5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,

6 and those who have fallen away, to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God again and put Him to an open shame.

7 The land that drinks in the rain that often falls upon it and produces crops useful to those for whom it is cultivated receives a blessing from God;

8 But that which bears thorns and thistles is worthless, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.

(Heb.6:5-8)

Thanks to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Law moved from external limitations to the holy internal state of man, manifested in the Beatitudes.

How can a person be sure that he is following the path of Salvation, the path that Jesus Christ laid out for us? In his life there will be moments described in the Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes, as found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-12), represent spiritual and moral ideals that may evoke different opinions and critical approaches. Here are some possible counterarguments against following these commandments:

1. Utopian ideals: Some may believe that the Beatitudes represent unattainable ideals that are not applicable in the real world where selfishness and competition prevail.

2. Lack of Practical Benefit: People may argue that following the Beatitudes, such as “blessed are the poor in spirit” or “blessed are the peacemakers,” has no practical benefit and may even lead to vulnerability.

3. Conflict with personal interests: Commandments may conflict with personal ambitions and aspirations, for example, “blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” which may imply giving up one’s own interests for the sake of others.

4. The Need for Strictness in Some Situations: Some may argue that certain circumstances require sternness and decisiveness rather than the humility and meekness prescribed in the commandments.

5. Cultural Differences: Different cultures may have their own moral standards that may conflict with the Beatitudes.

For example, the values of collectivism may conflict with the individualism expressed in some of the Beatitudes.

6. People with ill intentions: There is a belief that following the commandments can make a person vulnerable to manipulation by those who do not share these values.

7. Lack of Interpretation: The Beatitudes can be interpreted in different ways, which can lead to confusion and disagreement among followers.

8. No guarantees: Following the commandments does not guarantee success or happiness in life, which can lead to disappointment for those who expect immediate results.

To better understand this issue, let's look at the cultural and historical context of our passage.

Let's conduct a historical and cultural analysis of Chapter 5 of the Gospel of Matthew.

Let's look at the history of the writing of the book of the Gospel of Matthew.

1.1 The authorship of the Gospel of Matthew is traditionally attributed to the Apostle Matthew, who was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ and, according to the Gospel texts, was a tax collector. However, the question of his authorship is a matter of some controversy among scholars and theologians.

Here are some key points regarding the authorship of the Gospel of Matthew:

Traditional View: Early Christian tradition held that Matthew wrote this Gospel based on his own memories and the teachings

of Jesus.

**Anonymity of the text:** The Gospel itself contains no explicit indication of its author. The name "Matthew" first appears in the attribution of this text in the works of early Christian writers such as Papias and Irenaeus.

As a tax collector, Matthew had a skill that made his job even more exciting for Christians. Tax collectors had to be able to take shorthand notes, which essentially meant that Matthew could record a person's words as they spoke them, word for word. This ability means that the words of Matthew's Gospel are not only inspired by the Holy Spirit, but must also be factual transcripts of some of Christ's sermons. For example, the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in chapters 5–7, is almost certainly an accurate record of that great message.

## 1.2. Addressee

**Theological Emphasis:** The Gospel of Matthew emphasizes Jesus's connection to Jewish tradition and frequently quotes from the Old Testament, which may indicate its focus on a Jewish audience.

## 1.3. Date of writing

The date of the Gospel of Matthew is a subject of debate among biblical scholars and historians. Most scholars agree that the Gospel was written between 70 and 100 CE. Here are some key points that help determine this time frame:

1.3.1. **The events of the destruction of Jerusalem:** Many researchers believe that the Gospel was written after the

destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD, since there are hints of this event in the text.

1.3.2 Use of other sources: The Gospel of Matthew likely used the Gospel of Mark as one of its sources. Since the Gospel of Mark is considered to be earlier (presumably written around 65-70 CE), this also indicates that Matthew may have written his gospel later.

1.3.3 Theological and Social Contexts: Some elements of the text point to the development of the early Christian community and its interaction with Jewish traditions, which may indicate a later date of writing.

Thus, the most common opinion is the period between 80 and 90 AD, although some researchers may suggest earlier or later dates.

#### 1.4. Purpose of writing

Matthew tried to prove to the Jews that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah. More than any other gospel, Matthew quotes from the Old Testament to show how Jesus fulfilled the words of the Jewish prophets. Matthew describes Jesus' descent from David in detail, and uses many forms of speech that were more natural to the Jews. Matthew's love and concern for his people is evident in his careful approach to telling the gospel story.

#### 2. Historical moments

The fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel contains several important historical and spiritual moments that are of great significance in the Christian tradition. Here are some of them:

2.1 The Sermon on the Mount: Chapter five begins with the Sermon on the Mount, which is one of the most famous parts of Jesus' teaching. It includes important ethical and spiritual instructions.

2.2 Beatitudes: Jesus sets forth nine beatitudes (blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, etc.), which describe spiritual values and qualities that are pleasing to God. These beatitudes became the basis of Christian morality.

2.3 Salt of the Earth and Light of the World: Jesus speaks of his followers being the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." These are metaphors that emphasize the importance of Christian influence in the world and the need to live by the principles of love and truth.

2.4 Fulfilment of the Law: Jesus states that He did not come to abolish the law or the prophets, but to fulfil them. This highlights the importance of the law in the context of His teaching and confirms His messianic role.

2.5 Deepening the understanding of the law: In this chapter, Jesus also deepens the understanding of the commandments by explaining that not only actions but also thoughts matter (e.g. anger, adultery). This shows the high standard of moral demands on his followers.

### 3. Geographical points

In Matthew 5, as in other parts of the Sermon on the Mount, geographical points are not the main focus of the text, but they are still important for understanding the context of events. Here

are some of them:

3.1 The Mountain: The Sermon on the Mount, including chapter five, is delivered on a mountain (or hill). It is a symbolic place that emphasizes Jesus' authority as a teacher and prophet. The mountain is often associated with closeness to God and a place of revelation.

3.2 Galilee: Jesus delivers his teachings in Galilee, a region in northern Israel. The area was predominantly Jewish, but also had significant pagan cultural influences. Galilee was the center of Jesus' ministry and the place where he performed many miracles.

3.3 Capernaum: Although Capernaum is not mentioned directly in chapter 5, it is an important city in Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Many of His subsequent teachings and miracles took place there.

3.4 Symbolism of the place: Mountains and hills in the Bible often symbolize spiritual heights and closeness to God. The location of the Sermon on the Mount emphasizes the importance of the teachings that Jesus imparts to his followers.

#### 4. Cultural moments

Matthew chapter 5 is part of the Sermon on the Mount and contains many cultural moments that reflect the social, religious, and ethical aspects of life in first-century Judea. Here are some of them:

4.1 Beatitudes (verses 3-12): These beatitude statements (e.g., "blessed are the poor in spirit") represent a radical turn on traditional understandings of happiness and success.

They emphasize the values of humility, compassion, and righteousness, which contrast with the social norms of the time.

4.2 The Law and the Prophets (verses 17-20): Jesus speaks of the importance of keeping the Law of Moses and the prophecies. This shows respect for Jewish traditions and laws, but also points to the need to understand them more deeply than just following the letter of the law.

4.3 Murder and Anger (verses 21-26): Jesus expands the concept of murder by linking it with anger and hatred. This reflects the cultural emphasis on the inner state of a person, not just external actions.

4.4 Adultery and Lust (verses 27-30): Jesus raises the issue of inner desire and its relationship to sin. This highlights the importance of purity of heart and thoughts in Jewish culture.

4.5 Divorce (verses 31-32): The issue of divorce was a hot topic in Jewish society, where there were different schools of thought on the subject. Jesus affirms the high value of marriage and commitment, which may have been controversial for some listeners.

4.6 Oaths (verses 33-37): Jesus calls for honesty and sincerity, rejecting the practice of swearing as a way to justify lying. This reflects the high moral standards expected of believers.

4.7 Vengeance (verses 38-42): The "eye for an eye" principle is revisited by Jesus, who calls for forgiveness and mercy. This emphasizes the value of non-violence and love for one's enemies.

4.8. Love for Enemies (verses 43-48): The idea of loving

one's enemies was revolutionary for its time and emphasized the universality of love and mercy, which went beyond traditional Jewish norms.

Let's consider the literary context of our passage.

## 6. Genre

The Gospel of Matthew belongs to the genre of religious literature, namely to the genre of the New Testament Gospel. It is part of the canonical texts of Christianity and is a narrative about the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The main characteristics of the genre of the Gospel of Matthew:

6.1 Narrative Style: The Gospels contain a sequential account of the events of Jesus' life, including his birth, ministry, miracles, parables, crucifixion, and resurrection.

6.2 Teaching and Preaching: The text contains many of Jesus' teachings, including the Sermon on the Mount, which contains important moral and ethical instructions.

6.3 Messianic Focus: The Gospel of Matthew emphasizes that Jesus is the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament. This is evident in numerous quotations and references to prophecies.

6.4 Audience: Matthew probably wrote for a predominantly Jewish audience, as evidenced by the emphasis on the fulfillment of Jewish prophecies and traditions.

6.5 Structure: The Gospel of Matthew has a clear structure, divided into different parts, including the genealogy of Jesus, his teachings and miracles.

Overall, the Gospel of Matthew combines elements of biography, theology, and moral teaching, making it an important text for both Christianity and the study of first-century history and culture.

## 7. The plan of the book The Gospel of Matthew

The outline of the book of Matthew can be presented in the form of main sections and topics. Here is an approximate outline:

### Introduction

#### 1. Genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1-17)

- The descent of Jesus from Abraham and David.

#### 2. The Nativity of Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25)

- Indication of conception from the Holy Spirit and birth.

### I. The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

#### 3. The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:1-17)

- The preaching of John the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus.

#### 4. The Temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11)

- Temptation in the desert.

### II. The Preaching and Ministry of Jesus

#### 5. Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)

- Beatitudes, commandments, prayer, golden rule.

#### 6. Miracles and Healings (Matthew 8-9)

- Healing the sick, raising the dead, miracles over nature.

### III. Mission and Teaching

#### 7. The Epistle of the Twelve Apostles (Matthew 10)

- Instructions for the apostles before their mission.

#### 8. Response to Jesus' Ministry (Matthew 11-12)

- Questions about the Messiah, opposition from religious leaders.

#### IV. Parables and Teaching

##### 9. Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13)

- Parables of the sower, the leaven, the pearl.

#### V. Conflicts and contradictions

##### 10. Conflicts with the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 15-16)

- Debates about traditions and laws.

##### 11. Prediction of suffering (Matthew 16:21-28)

- Prediction of suffering and resurrection.

#### VI. The Last Days of Ministry

##### 12. Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11)

- Entrance on a donkey and recognition of the people.

##### 13. The Cleansing of the Temple (Matthew 21:12-17)

##### 14. Parables of the Last Times (Matthew 24-25)

- Teaching about the end of the world and readiness.

#### VII. Suffering, Death and Resurrection

##### 15. The Arrest and Trial of Jesus (Matthew 26)

- The Last Supper, arrest in Gethsemane.

##### 16. The Crucifixion (Matthew 27)

- The trial, crucifixion and death of Jesus.

##### 17. Resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10)

- Resurrection and appearance to women.

#### Conclusion

##### 18. The Great Commandment (Matthew 28:16-20)

- Indicating to the disciples the mission of preaching the Gospel to all nations.

Our passage is located in Part II of the Gospel of Matthew. Where Jesus voices the main points of His teaching, and especially in the Beatitudes.

In the Ten Beatitudes, Jesus reveals the secret of true happiness for man. In Russian, the adjective "blessed" has a somewhat mocking, condemning meaning. In fact, the commandments of Jesus Christ talk about how we can be happy despite external circumstances.

So, what commandments should we follow in the modern world?

3 – Blessed are the poor in spirit – the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them.

4 Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful – they will be treated mercifully.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

11 Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and say all kinds of lies about you because of Me.

12 Rejoice and be glad, because your great reward awaits you in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(Matthew 5:3-12)

So Jesus gives us the beatitudes for our successful service and our happy life on earth, and our eternal life with Him in heaven.

For us, these commandments should be as important as the Ten Commandments were for the Jews.

It is important for us in our life and ministry to fulfill these commandments in our life and ministry, and to be happy regardless of external circumstances.

May God bless you in your search for Truth.

With respect, prayer and God's love

Rustam Kodash Nasyrov

# **The meaning of the baptism of Jesus Christ or two approaches to fulfilling one's own mission in life and ministry**

The purpose of preaching is to understand your purpose as best as possible and to realize it in your life and ministry.

1 In those days John the Baptist came and preached in the wilderness of Judea.

2 and says: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3 For this is he of whom Isaiah the prophet spoke: The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 Now John himself had clothing made of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around the Jordan went out to him.

6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 Now when John saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him to be baptized, he said to them, "You generation of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance

9 And do not think to say within yourselves, 'We have

Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

10 Now the axe is laid to the root of the trees: every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I; whose sandals I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

12 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff He will burn up with unquenchable fire.

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him.

14 But John held him back, saying, I have need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?

15 But Jesus answered and said to him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John allows him to go.

16 And when Jesus was baptized, he went up straightway out of the water: and behold, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.

17 And behold, a voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

(Matthew 3:1-17)

There is a common saying that "We are the creators of our

own happiness." If that were true, we would see many more happy people than lonely ones. What's wrong with that statement, and why is it better to leave the question of our happiness in more reliable and powerful hands?

1. Man is too complex a creation for him/herself to be able to make themselves happy. The Bible says that man is "wonderfully and wonderfully made." This speaks not only of his unique purpose and the enormous possibilities inherent in him/her, but also of his/her complexity and versatility. It is very difficult to say that a sinful and fickle man/woman will be able to build his/her own happiness and will remain satisfied with his/her situation throughout his/her life.

2. There is too much pain, violence and death in this world for a person to remain human, for him to preserve his purpose and remain involved in service despite the events and twists and turns of his own life. He needs significant and strong external support.

3. We may not see the overall, universal plan behind the events of our own lives and ministries because we have a short lifespan and a "small overview." We need external adjustments to bring our lives and ministries into unison with the general church and public ministry of Jesus Christ in this world. We need an understanding of His priorities and tasks for this period of history. The perception of only our purpose can be much narrower than the perception of God, and we need to have a "big picture" in order to fit into the general church life and influence a larger number of people.

The perception and understanding of our purpose and our life and ministry may be substantially less than we need to effectively serve God.

How can we align our lives and our ministry with God's requirements, and why is this important to us?

Some may doubt the existence of God, but man has too much potential to be limited to his own selfish and egocentric goals – satisfying his own needs, achieving his own goals, and ensuring his own well-being. God wants the horizons of our life and service to be constantly expanding.

If we look at examples from the Holy Scriptures, we will see examples of "expanding influence." Noah obeyed God and built the ark, today all the inhabitants of the earth are his descendants.

Moses was obedient to God and fulfilled his destiny – giving birth to the state of Israel, laying the cultural and historical foundations of the entire Western civilization.

John the Baptist brought his ministry into line with God's requirements and was extremely successful.

The ministry of Jesus Christ was subordinate to the Father, and His whole life is an example of complete obedience to God.

This book is known as the Gospel of Matthew because it was written by the apostle of the same name. The style of the book is what you would expect from someone who was once a tax collector. Matthew shows great interest in record-keeping (18:23–24; 25:14–15). The book is extremely orderly and concise. Rather than writing chronologically, Matthew organizes

this gospel around six themes.

As a tax collector, Matthew had a skill that made his job even more exciting for Christians. Tax collectors had to be able to take shorthand notes, which essentially meant that Matthew could record a person's words as they spoke them, word for word. This ability means that the words of Matthew's Gospel are not only inspired by the Holy Spirit, but must also be factual transcripts of some of Christ's sermons. For example, the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in chapters 5–7, is almost certainly an accurate record of that great message.

The Gospel of Matthew was addressed to a greater extent to the Jews. It serves as a kind of bridge from the Old to the New Testament.

The Apostle Matthew wrote this book in the early days of the Church, probably around 50 AD. This was a time when most Christians were Jews, so Matthew's focus on the Jewish perspective in this Gospel is understandable.

Matthew tried to prove to the Jews that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah. More than any other gospel, Matthew quotes from the Old Testament to show how Jesus fulfilled the words of the Jewish prophets. Matthew describes Jesus' descent from David in detail, and uses many forms of speech that were more natural to the Jews. Matthew's love and concern for his people is evident in his careful approach to telling the gospel story.

The story described in our passage took place on the banks of the Jordan River. From other passages in the Bible, we can see

that it was a deserted, arid area, with thickets of reeds along the banks of the Jordan River.

Baptism for the forgiveness of sins was familiar to Jewish culture, but it was most often used to accept into Judaism proselytes who were not born Jews but chose to convert to Judaism as adults.

Matthew discusses the origins, birth, and early life of Christ in the first two chapters. The book then turns to the ministry of Jesus. The account of Christ's teaching is structured around such "points" as the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5 through 7. Chapter 10 describes the mission and purpose of the disciples, chapter 13 is a collection of parables, chapter 18 discusses the Church, and chapter 23 begins a discourse on hypocrisy and the future. Chapters 21 through 27 describe the arrest, torture, and execution of Jesus. The final chapter describes the Resurrection and the Great Commission.

Matthew's Gospel is closer to the genre of biography, but it gives more than a biography and description of a person's life. Matthew provides evidence that Jesus is indeed the chosen Messiah, and that He was the one promised in the Old Testament.

#### Outline of the Gospel of Matthew

- A. Birth and Infancy (1:1 – 2:23)
- B. Preparation for Ministry (3:1 – 4:25)
- C. Sermon on the Mount (5:1 – 7:29)
- D. Jesus Performs His Ministry (8:1 – 9:34)
- E. The Mission of the Twelve (9:35 – 10:42)

F. Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-52)

G. Life in the Coming Kingdom (16:13 – 18:35)

H. The Road to Jerusalem (19:1 – 22:46)

I. Warnings of Judgment (23:1 – 25:46)

J. The arrest of Jesus, suffering, death (26:1 – 27:66)

K. Resurrection (28:1-20)

Our passage is in the second section. It lays the foundation for the entire ministry of Jesus Christ.

Jesus confirms the truth of John the Baptist's ministry and comes to him to be baptized.

The meaning of baptism for us is that Jesus shows humility before the Father and shows us an example for our lives – the need for obedience to God and the need for baptism.

The entire section B is of fundamental importance:

B. Preparation for Ministry (3:1 – 4:25)

1. John the Baptist (3:1-12)

2. The Baptism of Jesus (3:13-17)

3. The Temptation of Jesus (4:1-11)

4. Jesus begins to preach (4:12-17)

5. Jesus chooses His first disciples (4:18-22)

6. Jesus heals some of the sick (4:23-25)

In this section, as we see, the foundation of Jesus Christ's ministry is laid. He is baptized and tempted, begins to preach, and gathers His team.

1 In those days John the Baptist came and preached in the wilderness of Judea.

2 and says: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3 For this is he of whom Isaiah the prophet spoke: The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 Now John himself had clothing made of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around the Jordan went out to him.

6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 Now when John saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him to be baptized, he said to them, "You generation of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance

9 And do not think to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

10 Now the axe is laid to the root of the trees: every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I; whose sandals I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

12 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His floor and gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff

He will burn up with unquenchable fire.

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him.

14 But John held him back, saying, I have need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?

15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John allows him to go.

16 And when Jesus was baptized, he went up straightway out of the water: and behold, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.

17 And behold, a voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

(Matthew 3:1-17)

The plan of our passage

I All the prophets came by the will of God, and John.

A John voices the meaning of his ministry

B It denotes who he is.

John announces the coming events

II. The circumstances of John's ministry

A The appearance resembled Elijah

B The diet was like Samson's

His ministry was successful, everyone was baptized.

III John was able to maintain spiritual vigilance

A He denounced the Pharisees and Sadducees

B There is no repentance without fruit

The Judgment of God is near

IV The Circumstances of Jesus' Ministry

A Will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire

B Will clean the threshing floor

He will gather the wheat and burn the straw

V The Union of Two Ministries

And Jesus comes to be baptized

In John speaks of the superiority of Jesus

Jesus commands to baptize Him.

D John sees a sign and hears a voice from heaven

This passage shows that Jesus' ministry was entirely subordinated to the will of the Father, and His purpose was to show sinful man the way to restoration to fellowship with God through water baptism and life and ministry in the local church.

So, we see that the ministry and life of John the Baptist were the preparation of the people of Israel for the coming of the promised Messiah. What conclusions can we draw for ourselves, for our lives and ministry?

1. Without God, our life has little meaning. Understanding one's own purpose is possible only through prayer of repentance, receiving forgiveness of sins from God, adoption and the opportunity to communicate with Him through prayer.

2. We may have vision and knowledge about our life, its purpose, and understanding at our level. This may not be enough to fulfill God's will in its entirety.

3. We need to maintain “spiritual vision” and be willing to bring our lives and ministry into line with God’s plan and the need to bring the Gospel message of salvation to as many people as possible.

May the Almighty bless you in your search for truth and in understanding your divine purpose.

With prayer, God's love and respect

Rustam Nasyrov.

# Why is the fear of God the best antidepressant?

We live in a time that is extremely turbulent and causes fear and uncertainty about the future. It is estimated that sales of antidepressants in the country reached a maximum of 16.1 million packages in 2024. A person and his psyche are exposed to influence and pressure from various aspects of life: work, family, finances, relationships between people.

Sometimes a person can feel as if he is in a smelting furnace, where the temperature is constantly increasing. And sometimes it seems that everything, the temperature has reached the maximum, and you can't stand it anymore! But let's stop and consider, why does God allow this in our lives? What is His plan, and why do these events happen to us, what does the Lord want to tell us and what to convey to our minds, in what should we change? Let's look at the texts of the Holy Scripture – the Bible.

1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tent is dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 For this reason we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling;

3 If only we, even though clothed, do not find ourselves naked.

4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, because

we do not want to be unclothed but clothed, so that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

5 For this very purpose God created us and gave us the Spirit as a pledge.

6 Therefore we are always of good courage; and since we know that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord,

7 For we walk by faith, not by sight,

8 then we are of good courage and desire rather to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord.

9 Therefore we strive zealously, whether at home or away, to be pleasing to Him;

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men; but to God we are manifested; and I trust that we are manifested also in your consciences. (2 Cor. 5:1-11)

When faced with external difficult circumstances in our lives, we need to realize that what is happening to us is under God's complete control, will not exceed our strength, and will be assessed in our report to the Lord.

I The realization of the fact that after the death of the body we will be given an eternal body in Heaven comforts us

II The presence of the Holy Spirit in us is the guarantee of our peace

III At the end of our earthly life we will have to give an account to the Lord Jesus Christ

The presence of the Holy Spirit in us helps us to meet temporary life difficulties in a calm state and not attach undue importance to them, understanding that God has complete power, and we will give Him an account of our lives and deeds.

How can we achieve peace of mind and heart in a safe and long-lasting way?

Here are some counterarguments against the idea of peace from the fear of the Lord and submitting your life to God:

1. Subjectivity of fear: Fear of God can be experienced as a negative feeling that leads to anxiety and stress rather than peace. People may feel pressure and guilt that prevents them from living a full life.

2. Personal Development: Submitting your life to God can limit your personal development and self-expression. The desire to follow rules can suppress individual desires and ambitions, which can lead to internal conflict.

3. Ethics and Morality: Fear as a basis for moral behavior can lead people to act not out of a sincere desire to do good, but out of fear of punishment. This can undermine true moral values and virtue.

4. Freedom of choice: Submission to God can be perceived as a loss of freedom of choice. People can feel dependent on external forces, which can lead to a feeling of helplessness and lack of control over their lives.

5. Diversity of Beliefs: There are many religions and philosophies in the modern world, each offering its own views on the meaning of life and moral values. Supporting only one point of view can limit understanding and acceptance of other cultures and beliefs.

6. Scientific Approach: Some people may prefer a scientific approach to understanding the world, based on logic and empirical data, rather than religious teachings that may seem vague or outdated.

7. Psychological Impact: Fear can have negative effects on mental health, causing anxiety, depression, and other disorders. Instead of bringing peace, it can aggravate internal conflicts.

Let's look at the cultural and historical context of our passage in order to understand the importance of the fear of the Lord in our lives.

Let's explore the history of the writing of the book of 2 Corinthians

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians in the New Testament is traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul. The letter was written to the Christian community in Corinth and addresses various issues concerning faith, moral standards, and relationships within the church.

Paul wrote this letter to strengthen believers, respond to criticism, and defend his apostolic ministry. It contains many of Paul's personal reflections, experiences, and spiritual instructions. The text also discusses themes of suffering,

comfort, and service.

Historians and biblical scholars generally agree that Paul's authorship is reliable, although some scholars may debate the details of his life and the context in which he wrote the letter.

Second Corinthians is believed to have been written by the Apostle Paul sometime between 55 and 57 AD. The exact date can vary depending on sources and historians' interpretations, but most scholars agree that the letter was written during Paul's third missionary journey, likely from the city of Philippi or Macedonia.

The purpose of 2 Corinthians is to address several key issues:

1. **Defense of Apostolic Authority:** Paul responds to criticism and doubts about his apostolic calling and authority raised by opponents in Corinth. He asserts his legitimacy as an apostle and servant of God.

2. **Comfort and encouragement:** Paul shares his experiences and sufferings, emphasizing that even in difficulties he finds comfort in God. He encourages the Corinthians to be steadfast in the faith and to support each other.

3. **A Call for Reconciliation:** Paul calls the church to reconcile and restore relationships after previous conflicts. He reminds them of the importance of forgiveness and love.

4. **Collection of funds for the needy:** Paul mentions the collection of offerings for the church in Jerusalem, calling on the Corinthians to participate in this work as an expression of their love and support.

5. **Spiritual Instruction:** Paul gives practical advice on morality, spirituality, and community life, emphasizing the importance of living by the Spirit and serving others.

In 2 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul touches on several key themes and historical points that are important for understanding his message and the context of the early Christian community. Here are some of them:

1. **The theme of the body and eternal life:** Paul speaks of the body as a “tent” that we leave behind and of the hope of an “eternal house” (2 Cor. 5:1). This reflects the early Christians’ belief in the resurrection and life after death, which was an important aspect of their teaching.

2. **The ministry of reconciliation:** Paul emphasizes that God has given him and other believers the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19). This points to the mission of the apostles in the context of evangelism and the restoration of the relationship between God and humanity.

3. **The Role of Faith:** In 2 Corinthians 5:7, Paul states that “we walk by faith, not by sight.” This emphasizes the importance of faith in the lives of Christians and their hope in the unseen, which is a central element of Christian doctrine.

4. **The Judgment Seat of God:** Paul says that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) to receive retribution for our deeds. This reminds the Corinthians of the importance of moral responsibility and spiritual life.

5. **Call to Service:** At the end of the chapter, Paul says that

“we have been sent in the name of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20), calling the Corinthians to be ambassadors for God. This emphasizes the active role of believers in spreading the gospel.

In 2 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul does not focus on specific geographical points, but several contextual aspects related to geography and history can be identified:

1. Corinth as a center of trade and culture: Corinth was an important commercial and cultural center in ancient Greece. The city was located at the crossroads of trade routes, which contributed to the mixing of different cultures and religions. This diversity affected the Christian community, and Paul took this context into account when writing to them.

2. Communities in Macedonia and Achaia: Paul mentions his ministry in other regions such as Macedonia and Achaia, which highlights his missionary work and connections with other Christian communities. It also shows that the letter was part of a larger network of early Christian communities.

3. Jewish Geography: Although chapter 5 of this letter does not directly discuss the geography of Judea, the early Christian context implies the influence of Jewish traditions and teachings, which Paul sought to adapt to Gentile communities, including the Corinthians.

4. Reference to a heavenly home: When Paul speaks of an “eternal home” (2 Cor. 5:1), he is using a metaphor that can be linked to ideas about heaven, which also has its roots in Jewish geography and cosmology.

In 2 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul touches on several key cultural points that are important for understanding his letter and the context in which it was written:

1. **Body and Spirituality:** Paul discusses the concept of the body as a temporary dwelling (2 Cor. 5:1). This reflects the Greek philosophical tradition, which often viewed the body as inferior and the spirit as the ultimate reality. Paul uses this idea to emphasize that Christians look forward not just to physical life, but to eternal life with God.

2. **Hope of the Resurrection:** In chapter 5, Paul speaks of the hope of the resurrection and eternal life (2 Cor. 5:1-5). This was a topic that was relevant to the Corinthians, who may have been influenced by various philosophies about the afterlife and what happens after death. Paul states that Christians have confidence in the future based on faith in Christ.

3. **The Role of Ministry:** Paul speaks of the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20). This emphasizes the importance of Christian ministry in the context of a society where there were divisions and conflicts. He calls believers to be ambassadors for Christ and to actively participate in the process of reconciliation between people and God.

4. **The Culture of Shame and Glory:** Greek culture placed great importance on public image and reputation. Paul mentions that he is not ashamed of his preaching (2 Cor. 5:12). This may be a response to criticism of his authority and ministry, which also reflects the cultural norms of the time.

5. Judgment and Evaluation: Paul speaks of us all having to stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). This idea of a final judgment was also part of a cultural context where there were different ideas about justice and consequences for actions.

### Literary context

The literary context of 2 Corinthians includes several important aspects that help us understand its content, structure, and purpose:

1. Background and Relationship with the Corinthians: 2 Corinthians is a continuation of 1 Corinthians, which Paul wrote in response to problems and issues that arose in the church at Corinth. In 1 Corinthians, Paul addressed a variety of issues, including moral issues, divisions in the church, and questions about spiritual gifts. 2 Corinthians reflects the further development of Paul's relationship with this congregation, his attempts to reestablish trust and authority after criticism of his ministry.

2. Defense of Apostolic Authority: In this letter, Paul addresses those who questioned his apostolic status and authority. He defends his ministry by emphasizing his devotion to Christ and his suffering for the sake of the gospel (2 Cor. 11:23-29). This defense is a key element of the text and helps us understand why Paul uses personal examples and testimonies.

3. Themes of Suffering and Comfort: Paul speaks of the suffering he experiences for the sake of the gospel and how God comforts him (2 Cor. 1:3-7). This theme of suffering

and comfort permeates the entire letter and is important for understanding the Christian experience, especially in the context of the Corinthians who faced various trials.

4. Reconciliation and Ministry: One of the central themes of the second epistle is the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20). Paul calls believers to be ambassadors for Christ and to actively participate in the process of reconciliation between God and people. This emphasizes the importance of Christian ministry in a society that is experiencing conflict.

5. Eschatology: Paul also touches on eschatological themes such as the hope of resurrection and eternal life (2 Cor. 5:1-10). These ideas are of great importance to the Corinthians, who may have been influenced by various philosophies about the afterlife.

6. The structure of the letter: 2 Corinthians has a clear structure that includes an introduction (chapter 1), a description of suffering and comfort (chapters 1-7), a defense of the apostolic ministry (chapters 10-13), and a discussion of the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (chapters 8-9). This structure helps the reader follow the logic of Paul's argument.

The Second Epistle to the Corinthians belongs to the genre of epistolary literature, that is, it is a letter. Like many other New Testament epistles, it was written by the Apostle Paul and addressed to a specific Christian community – the church in Corinth.

Here is the outline of Second Corinthians:

I. Introduction (1:1-11)

- Greetings and attribution
- Thanks be to God for comfort in suffering
- Consolation as a Call to Service

## II. Defense of Paul's Apostolic Ministry (1:12-2:17)

- Description of the purity and sincerity of his ministry (1:12-14)
- Explanation of change of plans (1:15-24)
- A call for forgiveness and restoration of relationship with the sinner (2:1-11)
- Comfort from God in Difficulties (2:12-17)

## III. Description of the Ministry of Reconciliation and Hope (Chapter 5)

- Hope for an eternal, heavenly home (5:1-5)
- Confidence in the future and fear of the Lord (5:6-10)
- Call to the Ministry of Reconciliation (5:11-21)

## IV. The Joy of the Corinthians' Repentance (Chapter 7)

- The joy of writing and repentance (7:1-9)
- Comfort and joy from changes in the church (7:10-16)

## V. The Collection for the Saints in Jerusalem (chapter 8-9)

- Example of the generosity of the Macedonian churches (8:1-5)
- The Corinthians' Call to Generosity (8:6-15)
- Preparation of the collection and the role of Titus (8:16-24)
- Principles of Generosity and Blessing (9:1-15)

## VI. Defence of the Apostolic Authority (Chapter 10)

- Apostolic Modesty and Strength (10:1-6)

- Confronting and criticizing false apostles (10:7-18)

## VII. Paul's Personal Testimony (Chapter 11)

- List of sufferings and trials (11:1-33)
- Defending your ministry against false teachers

## VIII. Revelation of the Power of God (Chapter 12)

- Paul's Experience and Visions (12:1-6)
- Trusting in God's strength in weakness (12:7-10)

## IX. Conclusion and Call for Unity (Chapter 12-13)

- Final Instructions and Warnings (12:11-21)
- A Call for Correction and Unity in the Church (13:1-10)
- The Final Blessing and Call to Love (13:11-14)

Our passage is in Section III and speaks of the importance of unity and healthy relationships in the church. That is when people can be free from fear and speak freely of God's love and forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on Calvary for our sins.

In our passage, Paul reveals the importance of a new life and a new eternal body. We live in a material world and tend to obsess over ourselves and our problems. The mind literally goes in circles, scrolling through the same restless thoughts, and each time they become even more restless, drawing us even more into another useless circle. What is a person to do? To look at the situation from the point of view of eternity, from the point of view of our perspective. Then the focus shifts from us and our problems to God, to His omnipotence, the hopeless situation is revealed, and we can exhale and go beyond our restless thoughts.

1 We know that when our earthly tent – our body – is destroyed, then an eternal home awaits us in heaven – a spiritual body created by God, not by human hands.

2 While we are in this tent, we groan in anticipation of the moment when we shall be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.

3 Having put it on, we shall not be found naked.

4 But while we are still in our earthly tent and groaning, it is difficult for us because we do not want to get rid of the earthly body, but nevertheless want to be clothed in the eternal, so that everything mortal may be swallowed up by life.

5 For this reason we were created by God, who gave us his Spirit as a guarantee.

6 Therefore we are always at peace, even knowing that while we are in our earthly body we are far from the Lord;

7 For we are guided by faith, not by sight.

8 Knowing this, we are at peace and would like to leave our bodies and dwell with the Lord.

9 Therefore, our goal is to do what the Lord wants us to do, whether we are in the body or outside it.

10 For we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and each one will be given what he deserves for the good or evil deeds he did while in his earthly body.

11 {The Ministry of Reconciliation} So then, knowing what the fear of the Lord is, we try to convince others. Now God knows what kind of people we are, and I hope that your conscience knows us as well. (2 Cor. 5:1-11)

I The realization of the fact that after the death of the body we will be given an eternal body in Heaven comforts us

A Our earthly body is temporary.

B Not everything in it may work well.

C It is finite, and it will die.

D A new body will be created by God

E The new body will be covered with God's Glory

F We sometimes suffer in a temporary body in order to enter into the eternal

II The presence of the Holy Spirit in us is the guarantee of our peace

A While we are in the body, we are distant from the Lord.

B We live by the principle of faith, not by external circumstances.

C The anticipation of moving into a new body makes us resilient

D Our main task is to fulfill the will of God

III At the end of our earthly life we will have to give an account to the Lord Jesus Christ

A We will be rewarded for our deeds

B The realization of God's sovereignty directs our lives in the right direction

C The fear of the Lord enables us to persuade others to submit to God's will and accept His love

The idea of God's progressive revelation runs through the

entire Bible. And in the New Testament we see how the most important event for each person is realized – the coming into this world of the Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave us forgiveness of sins, who gave us the opportunity to directly communicate with God, the opportunity to go beyond the boundaries of our earthly life and apply to it the scale of eternity, in comparison with which our earthly problems seem small and not scary, if we hope and trust in God, remain faithful to Him and His plan for our lives.

So how can we overcome our fears and depression that are trying to surround us from all sides?

1. Read the Bible, God's Word, daily.
  2. Pray the prayer of repentance, ask God for forgiveness for your life without Him and invite Jesus Christ into your mind, your heart and your life.
  3. Find a local church where God's Word is read and taught, and begin attending and serving there.
  4. Pray about your problems and needs and ask other local church members to pray.
  5. Help those you can help, and God will help you.
- May the Lord bless you in your search for Truth.  
With respect, prayers for you and God's love  
Rustam Kodash Nasyrov

# The Importance of Obedience in the Family and in the Church

Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the Church, and He is the Savior of the body.

But as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her,

to sanctify it, cleansing it with the washing of water through the word;

that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

So ought husbands to love their wives as their own bodies: he who loves his wife loves himself.

For no one ever hated his own flesh, but feeds and warms it, just as the Lord does the Church,

for we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

This mystery is great; I speak in relation to Christ and the

Church.

So let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife respect her husband. (Eph. 5:22-33)

In the modern world, people, as at all times, strive for happiness. We want to love and be loved, and very often in achieving these goals we are guided by emotions, and not by the recipe for happiness given to us in the Holy Scripture.

God loves man and has done everything for his salvation. He also wants man to be happy during his earthly life. There are times when we all go through trials, but if you ask a Christian who has lived with God for 5, 10 or 20 years whether he regrets the choice he made, you will get a smile and the answer "no".

Recently, the number of divorces has become equal to the number of marriages. The problems in people's relationships have become especially acute during the pandemic – while in self-isolation, we spend 24 hours of our lives with our spouse.

Once again, we can turn to the Word of God, the Bible, to find answers to our pain, our problems, and the loneliness we may be experiencing.

Following and fulfilling God's word is the key to a happy life for us.

What is the recipe for happiness for a person, to be happy in earthly life and inherit eternal life?

There is one story that I am inclined to believe because it seems very close to the truth. One day, Barack and Michelle Obama went to a restaurant to have lunch there, and this visit

was not planned and prepared by his security. While they were in the restaurant, they saw the restaurant manager talking to security, trying to approach the couple. "What does he want from me?" the president asked. "Oh no, he wants to talk to your wife," the security answered. When Michelle returned after the conversation, Barack asked, "Who was that?" "He was in love with me when we were in college," Michelle answered. "If you had married him, you would have been the wife of the restaurant manager," the president said with a smile. "No, if I had married him, he would have been the president of the United States, not you."

But let's go back to our passage and look at the historical situation and the cultural atmosphere of that time to understand what God put into these words for us living in this time.

According to the commentators of the past, the epistle was written during Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea and/or Rome in 60-63, since in the text Paul repeatedly calls himself a "prisoner" (Eph. 3:1, also 4:1 and 6:20). That the epistle was written by Paul, as St. Theophan (Vyshensky) noted in the 19th century, "there are almost no doubters of this, or there are so few of them, and the grounds for their unbelief are so insignificant that it is not worth dwelling on." However, in modern biblical studies there is an opinion that the author of the epistle was not Paul, but one of his Ephesian disciples, who used the apostle's authentic letters when writing.

Paul hoped that all who were striving to attain Christlike

maturity would receive this letter. Ephesians contains science for application by true children of God. In addition, studying this letter will help to form and strengthen the believer to fulfill the purposes and calling of God. The purpose of this letter is to establish and equip the mature church. It presents a balanced view of the Body of Christ and its importance in the work of God.

This epistle was probably written between 60 and 63 A.D. The epistle was written from Rome towards the end of the Apostle's time in bonds, i.e., about 63 A.D., and was delivered by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21). This is not the second, but the first bond; we see that the Apostle freely preaches the Gospel, asking for prayers for this work (Eph. 6:19–20). He could not have written this during the second Roman bonds, when he knew that "the time of his departure was at hand" (2 Tim. 4:6).

The immediate reason for writing the Epistle was the Apostle's desire to share with the Ephesian flock his deep contemplations about the mystery of the Church of Christ, to reveal the mystery of the salvation of Jews and pagans through the Church, and also to teach a whole series of moral teachings.

Let us look at the state of the world at the time Paul wrote his letter.

The Jews had a low opinion of women. In his morning prayer, the Jew thanked God for not creating him "a heathen, a slave, or a woman." Under Jewish law, a woman was not a legal person, but a thing. She had absolutely no legal rights; she was the complete

property of her husband; he could do with her as he pleased.

In theory, the Jews had very high ideals about marriage. The rabbis had sayings like, "A Jew should prefer death to idolatry, murder, or adultery." "Even the altar sheds tears when a man divorces the wife of his youth." But in reality, divorce had become terribly easy in those days.

At the time of Christ, even among the Jews, the marriage bond was in danger to such an extent that it threatened the foundations of marriage, because Jewish girls refused to marry because they faced uncertainty.

In the Greek world the situation was even worse. Prostitution was an essential part of Greek life. Demosthenes described the norms of life in his time: "We have courtesans for pleasure, concubines for cohabitation, and wives who bear us legitimate children and take care of our household." The woman of the upper classes of Greek society led a solitary life. She did not take part in public life, never appeared on the street alone. She did not even attend banquets or public holidays, she had her own chambers, which only her husband could enter. Everything came down to the fact that, as Xenophon wrote, "she saw, heard and asked as little as possible."

The woman of the noble Greek classes was so brought up that all friendship and companionship during marriage were excluded. Socrates said: "Is there anyone to whom you have entrusted more serious matters than to your wife, and is there anyone to whom you have spoken less than to her?" Verus, who

shared power with the great Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, answered his wife, who had accused him of having relations with other women, that she should not forget that the title of wife gave the right to self-respect, and not to pleasure. The wife of a Greek had to keep house, care for his legitimate children, and he sought society and pleasure elsewhere.

To make matters worse, there was no judicial procedure for divorce in Greece. As someone said, divorce was a matter of chance and caprice. The only guarantee a woman had was that her dowry would be returned. Hearth and home life were fading, and marital fidelity was nonexistent.

Paul's letter is divided into three main segments: 1) Chapters 1–3 present principles regarding God's work;

2) Chapters 4–5 set forth principles concerning our present existence;

3) Chapter 6 presents principles regarding our daily struggle.

This letter, although it has an epistolary form, can be considered as a doctrinal teaching – a scientific article. Despite its brevity (6 chapters), the Epistle to the Ephesians is very rich in content both in the dogmatic and moral parts. St. Athanasius called it "a catechism of Christian teaching."

I The Necessity and Importance of Subordination.

The stability of any system of power is built on subordination. If there is no subordination, the structure will fall apart. This is what the Roman wisdom "divide and rule" says, the rabbinical wisdom says that "a house divided cannot stand." Therefore,

the absence of subordination is extremely dangerous for any structure. Where can a person take an example of subordination?

A. Wives must submit to their husbands.

Paul writes for wives to submit to their husbands. This is difficult. For a later version of man, with stronger intuition, emotions and analysis, to submit to an earlier version is not so easy. For men, the submission of wives should be an example of their submission to Jesus Christ. As the wife submits to her husband, so the husband should be included in the vertical of authority God – Jesus – husband – wife

B. Husbands must submit to the Lord

From the point of view of submission to God's will, all people can be divided into four groups:

Dielectrics are ordinary people who do not know about God and cannot fulfill His will voluntarily. (pagans)

Semiconductors are mostly religious people, but they do not fulfill God's will in full, and only when it is beneficial or convenient for them. (Saul)

Guides are believers who live a spiritual life and, for the most part, fulfill God's will. (Jonah)

A superconductor is a person who carries out God's will despite the circumstances and even despite the safety of his own life. (Jesus Christ)

S. How Christ Submits to God

Christ completely submitted Himself to God, and already at the Last Supper He says that the Father has given everything

into His hands. The manifestation and confirmation of this is the arrest, mockery and execution of Jesus Christ. As a result of this, Jesus was resurrected, made the head of the church and is our heavenly intercessor.

### 1. Christ is the head of the Church

This is the secret of the invincibility and eternity of the church. The gates of hell will not prevail against it as long as it obeys Christ. The head of the church is not the senior pastor or the church council – the head of the church is Jesus Christ.

### 2. Savior of the body

Furthermore, Jesus not only exercises leadership over the entire church, but He is also the personal Lord of every believer.

### 3. The Church must submit to God

The submission of the church to God is an unquestionable statement. But how often do we fail to fulfill God's will? God's desire is for us to go and bear fruit. What is our good fruit: stable families, high professional achievements, good deeds and our charity, helping those in need. But all this must be a means of evangelization. Without this, the church will only look like a charity fund.

### II Husbands should love their wives

A husband's love for his wife is not a feeling. It is a choice. We make a strong-willed decision to love our wife even more than ourselves.

#### A. Husbands should also love their wives.

No one has emotional love for their body (narcissism), but to

take care of it, protect it, treat it if it is sick, not leave it until death. This is the image of how a husband should love his wife. Does everyone always do it this way? I don't, but you have to try.

B. Just as a man loves his flesh

C. Family is the unity of husband and wife

D. The wife should be afraid

A woman's emotional life is even more complex and mysterious than a man's. That's why the Scripture does not force her to love her husband. It says that a wife should show her husband the utmost respect. It is difficult to imagine that a husband will be respected at work, obeyed, if he has problems with obedience and respect for his wife in the family.

E. A husband should love his wife as himself.

But no matter what, a husband must love his wife and take care of her. If our body fails us, gets sick, or even becomes paralyzed, we still remain in the body until God takes us. So our love for our wife must continue until our death hour.

III Christ loves and nourishes the church

This is another important point for being in the church. By giving the church tithes, serving in the church we come under the care and provision of Christ for His church.

A. Christ loved the church and gave Himself

Christ's love for the church is so great **THAT HE DIED FOR IT**. How can we doubt His provision when even His life was given for the church.

V. He presented it as a glorious church.

Jesus is the head, representative and intercessor of the church before God. Therefore, we can rest assured that Jesus is involved in our earthly life and is guiding our Salvation, our road to Heaven.

C. That the church may be holy and blameless

In the church there is a cleansing by the Word. Therefore, it is important for us not only to be in the church, to listen to the Word of God, but also to be doers of this Word.

D. The Church is the flesh of Christ

Being in church and doing His will is where we can experience the closest fellowship with Christ. One day, while in a home fellowship, conducting an Alpha course, I was telling guests about the love of Christ, and at that moment His love passed through my heart. It is an experience like no other. All the people who were in the meeting then are now in the church.

#### IV

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians (chapter 7), Apostle Paul set forth his teaching on family life and virginity. There he gives preference to virginity if it is chosen for the sake of the Lord. Here he sets forth his teaching on the height of Christian marriage (Eph. 5:22–23).

The Apostle points to the Divine institution of marriage: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). The depth of the unity of both spouses extends to the point that they lose their limited individual qualities and each becomes the

possessor of mutual completeness – the two of them constitute one body.

Marriage is also a sacrament, a mystery, the prototype of which is the mystery of the union of Christ and the Church: "This is a great mystery; I speak concerning Christ and the Church" (Eph. 5:32). After all, each member of the marital union before marriage is already a member of the body of Christ, i.e. the Church. Of course, the spouses, as one new being, "one flesh", are attached to Christ. Marriage as a sacrament consists in the fact that the grace of Christ, which united a person with Christ in baptism, now unites, blesses and sanctifies the spouses in the image of the union of Christ and the Church.

Having in mind this high significance of Christian marriage, the Apostle defines the duties of spouses. For the real practical life of spouses, the Apostle commands wives to obey, and husbands to love (Eph. 5:22-28). This is understandable: after all, if marriage is an image of the union of Christ and the Church, then the attitude of the wife to her husband should be similar to the attitude of the Church to Christ. The Church is in obedience to God, and God proved His love for the Church by giving His only begotten Son, Who "gave Himself to her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:25-26), i.e., by baptism.

The mystery of the new life in the Church also determines the relationship of spouses to each other: The Apostle commanded the wife to love her husband as a member of a single marital

union, and to fear him as her head. The husband received the obligation not only to love his wife, but also to arrange her life (Eph. 5:29).

This is where puzzling questions arise:

a) Should not husbands submit to their wives? Yes, they should, because the Apostle commanded everyone to submit to one another in the fear of God (Eph. 5:21). Where there is the fear of God, there is mutual agreement, peace, love, and mutual obedience. But since wives tend to be burdened by their husbands' headship over them, they are reminded of submission. And husbands tend to abuse their power over their wives, so the Apostle reminds them of love;

b) How to understand "let the wife fear" her husband? As respect for the husband, combined with fear of offending him and thereby diminishing mutual love.

Blessed Jerome translated "let the wife honor" her husband in the Vulgate (in the Greek original, *jobhta* is used, from *jobew* – to frighten, to scare). After all, a wife should see in her husband not just a cohabitant, but a head appointed by God, rising in her mind to the awareness of the primacy of Christ over herself. Bewilderment arises from forgetting that the family is, first of all, a church unit.

Thus, for a marriage to be happy, it must be between believers who can pray together and receive God's answers together. Access to the church as the body of Christ is baptism.

So now baptism, similar to this image, not the washing away

of fleshly impurity, but the promise to God of a good conscience, saves us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Who, having ascended into heaven, is on the right hand of God: and to whom angels and authorities and powers were made subject. (1 Pet. 3:21,22)

In this letter, Paul outlines the coordinate system in which a Christian and his family live, and speaks of hierarchical relationships as a guarantee of preserving a marriage and a pledge of human happiness.

When we join the church, we do not lose our individuality, but we sacrifice our egoism in order to live and fulfill God's commandments and God's will.

Mutual love and mutual respect, based on a relationship with God, are the key to our happy family life, the preservation of our marriage and the foundation for the creation and growth of our faith.

May the Almighty bless you in your search for truth.

With respect and prayers

Rustam Nasyrov.

Vision for the year

# **The need for constant growth of faith and its implementation in relationships with people**

The purpose of the sermon is to deepen the understanding of the essence of Christianity and the application of faith in people's lives.

1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, our beloved Philemon and fellow worker,

2 And to Apphia, our beloved sister, and to Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the church in your home:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I thank my God, always remembering you in my prayers,

5 hearing of your love and faith which you have for the Lord Jesus and for all the saints,

6 that the fellowship of your faith may be effective in the knowledge of every good thing that is in you in Christ Jesus.

7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because through you, brother, the hearts of the saints are refreshed.

8 Therefore, having great boldness in Christ to command you what is right,

9 For love's sake I rather ask, none other than I, Paul the elder, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ;

10 I ask you for my son Onesimus, whom I begot in my bonds:

11 He was once useless to you, but now he is useful to you and me; I return him;

12 You accept it as my heart.

13 I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might serve me in your place in the chains for the gospel;

14 But without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your good deed would not be by compulsion, but voluntary.

15 For perhaps he went away for a time, so that you might receive him permanently,

16 not as a slave, but above a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, and much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

17 So if you have fellowship with me, receive him as me.

18 If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, hold it against me.

19 I, Paul, have written with my own hand: I will repay; I do not tell you that you owe me even yourselves.

20 So, brother, let me profit by you in the Lord; rest my heart in the Lord.

21 Trusting in your obedience, I wrote to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

22 And at the same time prepare a room for me, for I hope that through your prayers I will be granted to you.

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner for Christ Jesus, greets you,

24 Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.

25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.  
Amen.

(Phil.1:1-25)

In life we are constantly faced with the need to believe. We go to work and wait for payday, believing that with the money we receive not in gold and paper but in electronic form we will be able to buy part of what we need, someone will be able to buy everything we need and even more.

When we get married, we believe that our relationship will last for a long time, and will improve and deepen. Although, this does not always happen.

As members of the church, we believe in our salvation and forgiveness of our sins and strive to act according to biblical teaching.

So, we can state the following:

1. Faith is the foundation of human life and society. When faith in a person or in institutions of power is lost, relationships are destroyed.

2. A happy family life can be built on trust, when it is absent, the relationship also collapses.

3. The life of the church and believers is built on the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ, His love for us, sinful people, and His substitutionary sacrifice for us on the cross of Calvary.

For a healthy and lasting relationship, our faith must grow and develop.

What growth of faith does Paul expect from Philemon, to

whom the epistle of the same name is addressed, and what growth of faith does God expect from us, believers?

Someone might object: "My life is not built on faith, but on material well-being. I have certain assets, and I manage them correctly."

But in addition to material assets, we need time to properly manage our lives and property, but time is not in our control. If you remember, Jesus says this about a person who has removed the factor of God from his life, who gives time to a person's life – a madman.

Let us consider the cultural and historical context of our message to understand what God is speaking to us through it today, and what He expects from us today, what we must do to grow and develop our faith.

The author of the Epistle to Philemon is the Apostle Paul (1:1).

The message is addressed to Philemon and all believers.

This letter was written around 60 AD.

Philemon is the shortest of all Paul's writings and addresses the issue of slavery. It is clear from this letter that Paul was in prison when he wrote it.

Philemon was a slave owner who also ran a church in his home. During Paul's ministry in Ephesus, Philemon likely visited the city, heard the apostle preach, and became a Christian.

The slave Onesimus robbed his master, Philemon, and ran away, heading to Rome to Paul. Onesimus was still Philemon's

property, and Paul wrote to smooth the way for his return to his master.

Through Paul's testimony, Onesimus became a Christian (Philemon 10) and Paul asked Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ, not just as a slave.

The events that take place in the New Testament take place against the backdrop of a slave society. In this historical period, this was the main socio-economic formation of society.

We can reconstruct the circumstances surrounding the writing of the letter by connecting the contents of the letter with the text of Paul's Epistle to the Colossians. Philemon was most likely a resident of Colossae (cf. Col. 4:17 with Phil. 2), converted to Christianity by the Apostle Paul (v. 19). One of his slaves, Onesimus, had run away (vv. 15-16), and he very likely took some of his master's property with him (v. 18).

Slaves at that time did not represent a humanistic but only an economic value. A slave could be bought, sold, punished or killed, he and his family were property.

The message is a personal letter with elements of an IOU.

Outline of the Epistle to Philemon

I. GREETING (vv. 1-3)

II. PAUL'S GRATITUDE AND PRAYER FOR PHILEMON (vv. 4-7)

III. PAUL'S REQUEST FOR ONISIMUS (Verses 8-20)

IV. CONCLUSION (Articles 21-25)

This epistle is the smallest in the New Testament, but it is the cornerstone and foundation for understanding the need to grow our faith.

Philemon's faith had reached a high level, and good news of this reached the apostle Paul. Paul desired the growth of Philemon's faith and ministry, and rejoiced at the fruits that Philemon bore, to whose salvation Paul had contributed his share.

1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, our beloved Philemon and fellow worker,

2 And to Apphia, our beloved sister, and to Archippus, our fellow soldier, and to the church in your home:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I thank my God, always remembering you in my prayers, 5 hearing of your love and faith which you have for the Lord Jesus and for all the saints,

6 that the fellowship of your faith may be effective in the knowledge of every good thing that is in you in Christ Jesus.

7 For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because through you, brother, the hearts of the saints are refreshed.

8 Therefore, having great boldness in Christ to command you what is right,

9 For love's sake I rather ask, none other than I, Paul the elder, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ;

10 I ask you for my son Onesimus, whom I begot in my bonds:

11 He was once useless to you, but now he is useful to you and me; I return him;

12 You accept it as my heart.

13 I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might serve me in your place in the chains for the gospel;

14 But without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your good deed would not be by compulsion, but voluntary.

15 For perhaps he went away for a time, so that you might receive him permanently,

16 not as a slave, but above a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, and much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

17 So if you have fellowship with me, receive him as me.

18 If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, hold it against me.

19 I, Paul, have written with my own hand: I will repay; I do not tell you that you owe me even yourselves.

20 So, brother, let me profit by you in the Lord; rest my heart in the Lord.

21 Trusting in your obedience, I wrote to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

22 And at the same time prepare a room for me, for I hope that through your prayers I will be granted to you.

23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner for Christ Jesus, greets you,

24 Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.

25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Amen.

(Phil.1:1-25)

Detailed outline of the letter to Philemon

I Paul writes about his situation and greets the addressee

A He writes not as an apostle, but as a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

B Greets on behalf of himself and his employees

Greetings to Philemon and his family (house church)

II Paul thanks God for Philemon

A Paul constantly prays for those with whom he ministers.

B Good news reaches Paul about Philemon's ministry

Paul addresses Philemon to strengthen his faith

D Filimon's faith has reached a high level

III Paul wants to take it to a new level

A "Has the boldness to command" Philemon

B Writes about the motives and basis of his request

S Appeals with a request for the runaway slave of Philemon

– Onesimus

D He asks to accept him not as a slave, but as a brother.

IV Paul does not violate social foundations and laws, he fills them with new meaning

And Onesimus is now not only a slave, but also a brother.

B Philemon is in debt to Paul, just as we are in debt to God.

Paul identifies Onesimus with himself and with his heart.

D Pavel guarantees compensation for damages from Onisim

V Pavel will certify the “IOU” with his signature

A Paul reminds us of Philemon's debt

B Paul motivates him to obedience

Pavel promises to come soon

D Conveys greetings from his staff.

What is important at this stage for Philemon, and what might be important for us, reading these lines today?

We, each person, me, have people we have given up on. We don't want to communicate with them, we don't want to have anything in common with them, due to the circumstances we consider communication with them impossible, not useful and even unprofitable. Philemon had the same attitude towards the runaway slave Onesimus.

All he wanted to do with Onesimus was to punish him. And by law he would have been absolutely right, Onesimus was his property, his slave, Philemon had suffered financial damage from him, and wanted compensation, if not financial, then at least moral.

And you and I have people with whom we have no great desire to communicate.

The problem is that you and I were just as worthless, “written off,” and maybe even worse people, with whom no one wanted to communicate.

What did God do for you and me? He gave His only Spiritual Son, Jesus Christ, to take away our sins so that we could freely come to God and communicate with Him.

For this communion, faith is necessary, which God gives, and by which we are saved, and by which we have communion with God.

At some point, this is enough for us. And we see good changes and good fruits of this communication in our lives. As it was in the life of Philemon. But Paul wants Philemon to accept Onesimus too, no longer as a slave, but as a beloved brother.

If we want our relationship with God to deepen, we need to change our attitude toward those “bad” people who were in our lives, but today we consider communication with them impossible. I’m not saying that we should buy them an expensive gift and rush over and lay the latest phone at their feet or invite them over and treat them to a delicious dinner. No, it’s enough for us to remove from our mental list that big fat cross we put next to their name and phone number.

For us today it is enough to start praying for them so that God will give us the opportunity to restore our relationship with them, and to pray for ourselves so that we can change, so that we can forgive them and start restoring our relationship with them.

Just call them and find out how their life is, what they live on, do they have anything to eat?

Why is this important to you and me? It is important for several reasons:

1. It enables our faith to continue to grow and bear good fruit in our lives.
2. It gives people we consider “written off” the opportunity to

recover and get a “second” chance.

3. It reminds us of what we were like and how hard it was for us, and it will keep us from losing or questioning our present relationship with God, which was given to us not deservedly, but only by the grace of God, and through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God.

May the Almighty bless you in your search for truth.

With God's love, respect and prayers for you,

Rustam Nasyrov.

# 2024 Plan – Prayer for the Worst Person

January has already flown by unnoticed, and although the echoes of the New Year and Christmas holidays are still heard, the Christmas trees have not yet been removed everywhere, the year has already confidently come into its own, the daylight hours have already increased by almost one hour, the eye and hand are getting used to writing these four numbers – 2024, and it is time for you and me to look around and understand the spiritual atmosphere and spiritual tasks for believers – Christians in this difficult year and in our difficult times. Let us turn to the texts of the Bible to better understand our task for this year.

21 If thine enemy be hungry, feed him bread: and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

22 For by doing this you are heaping burning coals on his head, and the Lord will repay you. (Prov. 25:21-22)

38 You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

39 But I say to you, Do not resist an evil person. But whoever strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40 And whoever wants to sue you and take your shirt, give him your cloak also;

41 And whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 Give to him who asks you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

43 You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

44 But I say to you: love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

45 That you may be sons of your Father in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans do the same?

47 And if you greet only your brothers, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

48 Therefore be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matt. 5:38-48)

Relationships with God provide the opportunity to build other relationships with people of this world, namely:

A Do not repay evil with evil

B Respond to evil with good deeds

C Do not conflict over property issues

D Do not conflict over political issues

E Do not refuse to help those in need

F Help those who are unfriendly to us

G We can respond to hurt differently

For the people of this world, it is not only and not so much

words that are important, but practical actions and the daily life of believers. They do not listen to us so much as they look at how our words relate to our lives and our deeds.

How can we be effective in this new year 2024 and how can we reach as many people as possible with the good news of the Gospel? We can do this by starting to pray for the worst person around us.

The concept of “loving your enemies” is a principle often associated with religious and moral teachings, particularly Christian theology as taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. However, there are various arguments against this principle from different perspectives. Here are a few:

#### 1. Pragmatic arguments:

- – Self-preservation: It is natural for humans to want to protect themselves from those who wish them harm. Love involves a certain level of vulnerability that may not be wise in the presence of enemies.

- – Justice: Some argue that loving your enemies can prevent justice from being done. Wrong people should be held accountable and punished, not offered love and forgiveness.

#### 2. Psychological arguments:

- – Emotional Authenticity: It is psychologically unhealthy or inauthentic to have positive feelings for someone who has caused harm. This can lead to internal conflict or denial of one's true emotions.

- – Trust: Trust is the foundation of love, and trusting someone

who is considered an enemy may be impractical or impossible because their actions demonstrate hostility or harm.

### 3. Social and cultural arguments:

- – Social Cohesion: From a social perspective, excessive love for enemies can undermine group solidarity and in-group defense. Favor for one's community or nation may sometimes require a tough stance toward opponents.

- – Cultural norms: In some cultures, honor and retribution are more important than forgiveness and love, especially for one's enemies, since this approach is important for maintaining social order and containing aggression.

### 4. Philosophical and ethical arguments:

- – Moral Reciprocity: The concept of reciprocity is central to many ethical systems, which suggest that one should treat others as they treat oneself. Loving someone who does not reciprocate may be considered morally inappropriate.

- – Deontological views: Some philosophical views argue that certain actions or roles require specific responses. For example, a judge or a soldier must adhere to principles of justice or protection rather than personal loyalties.

### 5. Evolutionary arguments:

- – Survival mechanism: Evolutionarily, mistrust or even hostility toward strangers or those who signaled danger may have been critical to survival. Showing affection in such circumstances may contradict deeply ingrained survival mechanisms.

### 6. Political realism:

· – Strategic Interests: In international relations, the notion of loving one's enemies is often considered unrealistic. States act in their own interests, and maintaining power often requires a cautious or even confrontational stance toward adversaries.

#### 7. Risk of exploitation:

· – Encouraging Abuse: There is a concern that this principle can be exploited by unscrupulous people. Offering love and unconditional forgiveness can encourage enemies to continue their harmful behavior without fear of retribution or consequences.

These arguments come from a variety of perspectives and touch on the complexity of human relationships, be they personal, social, or international. While the ideal of loving one's enemies may be intended to create a more peaceful and forgiving world, counter-arguments highlight the potential problems and downsides of universally applying such a principle.

Let us consider the historical aspect of our passage in order to form a correct idea of the idea laid down by Jesus Christ in His Sermon on the Mount – the new law of the New Testament.

This book is known as the Gospel of Matthew because it was written by the apostle of the same name. The style of the book is what you would expect from someone who was once a tax collector. Matthew shows great interest in record-keeping (18:23–24; 25:14–15). The book is extremely orderly and concise. Rather than writing chronologically, Matthew organizes this gospel around six themes.

As a tax collector, Matthew had a skill that made his job even more exciting for Christians. Tax collectors had to be able to take shorthand notes, which essentially meant that Matthew could record a person's words as they spoke them, word for word. This ability means that the words of Matthew's Gospel are not only inspired by the Holy Spirit, but must also be factual transcripts of some of Christ's sermons. For example, the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in chapters 5–7, is almost certainly an accurate record of that great message.

The book is addressed to a Jewish audience, since the majority of the early apostolic church were Jews who had converted from Judaism and knew the Law.

The Apostle Matthew wrote this book in the early days of the Church, probably around 50 AD. This was a time when most Christians were Jews, so Matthew's focus on the Jewish perspective in this Gospel is understandable.

Matthew tried to prove to the Jews that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah. More than any other gospel, Matthew quotes from the Old Testament to show how Jesus fulfilled the words of the Jewish prophets. Matthew describes Jesus' descent from David in detail, and uses many forms of speech that were more natural to the Jews. Matthew's love and concern for his people is evident in his careful approach to telling the gospel story.

The Gospel of Matthew, one of the first books of the New Testament, presents readers with many historical questions in its fifth chapter. Commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount,

this chapter contains some of Jesus' most famous teachings and addresses various controversial topics that were prevalent at the time it was written. By examining the historical context and key themes of Matthew 5, we can gain a deeper understanding of the issues early Christians faced and how their teachings were shaped by the socio-political climate.

One of the major themes of Matthew 5 is the relationship between Judaism and emerging Christianity. Matthew's Gospel was written primarily for a Jewish audience with the intent of demonstrating how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies and teachings of the Hebrew Bible. Matthew 5 reflects this intent by showing Jesus as a new Moses, giving a new set of instructions from the mountain, just as Moses received the Ten Commandments. Matthew 5 can thus be seen as a bridge between older Jewish laws and emerging Christian theology, with Jesus reinterpreting and developing Jewish teachings.

In this context, one of the historical problems is the role of the Pharisaic interpretation of Jewish law at that time. The Pharisees were a sect within Judaism that placed great emphasis on observing the smallest details of religious laws. In Matthew 5:20, Jesus says, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will in no way enter the kingdom of heaven." This statement shows a contradiction between the teachings of Jesus and the strict interpretation of Jewish law by the Pharisees. It implies that personal righteousness and inner morality are more important

than simply following religious precepts.

Additionally, Matthew 5 addresses the issue of violent resistance and the Roman occupation of Palestine in the first century. In verses 38–42, Jesus speaks out against retaliation and calls on his followers to turn the other cheek and go the extra mile. This pacifist message reflects the historical context of Roman oppression, as many Jews engaged in armed rebellion in pursuit of liberation. By advocating nonviolence, Jesus promoted an idea of resistance that was unique to his time and place.

Another historical issue in Matthew 5 is the attitude toward women and divorce. At the time, women were often considered the property of their husbands, and it was relatively easy for men to obtain a divorce. However, in verses 31-32, Jesus challenges this system by emphasizing the sanctity of marriage and condemning divorce except in cases of sexual immorality. This teaching would have had a direct impact on the status and rights of women in Jewish society, calling on men to maintain the integrity of their marriages and empowering women in the process.

It is worth noting that some scholars argue that Matthew 5 may contain later Christian interpretations and interpolations aimed at addressing issues of relevance to the early Church. However, the historical context of Jewish-Roman relations and the sociocultural conditions of the first century played a significant role in shaping Matthew's presentation of Jesus' teaching.

In conclusion, the historical questions presented in Matthew 5 shed light on the challenges faced by early Christians and provide insight into the religious, social, and political dynamics of the time. Whether discussing the relationship between Judaism and nascent Christianity, examining Roman oppression and violent resistance, or challenging gender inequality, this chapter of Matthew remains a thought-provoking and historically significant text.

### Geographical Issues in Matthew Chapter 5

The Gospel of Matthew, one of the four canonical Gospels of the New Testament, is a rich source of moral instruction and religious doctrine. In chapter 5, known as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus delivers a profound message to his disciples and the crowd gathered around him. Although the chapter focuses on the spiritual significance of the teaching, there are some geographical aspects that can be analyzed to better understand the context and potential implications.

One of the geographical aspects that can be seen in Matthew 5 is the location of the sermon. The chapter begins with Jesus going up a mountain and sitting down, which indicates a significant difference in altitude between Jesus and his audience. The reference to Jesus going up a mountainside suggests that he may have delivered this sermon in an elevated location, perhaps reflecting the prominence of Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments. This connection highlights the importance of Jesus' teaching and positions him as a new

authority figure.

Another geographical element in this chapter is the mention of the land of Israel and its various regions. Throughout his speech, Jesus uses metaphors and examples that would resonate with people familiar with the local geography. He mentions the city of Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, as well as Galilee and Judea, two prominent regions. By mentioning these specific places, Jesus helps his audience relate and understand his teaching in a more immediate context.

Understanding the geographic elements in Matthew's Gospel can provide valuable insight into the context and possible meaning of Jesus' teaching in chapter 5. Using local landmarks, natural phenomena, and geographic features, Jesus creates a compelling and powerful message for his audience. These geographic features add depth and enhance the overall meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, ensuring that its powerful teaching resonates not only in the spiritual world but also in the physical world in which it was delivered.

### Cultural Moments in Matthew Chapter 5

The Gospel of Matthew, part of the New Testament, is not only a religious text, but also an important cultural document that provides insight into the customs, beliefs, and social norms of the time. Chapter 5, known as the Sermon on the Mount, is especially rich in cultural moments that shed light on the values and customs of the ancient world.

One of the notable cultural moments in this chapter is the

reference to the "salt of the earth" in verse 13. In ancient times, salt was a highly prized commodity used not only to season food but also to preserve it. The reference to being the "salt of the earth" was meant to resonate with the audience, conveying the idea of importance or value to society.

Additionally, in verse 14, Jesus calls His followers "the light of the world." Light had great symbolic significance in ancient cultures, often representing knowledge, truth, and righteousness. By likening His followers to light, Jesus used a familiar cultural symbol to convey the meaning of living with moral integrity and goodness.

Another culturally significant point in this chapter is Jesus' teaching on the Law in verses 17-20. In ancient Jewish culture, the Law, or Torah, was central as a guide for righteous living. Jesus' interpretation of the Law and his call for followers to surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees would have been a radical and thought-provoking concept for his audience.

Additionally, in verses 21-48, Jesus addresses various social and ethical issues such as anger, adultery, swearing, and loving one's enemies. These teachings provide valuable insight into the cultural norms and moral expectations of the time, and how Jesus challenged these norms.

In conclusion, the cultural moments in Matthew 5 provide insight into the values, beliefs, and social context of the time. By understanding the cultural background of these teachings, we can gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and impact of

Jesus' words in their historical and cultural context.

Let us also consider the literary context.

The Gospel of Matthew is written in the genre of biography, which was widespread at that historical time. Around the same time, Josephus Flavius's "The Jewish War" was written.

Outline of the Gospel of Matthew.

I. The Presentation of the King (1:1 – 4:11)

A. His genealogy (1:1-17)

B. His Coming (1:18 – 2:23)

B. The Messiah-King is represented by His forerunner (3:1-12)

G. The King Receiving Recognition from Above (3:13 – 4:11)

II. The Messages Brought by the King (4:12 – 7:29)

A. The Beginning of His Sermons (4:12-25)

B. Continuation of His Sermons (Chapters 5-7)

III. Evidence of the King's Credibility (8:1 – 11:1)

A. His Power Over Diseases (8:1-15)

B. His power over the forces of evil (8:16-17,28-34)

B. His power over people (8:18-22; 9:9)

D. His power over nature (8:23-27) D. His power to forgive (9:1-8)

E. His Authority Over Human Traditions (9:10-17)

G. His power over death (9:18-26) 3. His ability to turn darkness into light (9:27-31)

I. Again about His ability to cast out demons (9:32-34)

K. His right and ability to empower others (9:35 – 11:1)

#### IV. The Challenge to the Authority of the King (11:2 – 16:12)

A. Expressed in the opposition of John the Baptist to Him

(11:2-19)

B. As seen from His condemnation of the cities (11:20-30)

B. As seen from the controversies about His authority (chapter

12)

G. As seen from the "change of status" of the Kingdom

(13:1-52)

D. How it is seen from different events (13:53 – 16:12)

V. The Education and Encouragement of the King's Disciples

(16:13 – 20:34)

A. Revelation of the King's Coming Rejection (16:13 – 17:13)

B. Instructions in Light of the Coming Rejection (17:14 –

20:34)

VI. The King's Proposal Reaches Its Climax (Chapters 21-27)

A. The King declares Himself (21:1-22)

B. Confrontation of the "religious" with the Tsar (21:23 –

22:46)

V. The People Reject the King (Chapter 23)

G. Prophetic Predictions of the King (Chapters 24-25)

D. The People Reject the King (Chapters 26-27)

VII. Confirmation of the Immortality of the King (Chapter

28)

A. The Empty Tomb (28:1-8)

B. His Appearance (28:9-10)

B. The "formal" explanation given by the chief priests

(28:11-15)

D. The King's Official Commission (28:16-20)

Our passage is found in section 2B, which contains the sermons of Jesus Christ as recorded verbatim by Matthew.

Our passage is a conclusion, from the previously given imperatives, of how believers in Jesus Christ must act, and how we can achieve this.

The plan of our passage

I Relationships with God make it possible to build other relationships with people in this world

A Do not repay evil with evil

B Respond to evil with good deeds

C Do not conflict over property issues

D Do not conflict over political issues

E Do not refuse to help those in need

F Help those who are unfriendly to us

G We can respond to hurt differently

21 If thine enemy be hungry, feed him bread: and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

22 For by doing this you are heaping burning coals on his head, and the Lord will repay you. (Prov. 25:21-22)

38 You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

39 But I say to you, Do not resist an evil person. But whoever strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40 And whoever wants to sue you and take your shirt, give

him your cloak also;

41 And whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 Give to him who asks you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

43 You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

44 But I say to you: love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

45 That you may be sons of your Father in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans do the same?

47 And if you greet only your brothers, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

48 Therefore be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matt. 5:38-48)

This passage calls for a level of engagement with enemies that is unattainable in this world. This does not mean that we cannot use the military or respond to aggression with appropriate force. Jesus is speaking here about our daily interactions with people who are not always pleasant to us, who may be prejudiced and distrustful of us.

So our main goal for 2024 is to pray for the worst person in our circle, the one who has the most negative influence on our

lives. We need to pray for his repentance, for the Lord to give us wisdom on how to properly interact with him, how we can heap “burning coals” on his head, how we can have a good influence on his way of thinking and show him the true love of Christ and His mercy. And as someone prayed for us when we were still sinners, we will be able to effectively tell people about Salvation and the imminent coming of Jesus Christ to judge this world.

May the Almighty bless you in your search for Truth.

With respect, prayers for you and God's love

Rustam Kodash Nasyrov

February. Personal Relationship with God

# How does meeting God change a person's thinking and life?

Without a doubt, a person must change during his life. It is sad if a person's views at 20, 30 and 50 years of age remain stagnant.

We are not talking about changing life principles, conscience and honor.

The biggest problem is how to find Him. Some people, having met God, simply did not recognize Him, or passed Him by, or even considered Him a deceiver, or not who He really is.

Let us look, using the example of the Holy Scriptures – the Bible, at how a person's views and thinking change as a result of meeting with God, and what changes bring the greatest benefit to a person and his immortal soul.

1 Nevertheless, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For it is not grievous for me to write to you of these things, but it is of edification to you.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of circumcision,

3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

4 though I have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has confidence in the flesh, I more so,

5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the

tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, according to the law a Pharisee,

6 In zeal he persecutes the church of God, but in righteousness according to the law he is blameless.

7 But whatever things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ's sake.

8 And I count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whose sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death,

11 to attain the resurrection of the dead.

12 I do not say this because I have already attained or am already perfected; but I press on, that I too may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and straining forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:1-14)

We can have different degrees of religiosity and different

levels of education and familiarity with the Bible, most often we fall into the category of people who leave God, like the prodigal son, or into the category of religious fanatics who think and decide for God, both of which are wrong. Only personal relationships with God can give complete joy.

The end result of meeting God is joy.

Paul could rely on external signs, but he did not

Personal relationships give faith, righteousness, strength for the resurrection and victory over death.

Of all the options, the most difficult is to begin building a personal relationship with Christ, but it is the most fruitful.

Why do people choose to either leave God or decide for Him, but do not want to build a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

Here are five reasons why some people may not want to build a personal relationship with Christ:

1. **Doubt and distrust:** Many people may have doubts about the existence of God or the truth of religious teachings. This may be due to personal experiences, philosophical questions, or scientific views.

2. **Fear of Change:** Building a relationship with Christ may require changes in lifestyle, values, and priorities. Some people may be afraid of losing their lifestyle or facing internal conflicts.

3. **Negative Experiences:** Some people may have negative experiences with religious communities or church representatives, which leads to mistrust and reluctance to deepen their relationship with God.

4. Cultural and Social Factors: In some cultures or social groups, there may be negative attitudes toward religion or Christianity that prevent people from opening up to building a personal relationship with Christ.

5. Personal Grief or Suffering: People who have experienced difficult trials such as loss of loved ones, illness, or other suffering may feel anger or disappointment toward God, making it difficult to develop a close relationship with Him.

These reasons may vary from person to person and depend on individual experiences, circumstances, and the person's own choices.

Let us look at the historical aspect of our passage so that we can better understand this issue.

To do this, let us conduct a historical and cultural analysis of the letter to the Philippians.

We need to research the history of the writing of this book of the New Testament.

The Epistle to the Philippians, one of the New Testament epistles, is traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul. He wrote the letter while in prison, probably in Rome, around 60–62 CE.

In the letter, Paul expresses his gratitude to the Philippians for their support and cooperation in the work of the gospel, and shares his thoughts on joy, humility, and Christian unity. The letter also contains the famous words that “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

Although most scholars agree on Pauline authorship, some

scholars have expressed doubts and proposed other theories about the origin and author of the letter. However, the traditional view remains the dominant one in the Christian tradition.

The addressees of the Epistle to the Philippians are Christians living in the city of Philippi, which was located in Macedonia (modern-day Greece). Philippi was founded as a Roman colony and became an important trading and strategic center.

Paul founded the church in Philippi during his second missionary journey (around 49-50 CE), and he maintained contact with this community, which is reflected in his letter. In the letter, Paul expresses gratitude for their support, encourages them in their faith, and calls for unity and humility.

The Epistle to the Philippians was written by the Apostle Paul around 61-62 AD, during his imprisonment in Rome. It is one of the so-called "prison letters" written by Paul while he was in custody.

The purpose of the letter to the Philippians is to address several key issues:

1. **Gratitude:** Paul expresses his gratitude to the Philippians for their support and generosity, especially for the financial help they provided him in his needs.
2. **Strengthening Faith:** Paul encourages the Philippians to remain steadfast in their faith and continue to grow spiritually. He emphasizes the importance of unity and harmony among believers.
3. **The Example of Christ:** Paul uses the example of Jesus

Christ as a model of humility and service, calling on the Philippians to follow this example in their lives.

4. Encouragement: He encourages them in their difficulties and sufferings, reminds them of the joy that comes from faith and the hope of salvation.

5. Warning: Paul warns against the influence of false teachers and calls for caution in dealing with those who distort the true teaching about Christ.

In the third chapter of Philippians, the Apostle Paul touches on several key historical and spiritual points that help us understand the context of his letter:

1. Warning Against False Teachers: Paul begins the chapter by warning against “false teachers” (Philippians 3:2), calling them “dogs” who “work according to the flesh,” and warns against circumcision. This indicates that there were groups in the early church that insisted on Jewish rituals such as circumcision, which could create divisions among believers.

2. Paul's Personal Testimony: Paul shares his personal experiences and accomplishments (Philippians 3:4-6), emphasizing that as a Pharisee and law-keeper, he achieved much in the eyes of men. However, he considers all this "nonsense" compared to knowing Christ.

3. The value of knowing Christ: Paul says that he considers all his previous achievements as nothing because of the excellence of knowing Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:8). This highlights the essence of the Christian faith—a personal relationship with

Christ is more important than any human merit.

4. Sharing in the sufferings of Christ: Paul speaks of a desire to know Christ and share in His sufferings (Philippians 3:10). This indicates that suffering is part of the Christian experience and ministry.

5. Pressing on to the goal: At the end of the chapter, Paul says that he presses on to the goal—the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). This expresses his determination and single-mindedness in his spiritual life.

6. Call to Imitation: Paul calls the Philippians to follow his example and points to those who live according to God's commandments (Philippians 3:17). This emphasizes the importance of mentoring and example in the Christian community.

In the third chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul does not focus on geographical moments, as may be the case in other epistles, but some contexts can be identified that are related to the geography and history of the city of Philippi:

1. The City of Philippi: Philippi was an important city in Macedonia founded by Philip II of Macedon. It was a strategically located city on a trade route, which contributed to its economic prosperity. The city also had the status of a Roman colony, which influenced its culture and civil rights.

2. Roman Citizenship: In the chapter, Paul mentions his Roman citizenship (Philippians 3:5), which was a significant factor in his ministry and advocacy. Roman citizenship provided

certain rights and privileges that could be used to protect the Christian community in Philippi.

3. **Social Structure:** Philippi was a multicultural city with a diverse population, including Romans, Greeks, and local Macedonians. This cultural diversity could have influenced the dynamics of communication and interaction among believers, something Paul takes into account in his letter.

4. **Fellowship with Believers:** Paul refers to the Philippians as his “beloved” (Philippians 3:1), emphasizing his close relationship with this community. This indicates the importance of the local church in this particular geographical context.

In the third chapter of Philippians, the Apostle Paul touches on several cultural issues that are important for understanding his letter and the context in which it was written:

1. **Jewish Heritage:** Paul begins the chapter by mentioning his Jewish heritage (Philippians 3:5-6), which highlights his connection to Jewish culture and tradition. He lists his accomplishments as a Pharisee, which speaks to the high status and respect he had in Jewish society.

2. **Confronting False Teachers:** Paul warns the Philippians against “false brethren” and “false circumcision,” indicating the existence of hostile groups who were trying to impose legalistic demands (Philippians 3:2). This reflects the conflict between Jewish traditions and the new Christian faith that was relevant in the culture of the time.

3. **The concept of “citizenship”:** In 3:20, Paul speaks of

“our citizenship in heaven.” This statement has deep cultural significance, especially in the context of the Roman colony of Philippi, where Roman citizenship was a sign of status and privilege. Paul uses this concept to show that the true identity of believers is not tied to earthly citizenship, but to heavenly citizenship.

4. Values and Priorities: Paul says that he considers all his accomplishments and status as “rubbish” compared to knowing Christ (Philippians 3:8). This demonstrates the change in values that came about as a result of his conversion to Christ, and emphasizes the importance of spiritual values over material or social ones.

5. A Call for Unity and Cooperation: In this chapter, Paul also calls the Philippians to follow his example and strive for unity (Philippians 3:17). This reflects the cultural context of the early Christian community, where unity and support for one another were important aspects of the lives of believers.

The literary context of Philippians includes both internal and external aspects that help us better understand its content and purpose. Here are some key points:

1. Authorship: The letter was written by the apostle Paul, who was the founder of the church in Philippi. This gives the letter a personal touch, as Paul was writing to believers with whom he had a close relationship.

2. Purpose of Writing: The main purpose of the letter is to express gratitude to the Philippians for their support and

donations, and to instruct them in the faith. Paul also seeks to strengthen them spiritually and to call for unity among the believers.

3. The Theme of Joy: One of the central themes of the letter is joy, which permeates all of its chapters. Paul repeatedly encourages the Philippians to rejoice despite their circumstances (e.g. Philippians 4:4). This contrasts with his own conclusion, which highlights the power of Christian joy even in difficult circumstances.

4. Mention of suffering: Paul speaks of his own suffering and trials (Philippians 1:29-30), which is an important aspect of the Christian life. He shows that suffering can be part of the journey of faith and encourages the Philippians to endure hardships with perseverance.

5. Ethical Instructions: The letter contains practical advice and ethical instructions for the life of Christians (e.g. Philippians 2:1-11 on humility and serving one another). Paul emphasizes the importance of unity, love, and mutual assistance.

6. Theology of Christ: The epistle has a strong emphasis on the theology of Christ, including the teaching of His humiliation and ascension (Philippians 2:5-11). This passage is considered one of the earliest hymns about Christ and emphasizes His divinity and role in salvation.

7. Roman Culture: Philippi was a Roman colony, and Paul uses terms and images that would be familiar to Roman citizens. For example, he speaks of “citizenship in heaven” (Philippians

3:20), which would have particular significance for people who were proud of their Roman status.

8. Personal Address: At the end of the letter, Paul expresses personal greetings and thanks (Philippians 4:21-23), which emphasizes his close relationship with the Philippians and makes the letter more intimate and human.

Philippians is a New Testament letter (or epistle) written by the apostles and early Christian leaders to instruct, encourage, and correct believers. Here are some key characteristics of the Philippians genre:

1. Epistolary genre: This is a letter addressed to a specific Christian community (in this case, the church in Philippi). It includes the standard elements of the ancient Greek epistolary form, such as greeting, thanks, body, and conclusion.

2. Exhortation and encouragement: The letter contains instructions on matters of faith, morality, and Christian living. Paul encourages the Philippians to remain steadfast in the faith and to rejoice despite difficulties.

3. Personal Content: The letter contains personal elements, such as expressing gratitude for the support of the Philippians and mentioning his own experiences (such as the conclusion). This gives the letter an intimate and sincere character.

4. Theological Reflections: Like many of Paul's other letters, this letter contains deep theological ideas, including the doctrine of Christ, salvation, and Christian unity.

5. Ethical Calls: Paul emphasizes the practical application of

faith in everyday life, calling for humility, love, and service to one another.

## Outline of the Epistle to the Philippians

### 1. Introduction (1:1-11)

- Greeting (1:1-2)
- Thanksgiving for the Philippians (1:3-5)
- Confidence in completing the task (1:6)
- Prayer for spiritual growth and love (1:7-11)

### 2. The circumstances of writing (1:12-26)

- Preaching the Gospel in Chains (1:12-14)
- Different motives for preaching (1:15-18)
- Joy in Suffering (1:19-26)

### 3. A Call to Unity and Humility (1:27-2:18)

- Call for Unity (1:27-30)
- The example of Christ's humility (2:1-11)
- Call to obedience and holiness (2:12-16)
- Personal example of Paul and Timothy (2:17-18)

### 4. Honor to Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30)

- Plans for sending Timothy (2:19-24)
- Eulogy of Epaphroditus (2:25-30)

### 5. Warning against false teachers (3:1-21)

- Warning about temptations and false teachers (3:1-3)
- Paul's personal testimony of his faith (3:4-11)
- A call to imitation and striving for the goal (3:12-21)

### 6. Conclusion and Instructions (4:1-9)

- A Call for Endurance and Unity (4:1)

- Instructions on joy and prayer (4:4-7)
  - A call to think about good things (4:8-9)
7. Acknowledgments and Closing Words (4:10-23)
- Gratitude for support (4:10-14)
  - Comfort and Confidence in God (4:15-20)
  - The Final Blessing (4:21-23)

Our passage is found in the 5th central section, “Warning about False Teachers.”

In Philippians 3, Paul addresses an important topic concerning false teachers and false ideas of righteousness. Specifically, he warns the Philippians against those who rely on the flesh and external ceremonies instead of true faith in Christ. Let us look more closely at the connection between chapter 3 and the topic of warning against false teachers.

The main points of chapter 3 and their connection with the warning against false teachers:

1. Warning about false teachers (3:1-3):

- Paul begins the chapter with a warning about “flesh keepers,” referring to those who try to justify themselves through law keeping and rituals rather than through faith in Jesus Christ. He calls them “dogs” and “wicked workers,” emphasizing the danger of their teaching.

2. Paul's personal testimony (3:4-11):

- Paul shares his own experience and how he himself, as a Pharisee, had all the outward signs of righteousness, but realized that this meant nothing without faith in Christ. He emphasizes

that true righteousness comes only through faith, not through the works of the law.

### 3. Call to Imitation (3:12-21):

- Paul calls the Philippians to follow his example and strive for spiritual perfection. He emphasizes that true followers of Christ must focus on heavenly values, not earthly ones.

Connection with the topic of warning against false teachers:

- Contrast between true and false righteousness:
- The entire third chapter is built on the contrast between false teachings that emphasize external ceremonies and law-keeping, and true righteousness, which is achieved only through faith in Christ.

- The danger of trusting human traditions:

- Paul shows that relying on human traditions and achievements can distract believers from the true gospel. This warning is also relevant to modern Christianity, where various teachings may arise that emphasize outward manifestations of faith.

- Call for unity in faith:

- In concluding his thought, Paul emphasizes the importance of unity among believers in resisting false teachers and the need to focus on the true goal – knowing Christ.

Thus, Philippians 3 is an important warning against false teachers and illustrates how true faith and righteousness must be based on a personal relationship with Christ, not on outward ceremonies or human achievements.

1 Finally, brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is not difficult for me to write about this again and again, because it will be more reliable for you.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evildoers, beware of "self-mutilators."

3 We who are truly circumcised are you and I, who worship under the Spirit of God, rejoicing in Jesus Christ and not relying on external things,

4 although I can rely on it. If anyone has reason to rely on the external, then especially I do.

5 I was circumcised on the eighth day after birth, and I come from the people of Israel, from the tribe of Benjamin. I am a pure-blooded Jew, and in relation to the Law I am a Pharisee.

6 I zealously persecuted the church, and from the point of view of legal righteousness I am blameless.

7 But whatever I then counted as gain, I now count as loss for Christ's sake.

8 And not only this, but I count all other things as loss compared with the priceless knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ. For his sake I counted all other things in the world as rubbish, and I cast them away for the gain of Christ,

9 so that I might be with Him, no longer having my own righteousness according to the Law, but having the righteousness which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God through faith.

10 I want to know Christ and the power that raised Him, I

want to share His sufferings with Him and become like Him in His death.

11 Then, I hope, I will also attain the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained these things, or have already been perfected, but I press on to win them because Christ Jesus has bought me. (Philippians 3:1-12)

I The end result of meeting the Lord is joy

A. There are people who claim to be "believers"

B. True believers live by the Word

C. Do not rely on external signs

II Paul could rely on external signs

A. Circumcised on the 8th day

B. Comes from the Israelite people

C. Descendant of Benjamin

D. Purebred Jew

E. According to the Law – Pharisee

F. Zealously persecuted the Church

E. According to legalism – blameless

III Personal relationships have the highest priority

A. Faith enables us to build personal relationships.

B. Personal relationships produce righteousness

C. Righteousness gives power to the resurrection

D. Resurrection allows us to pass through death

Philippians 3 plays an important role in the overall structure and theme of the book. Let's look at how it relates to the rest of

the book and its major themes.

## The Main Themes of Philippians

### 1. Joy and gratitude:

- A very prominent theme in the letter is joy despite circumstances. Paul repeatedly emphasizes the importance of joy in the lives of believers (Philippians 1:4, 2:2). Chapter 3 continues this theme, showing that even in the face of false teachers and difficulties, joy can be found in true faith.

### 2. Unity and cooperation:

- Paul calls the Philippians to unity (Philippians 1:27, 2:2). In chapter 3, he emphasizes the importance of remaining united in the true faith and resisting false teachers who could divide the community.

### 3. Righteousness by Faith:

- In chapter three, Paul discusses his own righteousness and shows that it is not based on the law, but on faith in Christ (Philippians 3:9). This theme echoes the overall message that true righteousness comes only through a personal relationship with Jesus.

### 4. Striving for spiritual perfection:

- Paul encourages the Philippians to strive for spiritual growth and perfection (Philippians 3:12-14). This idea of continually striving for a deeper understanding of Christ and his teachings is central to the entire letter.

The connection of the third chapter with the other parts

- Context of the warning:

- Chapter three provides the context for the warning against false teachers that begins in the first part of the letter. This warning reinforces the overall theme of unity and proper understanding of the gospel.

- Paul's personal testimony:

- In chapter three, Paul shares his personal experience, which underlines his authority and sincerity. This testimony helps readers understand that he is not simply theorizing, but sharing what he himself experienced. This creates a connection between his teaching and his life, which is an important aspect of the entire book.

- Closing Calls:

- At the end of the letter, Paul summarizes his thoughts on joy, unity, and righteousness. Chapter three serves as a transition to these final calls, emphasizing the importance of focusing on Christ as the source of life and joy.

Thus, the third chapter of Philippians is the key element of the entire book. Not only does it develop the main themes, but it also serves as a link between Paul's warnings and his call to joy, unity, and spiritual growth. The theme of righteousness through faith and resistance to false teachers makes this letter relevant to all generations of Christians.

Philippians 3 shows us the importance of maintaining a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which not only enables us to maintain faith and get through all the circumstances of life, but also warns us against the other extreme of "legalism" and trying

to earn salvation and gain Christ not by grace but by our own merits. Both can deprive us of the main benefit of the Christian faith – a personal relationship with Christ.

May God bless you in your search for truth. With respect,  
prayers for you and God's love, Rustam Kodash Nasyrov

# **A personal relationship with God is one of the three proofs of the salvation of a person's soul.**

The purpose of the sermon is to gain a Biblical perspective on personal relationships with God and the salvation of the soul.

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way,

20 which He opened again for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 And having a high priest over the house of God,

22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water,

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

24 Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.

25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

26 For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

28 If anyone who rejects the law of Moses is put to death without mercy on the witness stand of two or three witnesses,

29 Of how much worse punishment, do you think, will he be thought worthy who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has treated the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified as an unholy thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

30 We know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge his people."

31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

32 Remember your former days, in which, after you were enlightened, you endured a great fight of sufferings,

33 sometimes being made a spectacle for others in reproaches and tribulations, sometimes taking part in others who were in the same situation;

34 For you had compassion on me in my bonds, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have in heaven a better and more lasting possession.

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

36 For you have need of patience, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise;

37 For yet a little while, a very little while, and He who is coming will come and will not delay.

38 The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my

soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. (Heb. 10:19-39)

From the time of Job to the present day, there have been ongoing debates about the salvation of the soul, how to find it, how to preserve it, will everyone be saved, and the most important question – "am I saved?" Which a person can ask himself, and live in constant fear and doubt, or remain in complacent inaction, believing that this question has been resolved for him (her), and no matter what he (she) does or does not do, he (she) is already saved.

1. The Holy Scripture (the Bible) was given to people so that during their earthly life they could bring their lives into line with God's requirements, and live in accordance with His commandments and through this receive salvation of the soul.

26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse:

27 A blessing if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today,

28 But a curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way that I command you today, and go after other gods which you have not known.

29 When the LORD your God brings you into the land whither you go to possess it, then you shall pronounce the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal:

30 Behold, they are beyond the Jordan, as the sun goes down,

in the land of the Canaanites who live in the plain opposite Gilgal, near the oaks of Moreh.

31 For you are going over the Jordan to go in and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you; and you shall possess it and dwell in it.

32 Therefore be careful to keep all the statutes and laws that I set before you today.

(Deut.11:26-32)

2. A person who believed in God and lived according to His Commandments (the Law of Moses) came to the understanding that he was not able to fulfill the entire Law, and accordingly became guilty, and his salvation came into question.

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says it to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may become guilty before God,

20 For by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets,

22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and upon all who believe, for there is no distinction,

23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

(Rom.3:19-24)

3. Faith in Jesus Christ (personal relationship with Him and life in accordance with the commandments) is the guarantee of our salvation, which we carry out during our earthly life after repentance, and the grace of Jesus Christ covers us when we sin and ask Him for forgiveness.

19 Why then was the law given because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

20 But there is no mediator for one, but God is one.

21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? God forbid! For if a law had been given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

22 But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

23 But before faith came we were kept under guard by the law until faith should be revealed.

24 Therefore the law has become our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after faith came, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus;

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor

free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

(Gal.3:19-29)

Based on our life experience and the above Scriptures, we can make the following statement: (1) A personal relationship with God, (2) living in accordance with the Commandments, and (3) faith in Jesus Christ and his grace (undeserved favor) are the key to maintaining our salvation.

Why are all three components important for the salvation of the soul, and one or two are not enough? Why can we say that only Christianity carries these three components and ensures our salvation?

We can keep the commandments and believe in God and His grace, but without personal relationships we will not change. We need an example for our lives, and then we are able to follow the example and change according to His character. (Example: Saul, Joseph of Arimathea,)

It is possible to have fellowship with God, to hope for His grace, but without the desire to fulfill His commandments, we will inevitably sin and will set a bad example for people who, looking at us, at our life, will think that either our God allows sin, or we do not believe in a Holy, Just and Rewarding God. (Example: Cain, Balaam, Zacchaeus)

We can have a personal relationship with God, try to live

according to the law, but without the grace of Jesus Christ we cannot achieve salvation of the soul. (Example: Moses, Peter, the centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:22), etc.)

Although some include Hebrews in the writings of the Apostle Paul, the identity of the author remains a mystery. Paul's usual greeting, common to his other writings, is absent. In addition, the suggestion that the author of this letter is referring to knowledge and information provided by other eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ (2:3) makes Paul's authorship questionable.

Some scholars attribute the authorship to Luke, while others believe that the epistle was written by Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Philip, or Aquila and Priscilla. Regardless of whose hand held the pen, the Holy Spirit of God is the author of all Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16), so Hebrews speaks with the same canonical authority as the other sixty-five books of the Bible.

In general, the book of Hebrews is concerned with the incredible struggle that accompanies the transition from one religious system to another. There is the pain of breaking old ties, the stress and tension of alienation, the enormous pressure placed on the apostate to return.

But the problem at the center of this Epistle is not simply the transition from an old system to a new one of equal value. No, it was a question of the transition from Judaism to Christianity and, as the author shows, of leaving the shadow for the sake of the substance, the ritual for the sake of the true essence, the preliminary for the sake of the final, the temporary for the sake

of the permanent – in short, the good for the sake of the best.

The Early Church Father Clement quoted from Hebrews in 95 CE. However, internal evidence, such as the fact that Timothy was alive when the letter was written and the lack of any evidence to suggest that the Old Testament sacrificial system ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, indicates that the book was written around 65 CE.

The late Dr. Walter Martin, founder of the Christian Research Institute and author of the best-selling book *The Kingdom of the Cults*, quipped that Hebrews was written by a Jew to other Jews, telling them to stop behaving like Jews. In truth, many early Jewish believers turned to the rites and rituals of Judaism to escape increasing persecution. The letter, then, is an exhortation to persecuted believers to abide in the grace of Jesus Christ.

When a Jew left the faith of his fathers, he was regarded as a renegade and apostate (meshummed), and faced one or more of the following punishments: – disinheritance; – exclusion from the religious brotherhood of Israel; – loss of job; – deprivation of property; – "psychoterror" and physical torture; – becoming an object of public ridicule; – imprisonment; – martyrdom.

There was, of course, a way out. If he renounced Christ and returned to Judaism, he would be spared further persecution. Between the lines of this Epistle we read of some of the arguments that were used to persuade the "renegade" to return to Judaism:

– rich traditions of the prophets;

- the outstanding ministry of angels in the history of the ancient people of God;
- closeness with the famous legislator Moses;
- national ties that connect the Jew with the brilliant military leader Jesus Navin;
- the glory of the Aaronic priesthood;
- The Holy of Holies, the place chosen by God to dwell among His people;
- the covenant of law given by God through Moses; – the divinely ordained structure of the sanctuary and the magnificent curtain;
- services in the sanctuary and especially the ritual on the great Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur is the most important day in the Jewish calendar).

We vividly see before our eyes the image of a Jew who lived at the dawn of our era, describing all the glory of his ancient, ritual-rich religion, and then asking with a contemptuous grin: “And what do you Christians have? We have all this. What do you have? Nothing but a humble upper room and a table with bread and wine on it! Do you really mean to say that you have left all that for this?”

If the letter was sent to Italy, then due to the bloody persecutions unleashed by Nero (64 AD), the date of writing of the Epistle moves to the middle of 64 AD at the latest.

Perhaps no New Testament book places the Old Testament more at the center of attention than Hebrews, which has the

Levitical priesthood as its foundation. Its author continually compares the shortcomings of the Old Testament sacrifices with the perfection in Christ. Where the Old Testament required continual sacrifices and an annual atonement for sin by human priests, the New Testament offers one single sacrifice through Christ (Hebrews 10:10) and direct access to the throne of God for all who are in Him.

This message belongs to the epistolary genre – it is a letter.

Outline of the Epistle to the Hebrews

1. Christ is higher than the prophets and angels (chapter 1, 2)
2. Christ is greater than Moses (3:1 – 4:13)
3. Christ is greater than Aaron (4:14 – 7:28)
4. Christ's Sacrifice is Superior to the Levitical Sacrifices (8:1 – 10:18)
5. A call to strengthen your faith (10:19 – 12:29)

1. Conclusion (Chapter 13)

Detailed plan of section 5:

V. Warning and Exhortation (10:19 – 13:17)

A. Warning Not to Despise Christ (10:19-39)

B. Exhortation to Faith from Old Testament Examples  
(Chapter 11)

B. Exhortation to Hope in Christ (Chapter 12)

D. Exhortation concerning various Christian virtues (13:1-17)

The fifth section is an affirmation of the necessity of holding on to saving faith and not denying Jesus Christ.

That is, Scripture says that there is such a danger and

temptation – to fall away from Christ because of persecution in our life and even under the threat of losing it.

Our passage speaks directly about the need to remain faithful to Him in all situations of life.

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way,

20 which He opened again for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,

21 And having a high priest over the house of God,

22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water,

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

24 Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.

25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

26 For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

28 If anyone who rejects the law of Moses is put to death without mercy on the witness stand of two or three witnesses,

29 Of how much worse punishment, do you think, will he be thought worthy who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has treated the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified as an unholy thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

30 We know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge his people."

31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

32 Remember your former days, in which, after you were enlightened, you endured a great fight of sufferings,

33 sometimes being made a spectacle for others in reproaches and tribulations, sometimes taking part in others who were in the same situation;

34 For you had compassion on me in my bonds, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have in heaven a better and more lasting possession.

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

36 For you have need of patience, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise;

37 For yet a little while, a very little while, and He who is coming will come and will not delay.

38 The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

(Heb.10:19-39)

The plan of our passage

I The Blood of Jesus Christ opened the way to God for us  
But we have boldness, but not audacity, to enter.

B He opened the way for us through the veil (his flesh)

C He is a priest in the house of God

II There are conditions for our entry to God

A It is necessary to come with a sincere heart

B With full faith

C with sprinkling – through confession of sins before God

D having undergone the sacrament of baptism

E keeping the law faithfully, because God is faithful

F it is necessary to love each other and do good deeds

G can't leave meetings

H it is necessary to exhort one another

III If, having known Christ, we sin voluntarily, then the sacrifice does not work

A There is no sacrifice for sins

B There remains the expectation of the Last Judgment  
With the fury of fire and the wrath of God

IV We need to remember past trials

A If we have gone through suffering

B helped others going through suffering

C lost their property because of their faith in Christ

D must remain faithful today

And we need patience and loyalty

V Righteousness can be preserved through faith

And we must not hesitate

B we must stand in faith

C we must achieve and maintain the salvation of the soul

Those who declared their allegiance to the Lord Jesus were met with fierce fanatical opposition. In view of this, true believers were in danger of losing heart and falling into despair. Therefore, they had to be encouraged, encouraged not to lose faith in the promises of God. They must endure everything patiently in view of the coming reward.

Those who were Christians in name only were in danger of apostasy. Having once professed to accept Christ, they could now categorically deny Him and return to ritualistic religion. This was tantamount to trampling underfoot the Son of God, defiling His blood, and insulting the Holy Spirit. There was no repentance or forgiveness for such a deliberate sin. The book of Hebrews warns against this sin again and again. In 2:1 it says that he who commits this sin falls away from the message of Christ; in 3:7-19 it says that he rebels against God, or hardens his heart.

In 6:6 it is called a backslider, or apostate. In 10:25 it is called the sin of forsaking the assembly; in 10:26 it is called willful or deliberate. In 12:16 it is spoken of as selling one's birthright for one meal. Finally, in 12:25 it is called refusing to hear Him who speaks from heaven. But all these warnings are directed against different aspects of the same sin—the sin of apostasy.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is as relevant today as it was at the

dawn of the Church.

We need to be continually reminded of the eternal privileges and blessings that are ours in Christ. We need to be exhorted to endure all things patiently, no matter what difficulties or oppositions we may encounter. All professed Christians need to be warned not to return to ceremonial religion after you have tasted and seen that the Lord is good.

It is important for theology to explain complex concepts in simple terms. So how do we not lose our salvation? Let's imagine that we are standing on the seashore and our task is not to drown in it, what should we do?

1. Don't go too deep. The swimming areas are marked with buoys, and we mustn't swim beyond them – that would be breaking the law.

2. We must put on a life jacket – accept Jesus Christ as our savior and put on His clean clothes, which He gives us after repentance and baptism. This is a picture of keeping the commandments and keeping ourselves clean. If we have sinned, we must confess our sin and sin no more.

3. We must be attentive to the signals given by the lifeguard on the seashore. There may be a black ball – swimming is prohibited. Or he may say to us: “Don't go in, the water is cold today!” That is, we must be attentive to the Bible and to the voice of Jesus Christ, which we hear when we read the Bible, pray, and are in a meeting.

4. We must be considerate of others so that they do not drown.

May the Almighty bless you in your search for Truth.  
With God's love, respect and prayers for you  
Rustam Nasyrov.

# Obedience to Jesus Christ as the main criterion of Christian faith

We think we know what Christianity is. We see the external manifestations: buildings with crosses on the roof, we see people wearing cross-shaped jewelry, we hear words telling us about Jesus Christ and His life and death for the atonement of every person's sins. But what is Christianity really? What is its true manifestation and what should it be in the Divine plan, according to His will? Let us turn to the Holy Scriptures of the Bible for this.

12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them likewise: for this is the Law and the Prophets.

13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are there that go in at it.

14 For strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there are who find it.

15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

16 By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?

17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 So by their fruits you will know them.

21 Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24 Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be likened to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house; but it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it. (Matt. 7:12-27)

Following Christ implies unconditional love for people, i.e.

unconditional good attitude towards each person, regardless of their previous actions. At this moment, a person faces a moral choice – according to justice and the law, they should have applied cruel punishment to him, but they applied mercy, and how should I act further? A moral choice appears in a person – the law or mercy.

Jesus transfers the Law into the realm of desired relationships, where the motivation of fear is replaced by the motivation of love.

A man is known by his fruits

You can build on two foundations: to fulfill or not to fulfill the Word.

A person goes through the following stages of establishing a relationship with Jesus Christ

- learns the requirements of the Law and the consequences of its violation,
- receives grace and forgiveness instead of punishment, faces a moral choice;
- how to live on your own;
- to take revenge or show mercy, if the choice is correct;
- a birth from above occurs – of a new moral person.

Why is being born again connected with an internal moral choice? Can a sinful person make the right moral choice and follow the commandments of Jesus Christ?

Possible counter arguments

Living in obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ

may be seen as an ideal for many believers, but there are counterarguments that can be made against this approach. Here are a few:

1. Individual Freedom: Obedience to commandments can limit personal freedom and autonomy. People may feel forced to follow rules that do not always correspond to their personal beliefs or life circumstances.

2. Contextuality of the Commandments: The commandments were given in a specific historical and cultural context. Some critics argue that their application in the modern world may be inappropriate or outdated.

3. Diversity of Interpretations: Jesus' commands can be interpreted differently depending on one's denomination or personal beliefs. This leads to disagreements and conflicts among believers, which calls into question the universality of these commands.

4. Moral Relativity: Some argue that moral standards cannot be universal and must be based on specific circumstances and the consequences of actions rather than on fixed commandments.

5. Psychological pressure: The pressure to follow the commandments can make people feel guilty or afraid of punishment for non-compliance, which can have a negative impact on mental health.

6. The Need for Critical Thinking: Complete obedience to commandments can hinder the development of critical thinking and independent analysis of moral and ethical issues, which is

important for personal growth.

Let's look at the historical context of our passage to better understand whether a person can follow the commandments of Jesus Christ and what reward awaits him along the way.

To do this, we will conduct a historical and cultural analysis of our passage.

To do this, we will examine the history of the writing of the book of the Gospel of Matthew.

### 1.1 Authorship

The Gospel of Matthew is traditionally attributed to the Apostle Matthew, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. However, the question of who exactly wrote this gospel remains a subject of debate among scholars and theologians.

Here are some key points regarding the authorship of the Gospel of Matthew:

1.1.1 Tradition: From the early centuries of Christianity there was a tradition that the author of the Gospel was Matthew, who was a tax collector (publican) and one of the apostles. This view was supported by many early Christian writers.

1.2.2. Anonymity of the text: There is no clear indication of its author in the text of the Gospel itself. Matthew's name is mentioned only in later copies and commentaries.

1.2.3. Linguistic and stylistic features: Some scholars note that the style and language of the Gospel of Matthew differs from the other gospels, which may indicate that it was not written directly by Matthew. For example, some believe that the text may have

been created based on oral traditions or other sources.

## 1.2. The Addressee of the Gospel of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew is considered to have been written primarily for a Jewish audience. This is evident from several aspects:

1.2.1 Old Testament Quotations: The Gospel of Matthew contains many references to Old Testament prophecies that show Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish expectations of the Messiah. This indicates that the author was seeking to convince Jewish readers that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

1.2.2 Discussion of the Law: This gospel places much emphasis on the Law of Moses and its fulfillment. Jesus is presented as the new Moses, who comes not to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17).

1.2.3. References to Jewish Customs: The text also contains references to Jewish customs and traditions, making it more understandable for readers familiar with Jewish culture.

1.2.4 Comparison with other Gospels: Unlike the Gospel of Luke, which is aimed at the wider Greek world and includes more universal themes, the Gospel of Matthew is more focused on the Jewish roots of Christianity.

Thus, the addressee of the Gospel of Matthew can be considered primarily the Jewish community, seeking to understand how the teachings of Jesus relate to their faith and traditions.

## 1.3. Date of writing

The exact date of the Gospel of Matthew's writing remains a matter of debate among scholars. It is generally assumed that it was written between 70 and 90 AD.

Some scholars believe that the Gospel may have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, when the Jewish community was facing new challenges and needed to rethink its faith in light of the events. However, the exact date remains uncertain, and different scholars may propose different time frames depending on their interpretations of the text and the historical context.

The purpose of writing the Gospel of Matthew is believed to have been for several key reasons:

1.4.1 Affirming Jesus' Messiahship: Matthew seeks to show that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah predicted in the Old Testament. He frequently quotes prophecies and demonstrates how Jesus' life and ministry fulfill these predictions.

1.4.2. Appeal to a Jewish Audience: The gospel is written with an emphasis on Jewish traditions and laws. Matthew often uses Jewish terms and concepts to convince his readers that Jesus is the one who came to fulfill the law and the prophets.

1.4.3 Establishing the Authority of Jesus: Through Jesus' teachings and miracles, Matthew emphasizes his divine authority and power. This is important in shaping the faith of early Christians.

1.4.4 Ethics and Moral Teaching: The Gospel of Matthew contains many commandments and instructions, such as the

Sermon on the Mount, which emphasize the importance of moral and ethical principles in the lives of believers.

1.4.5. The Call to Mission: At the end of the Gospel is the Great Commandment (Matthew 28:19-20), in which Jesus calls his followers to go and preach the Gospel to all nations, indicating the universality of the Christian message.

Thus, the purpose of writing the Gospel of Matthew was to confirm faith in Jesus as the Messiah, to educate and strengthen the community of believers, and to prepare them for missionary work.

2. Historical moments of chapter 7 of the Gospel of Matthew  
Matthew chapter 7 contains several key points and teachings that are important to both early Christians and modern readers. Here are the major historical and thematic points of the chapter:

2.1 Sermon on the Mount: Chapter seven is part of the Sermon on the Mount, which spans three chapters (5-7). This sermon is considered one of the main teachings of Jesus and deals with themes of morality, ethics, and spiritual life.

2.2 The Commandment of Judgment: In verses 1-5, Jesus says that one should not judge others if one has one's own shortcomings (a beam in one's own eye). This teaching emphasizes the importance of self-criticism and humility.

2.3 A Call to Prayer: In 7:7-11 Jesus teaches about prayer, calling people to ask, seek, and knock. He promises that God will answer sincere prayers. This passage emphasizes God's closeness and care for his children.

2.4. The Golden Rule: 7:12 contains the famous commandment: "Whatever you want people to do to you, do that to them also." This rule is the basis of ethical behavior and is considered a universal principle of morality.

2.5. The Wide Gate and the Narrow Gate: In 7:13-14, Jesus compares the broad way that leads to destruction with the narrow way that leads to life. This metaphor highlights the difficulty of following Christ and the need to choose the right path.

2.6 Warning Against False Prophets: In 7:15-20 Jesus warns against false prophets and teachers using the image of the fruit of trees. This teaching emphasizes the need to distinguish between true and false teaching.

2.7 Conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount: The chapter ends in 7:21-29, where Jesus speaks of the importance of not only hearing His words, but also doing them. He compares a wise man building on a rock to a foolish man building on sand. This emphasizes the importance of putting faith into practice.

3. Geographical moments of the 7th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew

Matthew 7 does not contain explicit geographical references as seen in other parts of the Gospel. However, some points can be related to the context in which the events take place. Here are some geographical aspects that can be highlighted:

3.1 Sermon on the Mount: Chapter seven is part of the Sermon on the Mount, which is believed to have been delivered on a mountain in Galilee. This location symbolizes Jesus' teaching and

his address to the people. It is important to note that Galilee was the region where Jesus spent most of his ministry.

3.2. Symbolism of Paths: In verses 13-14, where the wide and narrow gates are mentioned, a geographical metaphor can be seen. The wide and narrow paths can symbolize the choice between different paths in life, which can also imply different directions or regions that people can follow.

3.3 The Simile of Houses on Rock and Sand: In the final verses of the chapter (verses 24 to 27), Jesus uses the image of building a house on rock or sand. Although this is also a metaphor, it may reflect real geographical conditions, such as the presence of rocky areas or sandy shores, which may have been familiar to the listeners.

#### 4. Cultural Moments of Matthew Chapter 7

Matthew 7 contains several key cultural points that reflect the context of the time and society in which Jesus lived. Here are some of them:

7.1 Sermon on the Mount: This chapter is part of the Sermon on the Mount, which includes important moral and ethical teachings. In Jewish culture, the teaching and interpretation of the Law (Torah) played a central role, and Jesus addresses this by offering a new understanding of the commandments.

7.2 Judgment and Forgiveness: In verses 1-5, Jesus talks about not judging others unless one is free from sin. This reflects the Jewish practice of self-criticism and the importance of inner purity before judging others. In the culture of the time, judging

could be linked to social status and public opinion.

7.3 The Golden Rule: In verse 12, Jesus states the Golden Rule: "Whatever you want people to do to you, do that to them also." This expression reflects the values of mutual assistance and respect for others that were important in Jewish culture and remain relevant in modern society.

7.4 Imagery and Metaphors: Jesus uses various images, such as the narrow and wide gates (verses 13-14), to convey his ideas to his listeners. These metaphors were understandable to the people of his day and helped illustrate complex spiritual truths.

7.5 Building on Rock or Sand: The final verses of the chapter (24-27) use the image of building a house on a solid foundation. This may be related to the practical aspects of life in Palestine, where conditions could vary greatly. The image also symbolizes the importance of spiritual stability and wisdom.

7.6 Religious and Social Structure: The chapter deals with the issues of authority and leadership in the religious community. Jesus criticizes the hypocrisy of religious leaders and emphasizes the importance of sincerity in faith.

5. Let us consider the literary context of the Gospel of Matthew.

The Gospel of Matthew is one of the four canonical Gospels of the New Testament and occupies an important place in Christian literature. Its literary context includes several key aspects:

5.1 Authorship and Audience: The Gospel is traditionally considered to be authored by Matthew, one of the twelve

apostles. This Gospel was probably written for a predominantly Jewish audience, as is evident from the numerous references to the Old Testament and the emphasis on the fulfillment of prophecy.

**5.2 Structure and Style:** The Gospel of Matthew has a clear structure, divided into five main parts, each ending with a formula about the end of Jesus' speech. This may be a reference to the five books of Moses (the Torah), which emphasizes Jesus' connection with the Jewish tradition. The writing style includes the use of metaphors, parables and allusions to the Old Testament.

**5.3 Themes and Emphasis:** The Gospel of Matthew emphasizes the teaching of Jesus as the new Messiah who comes to fulfill the Law and the prophecies. It emphasizes the importance of moral teaching, including the Sermon on the Mount, and emphasizes the Kingdom of Heaven.

**5.4 Comparative Analysis:** In a literary context, it is important to compare Matthew with the other Gospels (Mark, Luke, and John). For example, Matthew includes more extensive teachings of Jesus and more references to the Old Testament than Mark does. This makes it unique in its presentation of Jesus as the fulfiller of ancient prophecies.

**5.5 Historical context:** The Gospel was written in the context of an early Christian community seeking its place in the world after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. This gives the text additional meaning as it addresses questions of identity and faith

in the context of persecution and change.

5.6 Climax and Conclusion: The final part of the Gospel (chapter 28) describes the resurrection of Jesus and the Great Commission to the apostles, which emphasizes the missionary aspect of early Christianity and the call to spread the teachings of Jesus throughout the world.

Thus, the literary context of Matthew's Gospel enriches our understanding of its content and meaning, highlighting both its connection with Jewish roots and unique aspects of early Christian teaching.

## 6. Genre

The Gospel of Matthew can be classified into several genres that intersect and complement each other:

6.1. Historical genre: The Gospel is a narrative of the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It seeks to convey the facts and events associated with his life, which makes it part of the historical genre.

6.2 Religious Literature: As part of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew serves as a religious text for Christians, containing teachings and commandments that are of great importance to believers.

6.3. Homilistic Genre: The Gospel contains many teachings and parables of Jesus, making it an important text for preaching and instruction. The Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7) is a prime example of this genre.

6.4 Paradigmatic Genre: The Gospel of Matthew includes

many parables and allegories that are used to convey spiritual truths and moral lessons.

6.5. Apologetic genre: The text contains attempts to defend the Christian faith by showing that Jesus is the fulfillment of ancient prophecies of the Old Testament.

Thus, the Gospel of Matthew combines elements of historical narrative, religious literature, preaching and paradigmatic genre, which makes it a multi-layered and content-rich text.

## 7 The Gospel of Matthew Outline

### 1. Introduction (Chapters 1-2)

- The Genealogy of Jesus Christ (Chapter 1:1-17)
- The Birth of Jesus (Chapter 1:18-25)
- The Worship of the Wise Men and the Flight into Egypt (Chapter 2:1-15)
- Return to Nazareth (Chapter 2:16-23)

### 2. The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry (Chapters 3-4)

- The Sermon of John the Baptist (chapter 3:1-12)
- The Baptism of Jesus (Chapter 3:13-17)
- The Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness (Chapter 4:1-11)
- Beginning of ministry and calling of the first disciples

(chapter 4:12-22)

### 3. The Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7)

- Beatitudes (chapter 5:1-12)
- The Teaching of the Law and Righteousness (Chapter 5:13-48)
- The Practice of Godliness (Chapter 6:1-18)

- Teaching on Wealth and Cares (Chapter 6:19-34)

- Conclusion of the Sermon (Chapter 7:1-29)

#### 4. Miracles and Signs (Chapters 8-9)

- Jesus' Healings and Miracles (Chapter 8:1 – 9:34)

- Healing of the leper

- Healing of the centurion's servant

- Healing of Peter's mother-in-law

- Calming the storm

- Healing of the possessed

#### 5. The Call and Mission of the Disciples (Chapter 10)

- The Epistle of the Twelve Apostles (chapter 10:1-42)

#### 6. Society's Response to Jesus' Ministry (Chapters 11-12)

- John the Baptist's Doubts (Chapter 11:1-19)

- Jesus and the Lawyers (Chapter 12:1-14)

- Prophecy about the Messiah (chapter 12:15-21)

#### 7. Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven (chapters 13)

- The Parables of the Sower, the Mustard Seed, and the

Leaven (Chapter 13:1-52)

#### 8. Conflicts and confrontations (chapters 14-16)

- The Murder of John the Baptist (Chapter 14:1-12)

- The Miracle of the Multiplication of the Loaves (Chapter

14:13-21)

- Peter's Confession (Chapter 16:13-20)

#### 9. The Teaching on Suffering and Service (Chapters 16-20)

- Prediction of Jesus' suffering (chapter 16:21-28)

- The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Chapter

20:1-16)

10. The Passion of Christ (chapters 21-27)

- Entry into Jerusalem (chapter 21:1-11)
- Cleansing of the Temple (Chapter 21:12-17)
- The Trial of Religious Leaders (Chapters 21:18 – 22:46)
- The Passion, Crucifixion, and Death of Jesus (Chapters 26:1 – 27:66)

11. The Resurrection and the Great Commission (Chapter 28)

- The Resurrection of Jesus (Chapter 28:1-10)
- The Great Commission to the Disciples (Chapter 28:16-20)

Our passage is in Part 3 of the Sermon on the Mount, in its final, practical part. Jesus, having established the Beatitudes, gives practical recommendations on how to follow them, and what they mean from the point of view of internal moral choice.

The practical part of any sermon is necessary for the audience to implement the stated principles in life, and the criteria for their successful or unsuccessful application. Just stating the principles would reduce them to moralizing and deprive the audience of the opportunity to practically apply them in their lives.

12 Therefore, in everything, treat others as you want them to treat you. This is the essence of everything written in the Law and the Books of the Prophets!

13 {The Narrow Gate} Enter through the narrow gate. The way that leads to destruction is broad, and the gate is spacious, and many enter in through it.

14 But strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to

life, and only a few find it.

15 {A tree is known by its fruit} Beware of false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

16 You will know them by their fruits. Do people gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles?

17 A good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit.

18 A good tree does not bear bad fruit, and a bad tree does not bear good fruit.

19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 So you will know them by their fruits.

21 Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, and perform many miracles?"

23 But then I will say to them, "I never knew you; get away from Me, you evildoers!"

24 {Two Foundations} He who hears My words and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on a rock.

25 The rain came down, the rivers came up, the winds blew and beat against the house, but it stood firm, because it was built on a rock.

26 But everyone who hears my words but does not put them into practice is like a fool who built his house on the sand.

27 The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew and beat against the house, and it fell, and its fall was terrible. (Matt. 7:12-27)

I Jesus Transfers the Law into the Sphere of Desired Relationships

A As you would like to be treated

B Enter through the narrow gate

C Wide gates lead to destruction

D Few find the way to salvation

II A man is known by his fruits

A We know the life of people by their deeds

B It is not enough to be called a Christian, it is important to be one

C Many will say, "We served You!"

D will answer: "Move away, I don't know you."

III It is possible to build on two foundations

A What does it mean to build on rock?

B What does it mean to build on sand?

C To listen and perform or not to perform.

D The consequences are appropriate

The Bible shows us the following stages of establishing and developing the relationship between God and man:

1. God created the world and man in it for eternal relationships filled with love.

2. Man sinned and lost his relationship with God.

3. God spoke to humanity through the prophets, preparing it for the coming of the Son.

4. Jesus came into the world to show the Father's love in action.

5. We receive forgiveness and establish relationships

6. We change in preparation for our “marriage” in Heaven

To establish eternal relations with God, filled with love, a deep internal change of a person is necessary. For this, God grants him internal moral freedom – applies mercy to him, instead of the prescribed punishment and expects further retransmission of this approach in the life of a person in relation to other people. This criterion becomes the main one in assessing a person's life. If he was able to make the right moral choice, we can talk about the person's birth from above. If this did not happen, then the person remains in the old system of relationships of the old world.

To receive forgiveness and grace in your life, simply pray and ask God to forgive you for your life without Him in the name of Jesus Christ. Ask Him to come into your mind and heart and expect His answers, they will surely follow. Find a local church and attend it regularly, find your ministry and follow the Lord faithfully!

May God bless you in your search for Truth!

With respect, prayers for you and God's love

Rustam Kodash Nasyrov.

True love

# **The Nature of Love – Why Does Love Bring Suffering?**

World literature and world cinema have created an attractive image of love. In real life, love often brings suffering and pain rather than joy and happiness, which are also undoubtedly present. What is the real nature of love, why is a person built with the need to love and be loved, and the need for an unceasing relationship filled with love? I would also like to draw attention to the fact that God, who loves us, also went through suffering and death so that a person could build these eternal relationships with Him, or refuse them.

1 After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.

2 Paul, as was his custom, went in to them and spent three Sabbaths speaking to them from the Scriptures,

3 revealing and proving to them that Christ must needs suffer and rise from the dead, and that this Christ is Jesus whom I preach to you.

4 And some of them believed and joined Paul and Silas, both of the Greeks who worshiped God, a great multitude, and of the noble women not a few.

5 But the unbelieving Jews, becoming jealous, took some wicked men from the marketplace, gathered together as a crowd

and stirred up the city, and came to the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

6 When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers to the city officials, shouting, “These troublemakers of the world have come here too,

7 And Jason received them, and they all act contrary to the commands of Caesar, considering another king, Jesus.

8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city who heard these things.

9 But these, having received assurance from Jason and the rest, let them go.

10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, where they arrived and went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 Now these men were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all readiness of mind, and examined the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

12 And many of them believed, and not a few of the Greeks, both men and women of honor.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica learned that the word of God had been preached by Paul also at Berea, they came there also, stirring up and agitating the people.

14 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul away, as if he were going to the sea; but Silas and Timothy remained there.

15 Those who accompanied Paul brought him to Athens, and

when they received orders for Silas and Timothy to come to him quickly, they set out.

(Acts 17:1-15)

We try to evangelize and talk about Christ to people who do not know the Law and it is difficult for them to understand that they are sinners and that they need a Redeemer. The nature of love is such that it leads to unity and oneness of lovers, if one of the parties is not perfect, then this causes painful emotions for the perfect party. The sinless Jesus died for sinful people. Now we need to become perfect.

I Paul preached Christ to people who knew the Law.

II Successful preaching of the Gospel can cause jealousy

III Paul and Silas were sent to Berea, where they preached Christ.

Successful preaching of Christ includes the demands of the Law, the recognition of oneself as a sinner, and the search for a solution to the problem of sins – the need for the substitutionary sacrifice of the Messiah. Successful preaching causes envy and brings suffering to those who preach.

Why is a “gradual” approach necessary in preaching the Gospel – the law, the realization of sinfulness, and the need for Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice.

Preaching the gospel, especially in the context of the themes of law, grace, and Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, can be controversial and controversial. Here are some possible counterarguments to the idea of gradually preaching these

themes:

1. **The Need for Clarity:** Some argue that gradual preaching can lead to misunderstandings of the basics of the faith. A clear and direct presentation of the doctrine of grace and the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ can be more effective for spiritual growth.

2. **Focus on the Law:** Preaching the law can be seen as a return to works, which is contrary to the doctrine of grace. Some believe that an emphasis on the law can distract from the central message of salvation through faith in Christ.

3. **Risk of Legalism:** The gradual introduction of law may lead to a legalistic attitude among believers, where the emphasis will be on keeping rules instead of a personal relationship with Christ.

4. **Difficulty for New Believers:** New believers may have difficulty understanding complex concepts such as law and grace. A straightforward explanation of grace may be more accessible and understandable.

5. **Historical Context:** Some may argue that the early Church did not use a gradual approach but preached the Gospel in its fullness all at once, which led to the rapid spread of Christianity.

6. **Moral Responsibility:** Preaching grace should not exclude the moral obligations of believers. Some may argue that emphasizing grace without mentioning the law can lead to moral laxity.

7. **Spiritual Condition of the Audience:** Depending on the spiritual condition of the audience, a more direct appeal to

the theme of Christ's sacrifice may be necessary to encourage repentance and faith.

Let us look at the historical context of our passage in order to better understand the issue of correct, “gradual” evangelism, in particular, and in general, about the nature of love, and why the side that loves more suffers more, how love and suffering are generally related, and is it possible to do without suffering if you truly love someone?

To do this, we need to conduct a historical and cultural analysis of our passage.

Let us first examine the history of the writing of the book of Acts of the Apostles, or as it is also called, the “Book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit.”

The Book of Acts, also known simply as Acts, is part of the New Testament of the Bible and is traditionally attributed to the Apostle Luke. Luke, who is also considered the author of the Gospel of Luke, was a physician and companion of the Apostle Paul.

The Acts of the Apostles describes the history of the early Christian church, beginning with the ascension of Jesus Christ and ending with the missionary journeys of Paul. The book contains many details about the spread of Christianity and the interactions of the early Christians with the outside world.

Although Luke's authorship is traditional and widely accepted, some modern scholars have cast doubt on it based on various textual and historical analyses. However, most Christian

denominations continue to accept Luke as the author of the book.

The Book of Acts in the New Testament is addressed primarily to the Christian community, as well as anyone interested in the history of the early church and the spread of Christianity. It is written by Luke, who is also the author of the Gospel of Luke. Luke begins the book by addressing a certain Theophilus, which may indicate that he was writing for a specific person or group of people who wanted to know more about the deeds and teachings of Jesus Christ and his followers after his ascension.

The exact date of the writing of the Book of Acts is not known, but most scholars assume that it was written between 70 and 90 AD. Some researchers believe that the book may have been completed around the 80s, since it ends with a description of events that took place in Rome and does not mention the destruction of Jerusalem in 70. This may indicate that the author wrote after these events, but before the end of the first century.

The purpose of the book of Acts is this:

1. Documenting Early Christianity: The book describes the formation and spread of the Christian church after the ascension of Jesus Christ, showing how the apostles and other followers preached the gospel.

2. Historical Context: Acts provides historical information about key figures such as Peter and Paul, as well as important events and missionary journeys that contributed to the spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire.

3. **Strengthening Faith:** The book serves as a source of inspiration to believers by highlighting the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles and believers, and by demonstrating how faith can overcome difficulties and persecution.

4. **Explaining the mission of the church:** Acts emphasizes the universality of the message of Christianity, showing that the gospel is not only for Jews but also for Gentiles.

5. **Showing the Unity of the Church:** The book emphasizes unity between different groups of believers, emphasizing the importance of community and cooperation in spreading the faith.

Chapter 17 of the Book of Acts describes several key historical moments related to the missionary work of the Apostle Paul. Here are the main events:

1. **Philippi and Thessalonica:** Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy) travel from Philippi to Thessalonica, where he preaches in the synagogue. He explains that Jesus is the Messiah and uses the Scriptures to support his claims.

2. **Reaction to the Sermon:** Paul's sermon provokes various reactions. Some of the Jews and many of the Gentiles accept the faith, but others, envious of Paul's success, raise a wave of opposition against him and his companions.

3. **Thessalonica Pogrom:** Paul's opponents riot and he is forced to leave the city. This event highlights the tensions between the early Christians and the Jewish authorities.

4. **Berea:** Paul and Silas go to Berea, where the people are

more noble-minded: they receive the word readily and search the Scriptures to test the truthfulness of Paul's teaching.

5. The Reaction at Berea: When the Jews of Thessalonica learn that Paul is preaching in Berea, they come there to cause a commotion. Paul is forced to leave the city again, while Silas and Timothy remain.

Chapter 17 of the Book of Acts describes several key geographical locations associated with the missionary work of the Apostle Paul. Here are the main ones:

1. Philippi: This is the city in Macedonia where Paul and his companions began their missionary work. Here they met Lydia, the first convert to Christianity, and founded the first Christian community in Europe.

2. Thessalonica: After Philip, Paul goes to Thessalonica (modern Salonika), a large city, where he preaches in the synagogue. Here he encounters opposition from some Jews, which leads to his forced departure.

3. Berea: From Thessalonica, Paul and Silas head to Berea (modern-day Berea). Here the people are more willing to listen to Paul and test his teachings against the Scriptures.

Acts 17 contains several cultural points that highlight the early Christians' interactions with different cultures and religious traditions. Here are some of them:

1. Missionary work in different cities: Paul preaches in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Athens, which demonstrates his desire to bring Christian teachings to different peoples and

cultures. Each of these cities had its own unique cultural and religious traditions.

2. Synagogues as centers of communication: In Thessalonica and Berea, Paul addresses the Jews in the synagogues. This emphasizes the importance of synagogues as places for discussing religious issues and spreading new ideas.

3. The Philosophical Context of Athens: When Paul arrives in Athens, he encounters a rich philosophical tradition. Athens was a center of philosophy, where thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle studied. Paul mentions the “unknown God,” which shows his attempt to establish a dialogue with the Athenian philosophers and religious leaders.

4. Idolatry: In Athens, Paul notices many idols, reflecting the polytheistic culture of the Greeks. His sermon on the one God and how idols are merely the work of human hands is a criticism of this practice.

5. Reaction to the Sermon: The different reactions to Paul's sermon among the Athenians illustrate cultural differences. Some of them ridicule him, others are interested and want to hear more, which shows the diversity of opinions and openness to new ideas in Athenian society.

Let's consider the literary context of our passage.

The Book of Acts of the Apostles is a genre of historical literature within the New Testament. It describes the early history of Christianity, the work of the apostles, especially the

apostle Paul, and the spread of the Christian faith after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Some key characteristics of the genre:

1. Historical Narrative: The Acts of the Apostles is a sequential account of the events that took place in the early church, beginning with the day of Pentecost and ending with Paul's travels.

2. Preaching and Teaching: The book contains the sermons and teachings of the apostles, which emphasizes the importance of transmitting the faith and the basics of Christian doctrine.

3. The context of cultural and religious interactions: Acts describes how early Christians interacted with different cultures and religions, which is important for understanding the spread of Christianity.

4. Spiritual Experiences: The book also emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit, who guides and supports the apostles in their missionary work.

Thus, the Acts of the Apostles represents an important source of information about early Christianity and its development in historical context.

An outline of the Book of Acts that can be used to study and understand its contents:

## Introduction

### 1. Preface (Acts 1:1-2)

- Mention of the previous book (Gospel of Luke).
- Purpose of writing: to tell about the deeds of Jesus and the

apostles.

- I. The Ascension of Jesus and Pentecost (Acts 1-2)
2. The Ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:3-11)
  - The Promise of the Holy Spirit.
  - Ascension to heaven.
3. The Substitution of Judas (Acts 1:12-26)
  - The choice of Matthias as an apostle.
4. Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13)
  - Descent of the Holy Spirit.
  - Speaking in tongues.
5. Peter's Sermon (Acts 2:14-41)
  - Explanation of events and call to repentance.
  - Formation of the first church.
- II. Life of the Early Church in Jerusalem (Acts 2-7)
6. Fellowship of Believers (Acts 2:42-47)
  - Teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer.
7. Healing the Lame Man (Acts 3:1-10)
  - Peter's sermon after the healing.
8. Peter's Sermon Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-22)
  - Arrest and release of the apostles.
9. Community Life (Acts 4:23-37)
  - Prayer and unity of believers.
10. The Death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
  - An example of a lie and its consequences.
11. Persecution of the Apostles (Acts 5:12-42)
  - Miracles and arrests.

### III. The Spread of the Gospel Outside Jerusalem (Acts 8-12)

#### 12. Philip's Preaching in Samaria (Acts 8:1-25)

- Acceptance of the Gospel by Samaria.

#### 13. Healing the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)

#### 14. The Conversion of Saul (Acts 9:1-19)

- Transfiguration of Saul into Paul.

#### 15. Peter's Activity (Acts 9:20-43)

- Healing of Aeneas and resurrection of Tabitha.

#### 16. The First Mission to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48)

- The call of Cornelius and the vision of Peter.

#### 17. Missionary Report (Acts 11:1-18)

#### 18. Mission to Antioch (Acts 11:19-30)

- Formation of the church in Antioch.

#### 19. Persecution of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 12:1-19)

- The arrest of James and the release of Peter.

### IV. Paul's First Missionary Journeys (Acts 13-21)

#### 20. The First Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14)

- Epistle from Antioch, preaching in Cyprus and Asia Minor.

#### 21. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35)

- The decision to save the Gentiles without circumcision.

#### 22. The Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)

- Travel through the Syrian, Cilician and Macedonian regions.

#### 23. The Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23-21:16)

- Preaching in Ephesus and other cities.

### V. The Final Part: The Arrest and the Journey to Rome (Acts

21-28)

24. Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-36)

25. Paul's Defense Before the Sanhedrin and the Roman Authorities (Acts 22-26)

26. Journey to Rome (Acts 27-28)

- Storm and shipwreck.
- Paul's preaching in Rome.

Conclusion

27. Paul's Last Days in Rome (Acts 28:17-31)

- Preaching and teaching in Rome.

Our passage is in Section IV, Paul's First Missionary Journeys. In Section 22, "Paul's Second Missionary Journey"

The Holy Scriptures reveal to us not only the history of the spread of the church in the territory of modern Europe, but also the principles that guided the first missionaries.

Chapter 17 of the Book of Acts is part of the second missionary journey of the Apostle Paul and contains important events related to his preaching in various cities. Here are the main points of the relationship of chapter 17 with the section on the first missionary journeys:

1. Continuation of missionary activity

- Context: Chapter 17 follows the account of the first missionary journey (Acts 13-14) and is part of the second (Acts 15:36-18:22). Paul and his companions continue their mission, preaching the gospel in new areas.

2. Preaching in Philippi (Acts 16:11-40)

- Connection to Chapter 17: Before going to Thessalonica,

Paul preaches in Philippi, where he is arrested and miraculously delivered. These events set the stage for the next phase of his mission.

### 3. Preaching in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)

- Summary: Paul begins his sermon in the synagogue of Thessalonica where he explains that Jesus is the Messiah. He uses Scripture to support his words.

- Connection: This reflects Paul's method, which he had used in previous journeys, of reaching Jewish audiences through the synagogues.

### 4. Reaction and persecution

- Persecution of Paul: As a result of his successful preaching, jealousy arises among some of the Jews, which leads to riots and persecution of Paul and his companions.

- Connection with previous journeys: This also recalls the reaction to Paul's preaching in other cities, such as Antioch of Pisidia and Lystra, where he encountered opposition.

### 5. Preaching in Berea (Acts 17:10-15)

- Move to Berea: After Thessalonica, Paul and Silas travel to Berea, where they find a more receptive audience who search the Scriptures.

- Methodology: This approach to studying Scripture was also characteristic of Paul in his previous missions.

### 6. Preaching in Athens (Acts 17:16-34)

- Cultural context: In Athens, Paul encounters philosophers and idolaters. His preaching here differs from other places

because he uses philosophical arguments and appeals to the culture of his listeners.

- **Diversity of Approaches:** This shows Paul's adaptation to different cultural contexts, which was also evident in his first missionary journey when he preached to both Jews and Gentiles.

Acts 17 illustrates the continuation of Paul's missionary work, his adaptation to different cultural contexts and preaching methods. These elements echo the same principles that were laid down in his early missionary journeys, demonstrating the consistency and development of his ministry.

1 {Ministry in Thessalonica} After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.

2 Paul, as was his custom, went into the synagogue and there for three consecutive Sabbaths reasoned with the Jews about the Scriptures,

3 explaining and proving that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "Jesus, about whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ," Paul said.

4 They succeeded in persuading some Jews, many God-fearing Greeks, and many noble women, and they joined Paul and Silas.

5 This aroused the envy of the rest of the Jews, and they took with them the wicked men they found in the marketplace, and gathered a mob and stirred up trouble in the city. They rushed to Jason's house, looking for Paul and Silas, so that they could

bring them out to the crowd.

6 When they did not find them there, they dragged Jason and the other brothers to the city authorities. “These people are causing trouble all over the world, and now they have come here too,” the crowd shouted.

7 – And Jason received them into his house. They violate the commands of Caesar and say that there is another king, whose name is Jesus.

8 The crowd and the city authorities, hearing this, became alarmed.

9 They took a pledge from Jason and the rest and sent them away.

10 {Ministry in Berea} As soon as night had come, the brothers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived at Berea, they went into the Jewish synagogue.

11 The Bereans were more open-minded than the Thessalonians. They listened with great interest to what Paul said and examined the Scriptures daily to see if what they had heard was true.

12 Many of them believed, and many noble Greek women and many Greek men believed.

13 But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there also and began to stir up and agitate the people.

14 The brothers immediately sent Paul away to the seaside, but Silas and Timothy remained in the city.

15 Paul's companions came with him to Athens and then returned with a command from Paul that Silas and Timothy should come to him as quickly as possible.

(Acts 17:1-15)

I Paul preached Christ to people who knew the Law.

A It is difficult for a person to understand that he is a sinner.

B Man can perceive God's perfect law

C A person may conclude that he is not fulfilling the Law

D Sinful man needs a Redeemer – Christ

E And Paul preached it.

F Paul's preaching was successful

G This caused envy and persecution

II Successful preaching of the Gospel arouses envy

A Jason and the other brothers were brought before the authorities

B They were accused of following another king – treason.

C Jason and the other brothers were given bail and released.

D Following Christ brings suffering into life

III Paul and Silas were released to Berea

A They came to the synagogue in Berea

B The Bereans were more open to the Gospel

C We searched the Scriptures every day

D Many of the Greeks and Greek women believed

E The Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea and stirred up the people there,

F Paul was sent to Athens

Throughout the Bible, the idea of God's progressive revelation runs through. God created man for an eternal, loving relationship. Sinful man failed to maintain that relationship, and it was destroyed.

The coming of Jesus Christ into the world gives man a second chance – the opportunity to restore these relationships. For Jesus Christ, the restoration of these relationships became the reason for His crucifixion, death and resurrection.

When we enter into this restored relationship, we also have to tell people about the forgiveness of sins, about salvation from hell and eternal death. And we also face misunderstanding, unbelief and envy.

Love leads us to those people who have not heard of Christ and who suffer from sin, being its slaves. We will not always be received with “bread and salt” or open arms. This path can be difficult and tragic, but we must continue to follow the path that our Savior Jesus Christ walked.

Why are love and suffering inseparable? When we love, we are united with the object of our love. We not only hope to possess it, but we also give ourselves into the possession of the other party. In essence, marriage is a sacrifice, where spouses sacrifice themselves and their interests for the sake of the happiness of their spouse. It is important that this be a correct, legal relationship. In the relationship between a man and a woman, it must be a legal marriage. In the relationship with Christ, it is complete obedience to His Word.

May God bless you in your search for truth.  
With respect, prayers for you and God's love  
Rustam Kodash Nasyrov

# **The tragedy of misunderstanding the nature of God's love or the greatest mistake of man.**

Some things are known and popular in the world because they reflect a clear concept of Divine love and the ability to accept or reject it. The movie "The Matrix" reflects the idea of free choice with two pills. You do not simply take or do not take a pill, this is not a clear choice: maybe you thought about it or you were "persuaded" or persuaded to make some choice. No, two pills say that you consciously made some choice and are a participant in one or another scenario of your life, and you took a direct part in this choice.

What could be the tragedy of not understanding the nature of God's love? In that, having a correct understanding of the nature of this love, we can build a correct and eternal relationship with the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Without a correct understanding, this relationship can be destroyed by the person himself. Let's see how the concept of the right choice is reflected in one of the most famous parables of Jesus Christ – in the parable of the prodigal son.

1 Then all the publicans and sinners came to Him to listen to Him.

2 But the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man

receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

3 But he spoke this parable to them:

4 Which of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he finds it?

5 And when he has found it, he will lay it on his shoulders with joy.

6 And when he comes home, he calls his friends and neighbors together and says to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost."

7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

8 Or what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece of silver, does not light a candle, and sweep the house, and search diligently until she finds it?

9 And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I lost."

10 So I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

11 He also said, "A certain man had two sons;

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of the estate that falleth to me. And the father divided the estate between them.

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all

together, and went into a far country, and there squandered his substance in dissolute living.

14 Now when he had spent all, a great famine arose in that land, and he began to be in need;

15 And he went and joined himself to one of the inhabitants of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine;

16 And he would have fain filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate, but no one gave him any.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you."

19 And I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants.

20 He arose and went to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 And the father said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it upon him, and put a ring upon his hand, and shoes upon his feet:

23 And bring the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to rejoice.

25 Now his eldest son was in the field; and as he returned, when he drew nigh to the house, he heard singing and rejoicing;

26 And he called one of the servants and asked, What is this?

27 He said to him, "Your brother is come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound."

28 He became angry and would not go in. But his father came out and called him.

29 But he answered and said to his father, "Behold, these many years I have served you, and have never transgressed your commandment, yet you have never given me even a kid of the goats, that I might rejoice with my friends;

30 And when this son of yours came, who had squandered his substance with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.

31 And he said unto him, My son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 But it was necessary for us to rejoice and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.

(Luke 15:1-32)

The main idea of these parables is not revealed to us at once. Jesus leads us to the main idea, illuminating our consciousness with two other, "small" parables, speaking about the value of repentance for God and the importance of continuing the relay

of salvation, brought to us and passing it on to other people.

The first two parables speak of the importance and value of repentance for God, and He passionately desires it and rejoices when a person realizes his corruption and sinfulness and wants to return to his father's house. This is valuable and important for God and for man.

This chapter can be divided into the following stages of understanding this parable:

- Publicans and sinners approached Jesus to listen to Him
- Jesus tells the parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son
- The son decided to return to his father – he got up and went
- The eldest son was in the field and when he returned he heard singing and jubilation
- When I found out the reason, I didn't want to go in and stayed outside

You can get closer to God and learn something about yourself and your life. And you need to do something with this information, it is not given just like that, it is given for a certain choice – I admit that this is about me, I decide to change and continue to move towards God, towards communication with Him, continuing to change, or I refuse to accept this information and apply it, and I will inevitably move away from God.

It is important for me today to understand the vector of my movement – am I moving closer to Him, or away from Him?

Possible counterarguments against accepting God's love,

revealed to man through the birth, life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. Some may argue that the concept of sacrifice and atonement through Jesus Christ is outdated and no longer relevant in the modern world.

2. Others may question the veracity of the story of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice, considering it a myth or fiction rather than historical fact.

3. Some may have difficulty accepting the idea of a loving God who requires sacrifice to forgive sins, seeing it as contradictory or unfair.

4. Skeptics may argue that the suffering and death of Jesus Christ does not prove the existence of a loving God, but rather raises questions about the nature of suffering and the problem of evil in the world.

5. Some may reject the idea of God demanding obedience and loyalty in exchange for love, seeing it as coercive or manipulative.

6. Critics may argue that the concept of God's love as revealed in Jesus Christ is exclusive and exclusionary, failing to take into account the diversity of beliefs and experiences in the world.

7. Others may simply not believe in the existence of a supernatural being or higher power, and then have a hard time accepting the idea of God's love as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Let us consider the historical, geographical and cultural aspects of this passage, so that we can better understand the

information embedded and sent to us in the biblical text, so that in today's difficult situation we can decipher it, correctly understand it and apply it in our lives.

First main section

History. Historical and cultural analysis.

Let's explore the history of the writing of the book of the Gospel of Luke.

The Gospel of Luke does not name its author. However, Luke 1:1–4 and Acts 1:1–3 clearly indicate that the same author wrote both books, addressing them to “the most honorable Theophilus,” perhaps a Roman official. According to early Church tradition, these two books were written by Luke, a physician and close associate of the apostle Paul (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11). This makes Luke the only pagan known to have written a book of Scripture.

The Gospel is addressed to people with Greco-Roman thinking, based on a global culture.

The Gospel of Luke was most likely written between 58 and 65 AD.

As with the other two synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Mark, the purpose of this book is to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and all that He “began to do and teach...from the beginning until the day He...was taken up into heaven” (Acts 1:1–2). Luke’s Gospel is unique in that it is a “continuous account” (Luke 1:3), in keeping with Luke’s medical mindset – often revealing details that are omitted in the other Gospels. Luke’s account of the life

of the Great Physician highlights His ministry and dedication to Gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, tax collectors, sinners, and others considered outcasts in Israel.

Luke 15 contains several historical moments that are significant for Christian theology. The chapter begins with Jesus being criticized by religious leaders for eating with tax collectors and sinners. In response, Jesus tells three parables: the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, and the parable of the prodigal son. These parables emphasize the importance of repentance and God's love and forgiveness for those who have lost their way. The chapter also tells how Jesus reached out to those who were social outcasts and His teachings on redemption and mercy.

Although there are no explicit geographical points in Luke 15, the parables Jesus tells in this chapter have significant relevance to the geographical and cultural context of the time. The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son all resonate with the agricultural and social landscape of the region.

The parable of the lost sheep, in particular, would have resonated deeply with the people of Judea and Galilee, where herding sheep was a common occupation. The image of a shepherd leaving ninety-nine sheep to search for the one that had strayed would have appealed to those familiar with the rugged terrain and open pastures of that region.

Likewise, the parable of the lost coin would have had geographical and cultural significance. In a society where women

often wore headdresses adorned with coins as a sign of wealth, the idea of a woman diligently searching for a lost coin would have been relatable to viewers.

The parable of the prodigal son also has geographical and cultural implications. The setting of the parable, featuring a wealthy landowner and his holdings, reflects the agrarian society of first-century Palestine. Themes of inheritance, family relationships, and the agricultural abundance of the land would have resonated with the experiences and environment of the audience.

To understand the geographic context of Luke 15, it is important to consider the cultural and social context in which these parables were spoken. They were designed to connect with the daily lives and experiences of the people who inhabited the region, and they continue to resonate with readers today.

Luke 15 contains several cultural moments that provide valuable insight into the religious and social context of the time. These moments reflect the teachings of Jesus Christ and shed light on the values and customs of the society in which he lived.

One of the cultural moments in this chapter is the parable of the lost sheep. In this story, Jesus tells of a shepherd who leaves his flock of 99 sheep to find one that has gone astray. This parable reflects the pastoral and agricultural lifestyle of the people of Jesus' time, where shepherding was a common occupation. It also illustrates the importance of each person in the eyes of God and the concept of finding the lost and bringing

them back into the fold.

Another cultural point in this chapter is the parable of the lost coin. In this story, Jesus tells of a woman who diligently searches for a lost coin in her house and rejoices when she finds it. This parable demonstrates the value of a human soul in the eyes of God, as well as His joy and triumph that accompany the repentance of a sinner and the finding of a lost soul.

The parable of the prodigal son is perhaps the most famous cultural moment in Luke 15. The story depicts the dynamics of family relationships in the first-century Jewish environment, as well as the concepts of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration. It highlights the cultural significance of inheritance and the shame associated with a son squandering his wealth, as well as the profound love and mercy of a father welcoming his son home.

These cultural moments in Luke 15 give readers a deeper understanding of the context in which Jesus lived and ministered. They provide valuable lessons about compassion, forgiveness, and God's all-encompassing love, while also shedding light on the cultural norms and values of the time. The teachings and parables contained in this chapter continue to resonate with believers and scholars alike, offering timeless wisdom and insight into the human experience.

Let's consider the literary context of our passage.

Thus, we should define the genre of the Gospel of the Infancy of Luke as a sacred-historical narrative with elements of the genre of ancient biography, Jewish midrash and Jewish (Judeo-

Christian) apocalypse.

## Outline of the Gospel of Luke

1. Introduction, address to Theophilus (1:1-4)
2. The angel's message to Zechariah (1:5-25)
3. Annunciation (1:26-38)
4. The Visitation of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth. Hymn to Mary (1:39-56)
5. The Birth of John the Baptist (1:57-80)
6. The Nativity of Jesus Christ (2:1-20)
7. Circumcision and the Presentation (2:21-40)
8. 12-year-old Jesus in the Temple (2:41-52)
9. The Sermon of John the Baptist (3:1-20)
10. The Baptism of the Lord (3:21, 22)
11. Genealogy of Christ (3:23-38)
12. The Temptation of the Lord by the Devil (4:1-14)
13. Sermon in Galilee (4:15-44)
14. The Calling of the Apostles (5:1-11)
15. Miracles. Preaching in Galilee and the surrounding lands (5:12 – 6:19)
16. Sermon on the Mount (6:20-49)
17. Healings (7:1-17)
18. The Baptist sends disciples to Jesus (7:18-35)
19. Miracles and Parables (7:36 – 9:27)
20. Transfiguration of the Lord (9:28-36)
21. Jesus goes from Galilee to Judea. Parables and miracles (9:36 – 11:36)

22. Rebuke of the Pharisees (11:37 – 12:12)

23. New miracles, parables and preaching (12:13 – 19:27)

24. The Lord's Entry into Jerusalem (19:28-48)

25. Preaching in Jerusalem (20:1 – 21:4)

26. Jesus' predictions about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world (21:5-38)

27. The Last Supper (22:1-38)

28. The Gethsemane struggle, arrest and trial (22:39-71)

29. Christ before Pilate (23:1-25)

30. Crucifixion and burial (23:26-56)

31. Appearances of the Risen Christ (24:1-49)

32. Ascension (24:50-53)

Our passage is in section 23: New miracles, parables and preaching. One of the signs of the coming Messiah in the Old Testament is the fact that He will speak to people in parables.

Our passage presents three main parables of Jesus Christ, which speak about the purpose of His coming – to find and save the lost souls of people.

1 Then all the publicans and sinners came to Him to listen to Him.

2 But the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

3 But he spoke this parable to them:

4 Which of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he finds it?

5 And when he has found it, he will lay it on his shoulders with joy.

6 And when he comes home, he calls his friends and neighbors together and says to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost."

7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

8 Or what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece of silver, does not light a candle, and sweep the house, and search diligently until she finds it?

9 And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I lost."

10 So I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

11 He also said, "A certain man had two sons;

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of the estate that falleth to me. And the father divided the estate between them.

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and went into a far country, and there squandered his substance in dissolute living.

14 Now when he had spent all, a great famine arose in that land, and he began to be in need;

15 And he went and joined himself to one of the inhabitants

of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine;

16 And he would have fain filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate, but no one gave him any.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you."

19 And I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants.

20 He arose and went to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 And the father said unto his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it upon him, and put a ring upon his hand, and shoes upon his feet:

23 And bring the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to rejoice.

25 Now his eldest son was in the field; and as he returned, when he drew nigh to the house, he heard singing and rejoicing;

26 And he called one of the servants and asked, What is this?

27 He said to him, “Your brother is come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.”

28 He became angry and would not go in. But his father came out and called him.

29 But he answered and said to his father, “Behold, these many years I have served you, and have never transgressed your commandment, yet you have never given me even a kid of the goats, that I might rejoice with my friends;

30 And when this son of yours came, who had squandered his substance with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.

31 And he said unto him, My son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 But it was meet that we should rejoice and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. (Luke 15:1-32)

I Publicans and sinners approached Jesus to listen to Him

And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured against Him

B Jesus told them parables

C About the lost drachma and the lost sheep

II Jesus tells the parable of the prodigal son

A son asks his father for an inheritance

B He took his share and went to a distant country and spent it all

C I found a man in that country and began to serve him.

D he was sent to herd pigs

E was ready to eat pig food, but no one gave it to him

F, having come to his senses, remembered that even mercenaries lived well with his father

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