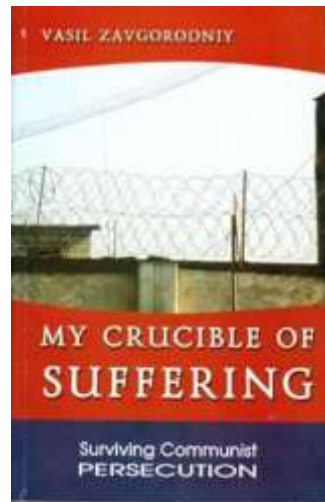


CHAPTER 19



I met **Vasil Zavgorodny** at the 17th Street church (Храм Благой Вести). My friend, Ben Delevan, introduced me to him. Vasil was the assistant pastor, and his story brought tears to my eyes. He told me about his life in a “gulag” (forced labor camp) in the Soviet Union. His story was similar to the one my father had told me, about his experience in a Soviet jail for refusing to take up arms and kill for the State. Vasil wanted me to help him spread his story to the world by translating his writings. I agreed. I present an excerpt of his story in this historical perspective to show what the Evangelical world had to suffer at the hands of the godless authorities in the Communist countries of Russia and Ukraine.

Here is a photo of Vasil (left) borrowed from his daughter’s post in a blog:



“My father lived a simple life in Odessa, a city in southern Ukraine, with a simple job; working on the machines in an ice cream factory. Like all men living in the Soviet Union, he was required to enlist in the Soviet Armed Forces. After he completed six months of training in the mid 1970s, he had to swear the Oath of Allegiance to the Soviet Navy. The oath required all men to “defend the Motherland by achieving complete victory over the enemy” which meant taking other peoples’ lives. **My father refused to take this oath because it would go against his beliefs as a Christian to honor life and the Biblical commandment not to kill.** As this belief was against the law in the Soviet Union, the commanders questioned my father’s religious views and on May 1st, 1975, he was sentenced to four years in prison.” – Yana Zavgorodnaya <https://www.livefullyblog.org/jewish-life/miracles-in-the-gulag-my-fathers-years-in-labor-camp/>

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PROLOGUE

In and around Rome, multitudes of Christians were arrested in the first century. The courts carried out many sentences for capital punishment. Death awaited many: ministers, leaders, the common folk, and those close to the Lord. Torture, mockery, and execution by the cruelest methods waited for them. Many were crucified. Some were sewn into the skins of animals and simply tossed in the field of the Coliseum, delighting the savage, bloodthirsty audience. Some were “tied to stakes in Nero’s gardens, pitch poured over their bodies, and their burning bodies used as torches to light Nero’s gardens at night, while he drove around in his chariot, naked, indulging himself in his midnight revels, gloating over the dying agonies of his victims.” (Halley’s Bible Handbook, by Henry H. Halley, p. 635)

“One of the strange ways of Providence is that many people have to suffer in the very way in which they would rather not have to suffer, have to go through life denied the one thing that most of all they would rather not be denied. Such people many very properly comfort themselves in the assurance that when God is bearing down extra hard in His grinding it is that the finished diamond may be extra bright and beautiful.” (Halley’s Bible Handbook, by Henry H. Halley, p. 665)

In the twentieth century, Christianity is persecuted on the territory of the former Soviet Union, and in countries of Eastern Europe, under the conditions of the Communist regime with an atheistic ideology. Under the sentence of death for its complete destruction, Christianity survived the “Trial by Fire,” and in the darkest days it advanced, even though Christians were implicated in being murderers, thieves, and evildoers.

Many departed to be with the Lord in complete anonymity, and thus they didn’t return to their church, or to their families and houses. Those who remained among the living continued to serve God, and therefore they continued to create history. To create history means to live a life of purpose and meaning. History – a unique masterpiece. And not only is it necessary to know it, but it is necessary to study and preserve it, and return to it often, investigating and analyzing it. The history of heroes always inspires the living in the pursuit of goals. A high percentage of people became heroes only because they took the example of their predecessors – the heroes.

You are an individual created by God, and you have a history – a story of your life. Preserve your history; transmit it to your children, grandchildren, and many people. It will serve as an example and stabilization in real life. For many, it will provide a model of an exemplary spiritual life to imitate.

BOOK 1

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE JOURNEY

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 20th century. Russia is covered with blood. First, the 1905 Revolution, a violent struggle that swept through the Russian Empire. Then the First World War in 1914. Afterwards, the October Revolution of 1917 that brought the Bolsheviks to power. The 1920's brought the destructive civil war and forced collectivization. The 1930's brought an extensive famine. The Second World War continued the carnage as Russia fought against the invading German army. And without a reprieve, the Ukrainian south suffered extreme hunger from 1947-48. Meanwhile, during the intervals of these events, through the channels of certain denominations, an awakening spread with the opening of new churches. However, with the arrival of the dictator Stalin, there began persecutions and prosecutions.

As a result of the acceptance of the decree of VTsIK (All-Russian Central Executive Committee or ARCEC) and Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars) respecting Religious Associations (April 8, 1929), church ministers and many active Evangelicals were arrested. These Believers were often found in prisons and labor camps (gulags) during Stalin's regime. It was forbidden to publish Christian journals, magazines, and literary works. In Moscow and in Kharkov, courses in Bible studies were eliminated. God's people were in the crucible of suffering. It was an unjust opposition.

In December, 1959, a "Letter of Instruction to Senior Presbytery of VSEHB" was sent to the official government-controlled leaders. [VSEHB is an acronym for All-Russian Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.] One of the main points stressed in the letter was: to bring to a minimum quantity the baptism of youth, ages 18 to 30, especially those students who went to school and participated in higher education. As a rule, pre-school children and children of school age weren't allowed to attend church services. There were at least thirty similar restrictions imposed by the authorities in the two official documents governing church life: "Letter of Instruction to Senior Presbytery" and "New Provision for VSEHB." [Three Sentences by Joseph Bondarenko]

The First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Nikita Khrushchev announced to the whole world that soon they will show on television the last Christian, who will say, "There is no God." The Council for Religious Cults, with the assistance of the KGB (Committee for State Security), was assigned the task of taking effective measures to suppress illegal activities.

As a result, the 1960's entailed massive arrests, trials, and judgments. Many Christians received multiple-year prison terms, and were usually exiled. As a result, families were split up and children were artificially orphaned. Christianity was placed in the flames of suffering. It was, so to say, history repeating itself in a way similar to the Church in Rome during the days of Emperor Nero. Instead of the Coliseum with wild, hungry animals, and instead of the stake and crucifixion on crosses, they substituted the toughest inhumane tortures in the torture-chamber of Siberia's coldest and most severe frost. And in the torture-chamber of Kazakhstan's cold and powerful winds.

The administration of the USSR had many inaccessible territories, many places of initial construction, with inhuman working conditions. Many Christians were sent to those places, where the government destroyed their own people, who were on fire with the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. These people only wanted to perform deeds of mercy, to support high morals, and open up to their fellow men the path to salvation from their sins. This was the same path our fathers and grandfathers followed, showing a personal example of fidelity and steadfastness in their faith to the young generation. Their example served us as a lesson of courage, cultivating in us a Christian maturity and patience, from which comes experience, and experience produces hope, which does not put to shame. [Romans 5:4-5]

“Thanks be to God for you (and your example). Many of you are already not among the living. However, as the expression of the people states: We bow low to you (in salutation).”

The era of the atheistic Communist regime – this was a time of spiritual darkness and unbelief possessing the minds and hearts of people, who were nourished by a godless propaganda which put up a dividing-wall between their minds and souls. This atheistic regime first deceived, then seduced the people, and afterwards destroyed them. The scattered kernels of atheism, within which exist the seeds of death, spread to other countries and continents of the earth, where Communism and Socialism was planted. These seeds of death were vigorously spread throughout Europe, and this misfortune befell other countries of the west. Europe was left with a dreadful statistic: the fewest number of Christians than ever before. The treasure of the earth is being transformed daily into a spiritual emptiness, sinking to the depths of debased morality and sin. These kernels of atheism, seeds of death, were carried on the winds by Communist messengers practically throughout the world. Some of the countries still cling to those atheistic regimes to this day.

Countless numbers of Christians didn't return to their own homes. Fathers didn't return to their own children. Husbands didn't return to their wives. Many churches were left without their pastors, who had blessed their flock with the words of their sermons and prayers. These same pastors, who never returned, had blessed the churches with baptisms, weddings, and ordinations. They had even blessed the newborn children. All that remains is a memory of their faces, always smiling and friendly as is becoming for Christians in God's world. A memory remains of their warm consecrated hands, blessing us and praying for our needs, our pains and sufferings in life's struggles.

The Church protested against the cruel, animalistic evil of communism and atheism. There were individual brothers and sisters who were led by the Holy Spirit. These were people with a purpose.

During Stalin's regime, interrogations were conducted by the KGB day and night. There existed an idiomatic expression among the prisoners to describe the process: “The Conveyor.” It was like a “meat-grinder,” transforming meat into another substance – a stuffing. Our brothers and sisters were interrogated a whole day without sleep or food. And if they turned into stuffing from being put through the meat-grinder, they were placed for a while in a so-called “Glass,” until they regained a stable condition which allowed them to stand and talk.

Several months ago I heard a Christian program on the radio. The theme was the singing of psalms. I don't remember the name of the broadcast director, but he told an interesting story of the birth of the following psalm:

**"I do not want half-truths,
I do not want half-purposes,
I do not want my heartstrings
to ring in vain,
I do not want half-beliefs,
I do not want a half-life.
Let my sinful "I" die
In the furnace of suffering;
From the flames of a free heart
May a new life arise." [Songs of Rebirth, No. 1294]**

In times past, the author of this hymn became a young Christian woman who received the Word from the Lord, and she composed the hymn while sitting in a prison hole. Here was a person with a purpose! Here was the place where people received the Word from God. Here's why the atheistic-communist system tried to destroy these kinds of people: these were people with divine purposes, people within God's plan, who stood against the demonic darkness that stupefied the minds of people. In essence, it was the Word of God that stood against this darkness. And the Word of God was alive and active in individual brothers and sisters. A living faith in God, that personified the nature and character of God, opposed this insanity.

All the martyrs were people of God's plan, and many of them left this chaotic world to enter a new world, a world without any trouble and suffering. These were people who understood their actions within a deeper context of God's Word. They followed in the footsteps of Christ and the Apostles. All of this was accomplished only because of their love for Jesus Christ and the Word of God, and their belief in Him.

A thought arises as one returns in memory to what happened decades ago: "Where did the strength come from? What was the source of the strength that fed the soul in days of such awful oppression? How, in general, could one survive? How could one resist and overcome?"

Apostle Paul answers such questions with two solutions:

(1) "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) That is to say, for Paul the source of support in all situations was Jesus Christ. It was a profound mutual relationship.

(2) "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." (Philippians 3:7) The source of support for Apostle Paul was:

- a. an awareness that all power belonged to Jesus Christ
- b. the right selection of priorities
- c. the right estimation of values
- d. the right conduct of one's person

CHAPTER 1 – CHILDHOOD

When I share my memories of my difficult childhood, many are amazed. How could it be like that! Needless to say, the 1950's, and midway through the 1960's, was a very complicated period of time. People lived very poorly. Many simply lived in poverty. There are two existing reasons to explain this situation:

(1) The fact is that we lived on the territory of Bessarabia, 90 kilometers (55 miles) from the city of Odessa (a major seaport on the Black Sea). The territory of Bessarabia was under the administration of Romania until 1944. It was a very poor country. The coming of the Soviet Army to the west during World War II turned the territory of Bessarabia into southern Ukraine, and part of the territory was annexed to the province of Odessa, while a part went to Moldavia, making it southern Moldavia.

If collectivization in the former USSR started after the civil war in the 1920's, then in southern Ukraine (the former territory of Bessarabia) collectivization started in the 1950's. The Second World War ended in 1945. Afterwards, there were several years of horrific famine in this territory. Collective farms (kolhoz) started there only after the famine.

My memory of the 1960's, under Khrushchev's management, is that it was a time of corn. I well remember those years, for they represented for our family a loaf of bread. I remember well its value. A small bundle of sugar is also preserved in my memory, and I remember the kind of sweets we had: candies and pastries. My mother would safeguard the pastry for the holidays, Christmas and Easter. I knew the value of a store-bought jar of jam or a piece of halvah. I was totally aware of why my mother prepared the pastries only for the holidays. I remember very well the work that was beyond our strength, the yoke for carrying two pails and the deep well located 400 meters from the house. In one day we needed to carry enough water so that in the evening father could water the cucumbers, tomatoes, cabbage, and so forth.

(2) The second reason that explains my difficult childhood was the cruel persecution and extreme psychological attacks, which were way beyond our young minds to understand. This created an agitation in our rational mind, similar to the waves of a powerful earthquake. This was done with the ultimate purpose of destroying to its foundation our stubborn intellect. This pressure was too much for our age.

In 1962, the searching of many Christian homes increased. The ideology of the KGB was to search for Bibles, Christian literature, and various handwritten poems and songs. Possessing these forbidden items entailed a criminal act, and for this many had to pay a heavy price. To publish literature in those days was unthinkable. It was an isolated land. To write songs, verses from Scriptures, and Christian history became completely illegal.

ARRESTS AND TRIALS

The arrests began. First they arrested our grandfather. Then the trial. I will never forget the night of the trial. The days were rainy, but on this day there was something special. There was mud, a liquid black earth, on the road. On this rainy night, grandfather was driven in a car that was pulled by a Caterpillar tractor on an impassable route. It was announced by the KGB that the person in the car was a state prisoner, an enemy of the people, an enemy of communism and atheism, and a worker for American imperialism. This was announced to the co-villagers who knew my grandfather as a decent intelligent man. For many co-villagers he served as a blessing in his council and his charitable deeds.

It was mandatory for all the co-villagers to appear at the trial, otherwise they might not receive seed for their fields. The brigade foreman controlled the attendance of his subordinates by “penciling in” those who were absent.

Our parents designated an overnight stay for us at our neighbor’s house, where the children were older than we were. Our parents went with the neighbors to my grandfather’s trial. The trial was a show, that is, a public display. It was the ideology of Communism and the KGB to slander and belittle innocent people and to frighten others in order to lessen their desire to hear or read the Bible. Their ideology also tried to frighten people from going to American-sponsored churches.

Thus, grandfather was put on trial, and he received a sentence of four years. He left “by steam locomotive” (prisoner’s jargon), that is to say, on the main train.

After grandfather, they arrested his son (my uncle), and after my uncle they arrested the pastor of the church. The pastor was the husband of my mother’s cousin. They also arrested a group of brothers from the church. They bared the Church as much as they could. One older brother and a young man were left with the burden of supporting the Church materially and physically by rendering assistance to single mothers with children.

It happened like this: our fragile, thin grandmother took leave of her husband at the prison camp. Afterwards, she has to see off her son and son-in-law, who had to leave his beloved wife and three small children. What a fate! O cruel world! Such a feat was performed only in the name of Christ.

The rest of the people were judged at one trial. This happened in August. It was extremely hot on the street. The humidity was high where we lived near the sea. The trial took place this time at the former district center. The KGB again put on display a public trial. Once again they engineered a large public gathering, with lots of young people who barely understood anything about Christianity. In order to embitter the brothers, they attached a fictitious label on them, saying that this was a result of American imperialism, that these people were spies, and this was not the religion of our land. The religion was from America.

The plot reminds one of the time of Jesus Christ, when the high-priest Caiaphas and his priests poisoned the mob with various accusations against Christ.

It was all done to achieve their desired result. And they managed to reach their objective. A mob is a mob, and it doesn’t take much effort to convince them.

Such were the methods that the atheistic-communist ideology used to battle against the Church. And the devil was their one and only ideologue. That's why the plot was similar, and everything repeats itself many times.

After the trial, the entire group of condemned brothers was placed in a special small vehicle (Voronok, "Crow") for prisoners. In the intense heat of the day, the people surrounded the vehicle in a radius of 10 meters. At this time the brothers inside the vehicle started to sing a psalm:

"For the Evangelical Faith
For Christ we will stand
Following His example
Always forward, forward after Him.
The battle is intense, the flames are terrible,
And the places are shaking;
Raise the banner higher
Of the victorious Christ."

[*"Pesni Blagovestnika,"* Evangelical Songs, No.283]

As they continued singing the evangelical song, the wives, mothers, children and close friends who came to the trial took one last glance at their departing sons, husbands, fathers and dear friends. Separation would last not for days or months, but for years. Our mothers were told, "Now the chickens will rake you away." This was a public discrimination to aggravate the public, to demolish and destroy compassion in simple folk towards all single mothers and fatherless children. This was done to back the commoners into the corner of fear, which would cause them to turn away from their faith in God, and no longer serve Him according to the principles of the Bible. The common people weren't able to withstand such skillfully refined politics. They had a mob mentality, and they were easily deceived. And in those days it was easy to manipulate a mob.

Hard times fell on the shoulders of the mothers. However, the chain reaction eventually affected all of us. We were the laughingstock of the village and country. We were an example of shame and contempt, and we were counted as idiotic and backward. Nevertheless, all the Christian children were excellent students in school. God blessed all of us. To God be the glory! He promised not to leave the fatherless or the widows, but to care for them painstakingly. This is his personal promise, his divine nature, and all the mothers and everyone in the Church sincerely believed it.

"A father for the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation.
God set the solitary in families; He brings out those who are
bound into prosperity." (Psalm 68:5-6)

It's insulting that these people appeared to be so cheaply deceived by the devil. They were simply compelled to do wrong, oppressing the fatherless and the widows. (Ezekiel 22:7) As a consequence, God also has set down a judgmental decree:

"Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong,
in the days that I shall deal with you?
I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it." (Ezekiel 22:14)

CHAPTER 2 – SCHOOL YEARS

A new coil of discrimination starts to unwind. Everything was permissible for a teacher, who could throw all kinds of dirt on any of the Christians in front of the entire class. This was done deliberately. It was also a political act with a purpose: to place in the minds of children an aversion towards Christians and God. In this manner the future generation was trained in the ideology of Communism. “Communism is the youth of the world, and it will be constructed by them,” wrote the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. They tried to break us, Christian children, with this kind of ideology. The teacher was permitted to take any one of us from our desk and ask so-called stupid questions, which were far from the subject. The questions were based on distorted views of Christianity.

However, God already at such a young age was teaching us many things. He was teaching us patience and condescension toward each other. He was teaching us to live by faith. These years became the foundation of our spiritual growth. Praise God! All this appeared to the world as foolishness, but to us who are being saved it was the power of God. (I Corinthians 1:18)

We continued to serve the Lord and to conduct church services. Sometimes, the authorities found out about our services, and they attempted to photograph our activities. This was done in the following manner: evidently they waited beneath the windows, and when we knelt to pray, they quickly rushed in and snapped their cameras. On the following day in school, the pictures of our service would already be hanging on the walls. During recess the teachers would walk by and stop, and then they would ridicule everyone who attended the church services. This was done to intensify the discrimination and to bring us more pain and suffering. This was mental genocide done in a public way. They simply tried to disgrace us. We were constantly called American spies, agents of American imperialism.

We were teenagers, and this kind of pressure caused us to ask as we woke up in the morning: “Why didn’t the Second Coming of Christ arrive last night?” In our adolescent mind, our understanding of the Second Coming of Christ was that it would take place only at night. We waited for that night every day. It was a continuous topic of discussion.

It was sad for us to look at all the mothers, whose husbands were in prison. We often saw them in tears at prayer meetings or at church services. We understood very little about the significance of all their tears.

Thus, nothing could really break us, even though the devil desired it immensely. On the contrary, all of us continued to serve God, zealously attending church services and participating in physical work: digging the gardens, planting potatoes and picking them out, cleaning up after the harvest, and gathering trunks of sunflower plants in the field for the heating of homes. Charitable work is the stronghold of the Kingdom of God – it is protected by pressing on, by opposition and boldness. That’s why Apostle Paul asked for intercessory prayer from the brothers and sisters of the Ephesian Church: “So that I may preach boldly, as I ought to.” (Ephesians 6:20) This was for Paul the source of his help.

There was an upheaval in the country. It turned out that Nikita Khrushchev, the president of the Soviet Union, earnestly tried to purge the country of Christian people. However, it turned out the other way around. The Kremlin (center of government) purged themselves from him; and besides, he left in disgrace, like an unprofitable leader of the country.

These kinds of episodes the Bible calls the law of cause and effect – sowing and reaping. It's essential to remember this law. Sowing the seeds, you sow only on your own section, and you alone reap the harvest. Whether you're a president or a millionaire, poor or a businessman – in front of God's justice all are equal. No one can avoid the law of sowing and reaping: "What you sow, you will reap." (Galatians 6:7)

A new president comes to power, Leonid Brezhnev. After the congress of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CPSU), they started granting amnesty to many brothers. My uncle was one of the first to be set free, and then the rest of the brothers were released. Only my grandfather was kept imprisoned to the end.

It was a unique picture: they were riding home and no one was aware of their day of release. They were riding home on a regular bus route. Along the way they decided to get off the bus in a neighboring village and walk the final miles home. And so they got off the bus and walked seven kilometers (almost five miles). The people on the bus, when they arrived at their destination, announced to the covillagers that the Christians had been released and were presently walking home from the neighboring village. This news instantly spread through the village. Many people came out of their houses to welcome them home. The former prisoners were heroes of the faith, and they walked – not with heads bowed low in humiliation – but in a worthy manner with heads held high. They walked with the feeling that they had fulfilled their high calling and purpose before the Eternal God. In short, the curse that the KGB hurled on the Christian mothers did not come to pass: the chickens did not rake anyone away. Everyone survived.

Yes, these years of the men's absence were difficult, but the Lord taught us many things. He was always our helper in all our misfortunes. Only our grandfather was left to bear the entire burden of the administration's wrath. He had to serve his sentence to the end. He awaited his deliverance to the final bell.

With the release of the brothers, the Church felt revived. The pastor of the Church once again served his flock. The days of being orphaned were over. The entire Church family was assembled together. The first Communion (Eucharist) in years was celebrated. Once again, the Church was prepared to announce to the world that, against sin and worldly things, it is as "terrible as an army with banners." (The Song of Solomon 6:10)

Church services were conducted always under the steadfast eye of the KGB, who continued to visit and watch all activities. At times the Church had to account for penalties; it was necessary to pay for everything. There were innumerable penalties. We simply became accustomed to them, even though the extraction of the penalty amounted to one month's salary.

To complete the secondary education level for Christians was virtually impossible. In order to be instructed in the 9th class (grade), it was necessary to be enrolled in the Komsomol (Communist Union of Youth). The student was compelled, after the 8th

class, to travel to the city, finish some courses in secondary school, and go to work. For Christians, certain jobs were available: for boys, there were construction workers and drivers; for girls, seamstress or work in manufacturing factories, or wherever they could get a job. Higher education institutes and technical schools were admitting only Komsomol members.

In order to be convinced of my statements, take a look at one example, and then make your own conclusion about the way in which it was possible to attend an institute or a university:

“Comrades! A student of the Naval Institute of Engineers, Joseph Bondarenko, is not permitted to pass the examinations nor defend his thesis for a degree. He is dismissed from the institute for the propagation of a world view that is harmful for Soviet society.” [Three Sentences by Joseph Bondarenko] The assistant minister of the Soviet Navy attended this meeting.

After this occurrence, corrections to the laws of education were enacted. Christians were no longer tolerated at the higher education level, because it would turn out to be a disaster for Communist society. These corrections were not advertised; they were not quoted in the press. It was necessary to continue deceiving the entire world. However, these corrections were strictly adhered to in certain places by local authorities and by the rectors of institutes and universities, and sometimes even by the directors of technical schools.

Our Christian youth approached these restrictions with humility. They didn't lay claim to anything. With God's help they passed over this field of obstacles. There was no sense in fighting. There was no one to fight with. It was a regime.

At the workplace, the Christians were distinguished from other workers by their hard-working ethic. They were always one of the best workers. Their behavior was exemplary. The managers of various organizations saw this with their own eyes. They were perplexed: Why are these Christians with their immense capabilities forbidden to move forward? There was one answer: “Their religion is harmful. It's from America. And they are dangerous to our society.” For many Christians, the only way they could advance in their career was to forsake their faith. Also, it was obligatory to join the Communist Party, which paved the way into the future, and looked the other way at many indecent, and sometimes criminal, acts of its own members.

For example, we had a proverb among the common folk: If you need building materials, become a member of the Communist Party; if you need to work, become a member of the “Shtundy” (i.e. Evangelical Church). [Note: “Shtundy” was a derisive term for Evangelical Christians. The word comes from the German word “Stunde” (hour). It referred to the special “biblical hours” when they read the Bible, said sermons, and sang spiritual hymns.] The proverb characterized the fundamental doctrines of the two communities. It was the product of two master craftsmen: Communist and Christian. The proverb itself dictated to the nation who was qualified for what. God helped us carry on a victorious life in Christ Jesus! Praise Him! The Church once again proved its significance with its personal example of conscientious work and behavior in society. These were times of Evangelical work conducted by personal example.

The year was 1971. I was already in Odessa (near the Black Sea). I completed one year of school and went to work. I made many new acquaintances among the youth in the city and in other regions. Musical activities are drawn deeper into various aspects of the Church services. Good relationships are established.

The waves of the sea beat against the shore, and then the bottom of the sea pulls everything into the depths. Thus my Christian life pulled me deeper into the depths, where I went without any resistance. More time was devoted to our home church. The pastor served many churches, and we gladly started to divide the responsibilities amongst us. In some churches, a strong youth group was created. The youth were capable of playing musical instruments, preaching, singing, and reciting verses and poems. They were mobile and could relocate easily. Practically every Sunday, a program was created for the Church service. More opportunities opened up, and acquaintances with the youth expanded throughout the southern part of Ukraine: in Nikolaev, Kherson, and Crimea. We utilized all the opportunities for evangelism and for serving in spiritual revivals.

When they talk of the evangelism that began in 1988 – the 1,000 year anniversary of the Christianization of Russia – we already had courageously carried out evangelical activities in the 1970's. However, it was not on a grand scale, and it was under different conditions. Nevertheless, God's work was organized, and God blessed us.

We were aware of what we were doing, and we saw clearly that we were within aim of the KGB's sharp-shooting eye. We knew that in a moment's notice they could be unforgiving, and we would be serving time in prison, just like our older generation. We also were ready to pay the high price of spreading the gospel of the Kingdom of God in an atheistic country.

The storm clouds began to gather. Several brothers were arrested in the city of Nikolaev. Once again, the trials commenced, and then they were sentenced for years. In 1974, there was a two day trial of Brother Khlevnov in Nikolaev. We traveled with a large group of youth from the city of Kherson to the trial in Nikolaev. We heard the sentence of the trial. There would be a separation of family members for years.

Nevertheless, we continued to work in the field of evangelism. Everything we did was done with a tremendous love in the name of Jesus Christ. It was done only towards the building of the Kingdom of God. The movements of our collective efforts serve to this day for us as a profound imprinted memory. We were not ashamed of the time we spent in our youth. When we meet with each other, we have something to reminisce about. Also, there is something to tell our children.

Well, and there are details of our Church services, which it is not possible to completely relate. It was a sacrifice of our time and our life. It was a great risk, all of which was done for the glory of God!

CHAPTER 3 -- WATER BAPTISM

On the 26th of September, in the year 1973, I entered into a covenant with the Lord and participated in the sacred rite of water baptism. This festive day took place not in the city, and it did not even take place in our native church. It took place far away on the

periphery of the city. Everything took place in secret (underground) and in silence in the darkness of night. The water baptism was performed in a secretive manner by the pastor because for him it could turn out to have dire consequences from the authorities.

At this time, only my friend, Leonid, and I received the water baptism. The two of us prayed to God, and then we entered the waters with the pastor. It was a beautiful starry night, and the weather was pleasant. Nature agreed with our desires to enter into a covenant with God. It appeared as if Nature even sympathized with us and wanted to share in our happiness. Once we were standing in the water, we shivered a little as we looked up at the starry heavens and anticipated the blessed event. We gave precise answers to all the questions posed by the pastor. We believed that our answers were instantly heard by God.

We served God, and from that sacred moment of our baptism, we understood that we had completely dedicated our lives to God. We had entered into an immense responsibility in our lives before God. We did not possess any exceptional talents, but what we did have – the beginnings of natural capabilities – they now belonged to the Lord. Now Lord, you use us wherever we are needed and in whatever we can be of service to You.

Now we were able to participate in the Lord's Supper (Eucharist) with the harmonious family of the Church, where we became part of the mystery of the Lord's body. And then there was the consecrated verse that was read to me at my baptism. This verse became the foundation of my Christian life, as well as my daily life:

“Let your garments be always white,
and let your head lack no ointment.” (Ecclesiastes 9:8)

This festive day was so joyous and memorable that I had wanted a simple photograph to remember it. However, we fully understood the entire situation around us, and accepted the inevitable without complaint. Nevertheless, when freedom finally came, I always had a goal of making the day of my baptism a festive holiday. This day had to remain an unforgettable day of my vow to the Lord. In life, we often return in our mind to this day – the day that we promised to serve God with a pure, good conscience. (1 Peter 3:21)

CHAPTER 4 – THE BEGINNING OF EVENTS: INVESTIGATION

My turn eventually arrived. You might practically say it was my Via Dolorosa (Way of the Cross), which was fated by an unearthly trial. I end up by random distribution in a training detachment for the preparation of military duty on a naval warship. Here in the detachment it was obvious instantly – or to say it plainly – it happened that they didn't grab me while I was at liberty, but here I simply landed into their hands, like a booty.

On the day of our arrival at the detachment, they changed our clothes for sailor's clothes. When we put on the uniform, we looked strange, and we started to laugh at ourselves. We had our own impressions.

Then after lunch, an officer and a midshipman arrive by turns to begin their interrogation by fishing for answers: What locality are you from? (As if they didn't already know). Where did today's company of one hundred men join the detachment?

There was one question that disturbed everyone: Why aren't you a member of the Komsomol? They also asked about my views in relationship to the Komsomol and Communism.

It became obvious to me who was trying to catch me in my words. The sailors standing to the side also noticed this, and that evening they asked me: "Why are they picking on you? What's it all about? Are you dragging a trail of tails behind you?"

"Oh, no," I answered. But to myself I thought: 'Well now, it is evident to the ordinary naked eye, and to bystanders, that from the first moment of my arrival, there are eyes watching me.'

Everyday I conscientiously respond to those kinds of questions. That is to say, I evade direct questions to the best of my ability. Even though it was apparent from the situation that everything was approaching an imminent discharge.

The thorny path of my life began on the sixth day of my naval service. The game was over, and the embittered persons – as the expression goes – "put up a senseless fight." It happened like this: After the morning relief our platoon was taken up to the second floor of the building – to the Lenin's Room (Hall). They gave us a sheet of paper, and it was mandatory for everyone to write explanations related to the following topics:

1. If you were not a member of the Komsomol – why not? Give reasons and arguments.
2. If you have any religious persuasions – write about your membership in a denomination.

For me this trick was completely transparent. Everything that takes place was being carefully examined. When I received the sheet of paper, I quickly wrote: I am not a member of the Komsomol organization, and I refuse to join it because I am a Christian. I have my own convictions, and I belong to one of the Christian denominations.

I was the first to finish writing. The officer took my paper and read it. He had a sly grin on his face.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, I was called to a special department for my first interrogation. After that, there was a second interrogation, and so on every day. During the day there was physical training. Many of the fellows finished their studies. They knew what I was writing about. In the afternoon there was the regular meeting in the special department.

At night – I don't know at whose orders or by which commands – the person on duty of the company or of the unit, or the first sergeant, could awaken me. They could decide who wasn't allowed to sleep for a determined amount of time. In order to make the time go by fast without fatigue, they would get us out of bed and carry on nightly discussions. They would ask hundreds of foolish questions about pseudoChristianity and religion, even though in this sphere they were amateurs. They could hold up three to four hours of my nightly rest, and there would be nothing left for my sleep. In the morning nobody asks anything – just fall in line and do your duty.

I started to lose my physical strength, and I felt like I was on the edge of some kind of physical breakdown or sickness. This continued practically every night. And if I was fortunate, and they didn't awaken me, I simply fell into a deep sleep. For some unknown

reason, I always dreamed of my mother, who wanted to take me by the hand. However, when I awoke, it was only a dream.

CHAPTER 5 – FIRST ARREST

Thirty-four days of my military service pass, and then my first arrest occurs. On this day there was a heavy rainstorm. According to the command plan, we were supposed to go on a forced march – it seems to me – a distance of ten kilometers. In full equipment. We were soaked through and through. There was water in the boots. In some places we had to run through puddles. We didn't have a single square inch of dry clothing on us.

In the afternoon we returned to the unit and lined up, and in front of 2,000 sailors, it was announced that I was being arrested for ten days. I was completely soaked to the last thread. They drove me away in that condition to the garrison guardhouse. And when they brought me there, they threw me into the basement prison cell, where my fate was determined.

An iron table was attached to the wall. There was an iron bench. There was a wooden screen made of planks, and it was fastened to the wall with hooks so that you couldn't lay on it during the day. According to the regulations, it was determined that the cardboard to strengthen the plank-bed would be given out only at 11 o'clock at night, and it would be taken away at 6 o'clock in the morning. They simply shoved me into the cell, and at my back I only heard the words: "Here is the place for you so-called Christians, you sectarian."

The cell had a harsh suffocating odor, a greasy dampness. I try to examine everything, since for me it's all unusual. I'm walking down this path for the first time. The walls are painted with black paint, or with tar, for a large part of the walls. But the greatest part of the wall was simply blossoming with fungus.

I came up to the wall and ran my fingers on it. From top to bottom was a layer of water. And the floor was also completely wet. It appeared that the entire town was arranged in a lowland below sea level. And the prison cells were located in the cellars.

Every morning, upon rising from bed, it was mandatory to wash the floor with a bucket of water. In the corner of the cell, beneath the ceiling, was a small window 40 x 20 centimeters. The opening through the small window revealed that somewhere in the outside world there is life, and the sun and sky are visible – but here inside the cell there was only confinement. To lean one's elbows on the small table during the day was impossible. I could only sit on the metal bench and walk – that was the entire regimen.

The cell becomes my **crucible of suffering**. There can be no thought now of any kind of substantial life. This was simply imprisonment in stench. It was in reality a dreadful place, like a nightmare. And yet the inner voice repeats: have faith in God, and he will definitely lead you out of this place. It was absolutely essential at this time to believe the same way as the majority of Christians believed. They were the heroes of the faith, and they also passed through the furnace of suffering. After all, God does not send that, which is beyond one's ability to perform.

THE FIRST NIGHT

The prison cell has the temperature of an underground basement. The clothes that I wear are completely soaked. I couldn't sit on the iron bench. The forced march brought my entire body and mind to a state of utter exhaustion. When the cardboard was given at 11 o'clock, I lifted the plank-bed and lay down, covering myself with only an overcoat. I couldn't sleep, and I was suffocating from the lack of clean air. I felt nauseous. My head ached immensely. The stench and the coldness reminded me that I was being squeezed, like a red-hot metal is squeezed by the mighty hands of a blacksmith. There was nobody to complain to, and there was nobody to talk with.

And here God begins to teach me practical lessons. I needed to stop all my tiresome thoughts. I needed to start from the beginning of my journey to learn very many principles. These principles were to serve as my major support and the source of strength in such an unequal battle of my solitude. The Lord, and only the Lord, needed to become my support in this confinement. I remembered the words that I used in my sermons. They were words of encouragement from a Psalm of King David:

“Seek the Lord and his strength,
Seek His face always.
Remember His marvelous works
That He has done, His wonders,
And the judgments of His mouth.”

(Psalm 105:4-5)

Now I begin to understand – why I am here. I must learn to seek a deep relationship with God. That means, God teaches in his first lesson, just like a firstgrader is taught his alphabet, so also I was taught: In this dreadful place, stench, wet and cold, you must seek the Lord and remember, and not only once, but many times sort out in your reasoning mind, and do that which you were not able to do when you were free. A free life is like a mountainous stream – it is continually in one turbulent condition. But here in my cell I needed to climb up a ladder, with short breaks in between each rung. The quest for God – it requires reasoning and remembrance.

I couldn't sleep all night. The basement temperature had its effect on my wet clothes and on my entire body. Several times I got up to walk with big strides in order to somehow warm up with the movement. And once again I tried to lie down and sleep, but nothing came of it. My wet shoes did not serve as a defense against the concrete basement. On the contrary, they brought nothing but cold to the soles of my feet. So I walked in my bare feet on the concrete floor. My teeth started to ache, and then the pains started. Then I would try again to go to sleep. I fell down from weariness on the plank-bed and covered my body with the wet overcoat. Instead of a pillow, I placed my arm under my head. Slowly, by this method, the memories returned. God started to comfort me and give me strength.

I started to remember our brothers in the church, who went through two terms. I remembered my uncles, my grandfather, the north, and Siberia. Up to this moment, the north and Siberia were for me the most captivating events in their stories, which I loved

to listen to and waited with anticipation for the next opportunity. But today it was my own practical reality. It was now the first historical page of my own pains and sufferings.

I remember the stories of my grandfather. In childhood I always loved to associate with him. At night we'd go through the fields in the colony of his zone (camp) in Vikovo amongst the overgrown reeds of the island of Yarmak, which was covered in perpetual fog. This was an awful depth of people's damnation, their pain and suffering, and mockery. This was the periphery of penal servitude in the gathering of reeds. And the overseers of the convoy (of prisoners) had opportunities for unlimited license and lawlessness.

Many days were spent in the reeds, and grandfather was not able to dry out his clothes. In the tent, there was one small stove which gave out warmth only when chopped wood was placed in it, but for the overseers they threw in wood all night. No one was interested in working in this marsh. At the end of the day everyone was completely exhausted, and they quickly fell into a deep sleep after the first warm feeling.

Remembering these stories of life's experience brought a calming effect. At this time, my reasoning mind began to realize: Wasn't this my personal choice? That means it was my choice of priorities and my evaluation of values. In this manner, and through these methods, God spoke to me and taught me, giving the first lessons to the first-grader.

And so I couldn't fall asleep. I keep walking back and forth at a brisk pace to keep warm. I finally was able to fall asleep at daybreak. It was only for about one hour. Thank God for even that. However, at the six o'clock rising in the morning, the guard's knock on the door brings back the daily grind. The jailor-soldier takes away the cardboard, the plank-bed (where I tossed and turned all night) goes up to the wall, and then he tosses a bucket of water to wash the concrete floor. That's how we were served.

During the day it felt a little more cheerful, a little warmer. Even the clothes started to dry out from the temperature of the body. Little by little comes the condition known as God's peace, and I come back to my senses, like coming out of a state of shock.

At ten o'clock in the morning, the door of my cell opens, and they take me out of the basement to the surface of the courtyard. A colonel invited me to sit down next to him on a bench. The colonel was a commander of the garrison guardhouse. Acting in a fatherly way, he placed his heavy masculine hand on my knee, and in a very smooth, crafty manner he started to feel sorry for me.

"Listen, sailor!" he said. "I arrived here last night just because of you. I looked at the plank bed where you sleep. I looked at your cell, and I wept to myself. Believe me! It hurts me – to my very soul – to see you like this. I understand you are not the kind of person that wants to be in the basement. I think that you are mistaken. Your parents befuddled you from your childhood, and they dragged you – to put it bluntly – into this religion. They deprived you of the fortunate future."

The colonel poured out his pity on me for about 15 to 20 minutes. After that he proceeded in a more serious tone. His music changed, and his tonality sharply modulated.

"Are you really a member of a religious community?" he asked harshly.

“Yes,” I answered.

“What charmed you, at such a young age, to accept water baptism?” was his second pointed question.

From the performance of his questions, I understood that the colonel was not a dilettante in religious affairs – playing the role of a prostitute. He had a good understanding of the subject at hand.

“I don’t think I’m a new discovery for you,” I replied as I received the word from God. “I’m sure I’m not the first in this basement, and not the last. Others traveled down this road before me, and others will travel it after me. Now, exactly, it is my time and my path. Christ spoke of this when he said, ‘They persecuted me and they will persecute you.’ This choice is my right.”

The false compassion evaporated on the face of the colonel, like the morning dew from the sunshine. He let out several swear words.

“I will let you rot in prison!” he exploded. “Today I will write an order through the commandant’s office for all duty rosters – to deprive you of all strolls in the fresh air.”

Now there is no more pity left. The colonel looked me straight in the face with a fixed gaze. Then he squeezed my chin with his hand and quietly said: “Look there in the front garden. There’s my dog, a German Sheepdog breed. For me she is worth more than you!”

He shoved me across my chin with such a force that my flat cap flew off my head. I stumbled backwards several steps.

“To the cellar with him!” roared the colonel like a bear. “And without an outdoor stroll!”

Once again I’m in the cell, thinking about all that just occurred. God continues to teach, and today it was necessary to gaze realistically at two sides of one medal. I needed to gaze at the pity extended towards me, which played on my feelings and delved into my subconscious mind. It implored me to gaze on the horizon of the kingdoms and on the promises of the future. And at the same time to see myself being thrown away because the colonel did not reach the desired results in our conversation. And then comparing his dog to me, giving a higher value to the animal than to human dignity. And finally roaring like a hungry bear, defending his fresh catch.

My thoughts were interrupted, and I was led at the command to the second floor. On the door was a sign: Investigator. Now it was apparent, and I guessed at once, what stood behind all this.

I entered the room. A captain of the first rank from my detachment sat behind the desk. He invited me to sit in front of the desk. He announced that he is my military investigator from a special department, and that he was required to gather documents. Then tomorrow he was obligated to escort me to the garrison prosecutor. If I didn’t change the course of events, then they would open up a criminal case against me. I would be under investigation, and afterwards a military tribunal would sentence me.

“What do you say about that?” asked the investigator.

“I am familiar with these kinds of proceedings,” I answered. “And about my actions, I understand the consequences to the end.”

The investigator switched to another subject very gently: “You know, I received an order several days ago to take care of your personal file. I’ve already observed you

several times. I watched you from my room at headquarters, and I noticed your attitude towards your work at the parade-ground. I watched you in the circle of sailors, your fellow-workers. I watched you in the dining hall. You are a normal man. I do not understand your religion, what kind of power drives you to undergo such suffering, what kind of ideology. What will you gain from this? I finished school with excellent grades, at the highest military college, the academy. My family is educated. But I don't understand your belief, all of your ideology that you are propounding. This is a harmful religion. You'll ruin your entire life; it is given to a person only once. I do not understand your God, who requires from you, namely, such sacrifice and pain. Believe within your own soul and within your own mind – silently. Pray silently! What do you think, that amongst 2,000 sailors there aren't other believers, and you're the only one? They belong to the Komsomol, and they silently believe to themselves, showing to nobody their personal persuasions with regard to religion."

While he was having his say and unburdening his feelings, I knew that I would have to respond. I remembered the word that Christ formerly spoke:

"Do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." (Matthew 10:19-20)

Indeed, God's promised words poured out, like rain on the earth, and I received the Word ("Rema," Greek) from the Lord:

"I have heard from your mouth that you are a Jew. Well, I also believe in the God of Abraham, who became the father of your nation, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. I don't have a painted God, or an image poured out of clay, bronze, or copper. I don't have a god sculpted and squeezed out of stone or wood. I don't pray, nor do I bow down, to idols and holy images. I bow down only to the God that Abraham, Moses, David, and others worshipped."

The officer did not listen any further. He got up from behind the desk and stood to his full stature.

"So you worship our God?" he asked.

"It appears to be so!" I answered.

After this exchange of words, we parted. They took me back to my cell.

On the second day, they drove me to the garrison prosecutor and my case was opened up. Now my situation was different – I was under investigation. The journey to the prosecutor took all day, for it was necessary to travel more than 200 kilometers in one direction.

At night, after being covered by the overcoat, thought-provoking impressions of the day come to mind: the meeting with the colonel, the confrontation with the investigator, and the statements of the warrant officer and other officers on the way. It turned out that my life was outlined on a KGB chart, where enormous forces were already at work. Now there was only one road – to go forward. And every day lived would be a written history of my life.

On the second day, after already experiencing the prosecutor's office, I was once again ushered into the room with the sign: "Investigator." Except this time it would be in front of the officer of the prosecutor's office.

A special squad returns from my native land after obtaining all of the information: every piece of intelligence where they found me at church services, where fines were written, where I participated in the church services. In short, they brought everything.

With regard to this information, a hastily assembled meeting is conducted with the detachment command, a special squad, the garrison guardhouse, and an examining magistrate.

When the investigator became familiar with the papers that provided evidence for him, the colonel bellowed out: "What did I tell you? This is not an ordinary bird. He came by himself into your hands. Don't you hear how he conducts a conversation and how he answers you? I understood from the first day that this is a trained man, prepared for a purpose. Don't look at his youth. He has followers. It's precisely these young people that the west and the USA use in reconnaissance. There is nothing in common here to tie to God. Here, under the name of God, is concealed the smell of imperialism, our enemy. It is necessary to let these kind of people rot!"

Again I'm in a cell and entirely involved in analyzing the events of the day. Did I do everything correctly today? Or did I allow errors to creep into the conversations? Even though they didn't ask me many questions. It was necessary mainly to answer only "yes" or "no." A picture comes into view – there is no sight of freedom for me. All the material gathered speed, and it was essential now to move at full capacity, boldly and only forward.

Now my parents know that I am locked up. The military investigator personally came to the house of my father and mother and told them the news. It became easier for those, whose relatives pray at home. It also means that the Church and many of my friends are made aware of the events. It became warmer for the soul, and this warmth transformed into a condition of prayer. This was something for me to pray about. And something for which to thank God!

First: God was the source of my strength, my support, much earlier than my time in the cell. In good times, God took care of me by instilling in me a love for the Word of God, which I read a lot when I was at liberty. I loved to study the Scriptures, to memorize the golden verses from the chapters. We had this kind of practice in the middle of our youth programs. There were many Christian songs and verses that we knew from memory. I remembered the most interesting Christian events and testimonies of our brothers and fathers. God gave me the opportunity to preserve this storeroom, which now has a vast supply of priceless wealth. I was able to walk in the cell for hours – remembering, reasoning, and quoting verses from the Bible and verses from songs. And this truly was a confession of faith! This was my strength!

Second: One of the strongest sources of my support was prayer. It was the kind of prayer that I had learned in childhood – to pray for hours. It was a result of the life of our Church in my childhood, where the process of my formation took place. Our fathers and mothers, and also the older generation of the Church, and my pastor – they were the teachers of prayer in fervent prayer services. All this became the foundation of my spiritual life to this day.

During this period of arrest, there definitely were many current events, even though it was forbidden for me to read journals or newspapers. God gave such solitude, and he

taught the first-grader many disciplines at his desk. This period of time was a mutual relationship with prayer.

My first term ended. In the afternoon, they took me to the unit (detachment). I look, and I see fresh faces in the outdoors, in the sun. But I'm all pale and unwashed, like the wall without sun or air in the basement. I put myself in order, and I flow into the life of the company. Several of the well-known sailors came up to me and showed compassion towards me.

"Listen!" the sailors said. "Be reasonable. Look at who you resemble. Renounce your convictions while you're in the military. When you return home, you can pray all you want. Adapt yourself to circumstances! Simply lead a time-serving form of life. Be smart. Don't fight at a bayonet point with them. Don't you understand? Don't you see that they'll let you rot in prison, or destroy you? They won't let you live like this! You know the history of our country. This ideology destroyed millions of people of our own nation for dissenting. And now you alone want to go against the current. We feel sorry for you!"



[My Crucible of Suffering by Vasil Zavgorodniy, translated from Russian by Paul John Wigowsky](#)

[Note: Also published under the new title – “The Treasure of Strength in Adversity” by Vasil Zavgorodniy. He told me some “brethren” did not approve of the other title.]

MY CRUCIBLE OF SUFFERING:
Surviving Communist Persecution
by Vasil Zavgorodniy

Translated from Russian
by Paul John Wigowsky

I had Vasil Zavgorodniy sign his name on a copy he gave me, and he gave me his honorable word that I could print excerpts online (website). His permission was in exchange for my spending many hours translating his book – for free! I realize now that it was good that I had such an agreement with him, because now I see on Amazon that the book is out of print. And only my excerpts tell the story of this incredible, courageous man.

<https://wigowsky.com/ukraine/vasil/CrucibleofSuffering.pdf>

I added a bilingual version on this webpage – it included a couple of extra chapters. The bilingual version allows the reader to see the writing ability of Vasil Zavgorodniy. Here are the extra chapters (Ch 6 - 13):

ГЛАВА 6 – ПРИЕЗД ДЕДУШКИ

Идут мои будни в учебном отряде. Иногда вызывает следователь, иногда особый отдел. До всего уже насколько привык, что считалось всё нормой.

В одно время утром, после завтрака, подходит до меня командир моей роты и говорит:

«Пойдём со мной»!

И мы идём вместе говорим обо всём. Подходим до КПП (Контрольный Пропускной Пункт), и сразу же мысль – а куда он ведёт меня? Заходим на КПП, а там ожидает меня дедушка. Вот это сюрприз. Это мой любимый человек, с сильным практическим опытом. Мы все трое сели в комнате КПП, и командир начал выдавать информацию обо мне, и обо всём вокруг меня. Разговор шёл больше часа, и он просил дедушку повлиять на меня, чтобы я изменил переориентацию и мог ещё спасти своё положение. Затем он оставил нас одних.

Для меня было очень важна эта встреча. Я уже за это время за всеми соскучился. Самым ценным для меня были сообщения, что все те служения нашей группы молодёжи продолжают по тому же принципу и в том же режиме, в котором мы начинали.

CHAPTER 6 – THE ARRIVAL OF MY GRANDFATHER

My everyday life goes by in the training detachment. Sometimes the investigator calls, sometimes the special department. I was so accustomed to everything that it was considered to be the norm.

One time in the morning, after breakfast, the commander of the company came up to me.

“Come with me!” he ordered.

We walk together and talk about everything. We come up to the KPP (Control Checkpoint). Suddenly, the thought occurs to me, ‘Where is he taking me?’ We enter the building, and there, waiting for me, is my grandfather. What a surprise! This is my favorite person; he has a strong personal experience. The three of us sat in the room of the KPP, and the commander started to give out the information about me and about everything around me. The conversation extended to more than an hour. The commander asked grandfather to influence me, in order that I change my orientation and still have a chance to save my position. Then the commander left us alone.

This meeting was very important to me. Lately, I started to miss everyone. The most precious thing for me were the communications that all the services of our youth group were still continuing according to the same principles and with the same regimen that we started.

Было приятной новостью, что младшие за нас создают уже свой оркестр; наши ученики скоро пойдут по линии движения.

Дедушка рассказал, что многие Церкви посвящены в мои события. Очень многие молятся, и конечно передавали сердечный привет. Для меня его приезд был равносильно, что для двигателя внутреннего сгорания – капитальный ремонт.

Нам дали время только два часа, хотя его поезд уходил вечером, и ему остаток времени необходимо было провести на вокзале. Обычно пускают с родственниками в увольнение, меня этой привилегии лишили. Я под следствием. Навернулись слёзы в дедушкиных глазах, со всего было видно, что на душе было ему очень тяжело прощаться. С разговора командира роты, он понял что предстоит разлука на годы.

А сейчас прощаемся и последние слова благословения. Это были большие благословения на малой земле. Новый мир, только в кратком измерении. Остался я снова один.

There was also pleasant news about those younger than us, who already formed their own orchestra; our students would soon proceed along the same lines of our movement.

Grandfather related the news that many churches were aware of my situation, and many were praying for my safety. And, of course, they extended their heartfelt greetings to me. For me his arrival was the equivalent of a major overhaul of an internal combustion engine.

They gave us only two hours for the meeting, even though his train was leaving at night. And so it was necessary for him to spend the remaining time at the train station. Ordinarily, they allow prisoners to be with the relatives until departure, but I wasn't given that privilege. I was under investigation. Tears welled up in my grandfather's eyes, and it was visible that it was very difficult in his soul to part with me. From his conversation with the commander of the company, he understood that separation for many years was forthcoming.

And now he bids farewell and says his last words of blessing. These were big blessings on a small earth. A new world, but short-lived. Once again I'm left alone.

ГЛАВА 7 -- БУДНИ

На второй день меня вызывают на допрос. Почему-то здесь присутствует политрук роты, капитан-лейтенант. Как только я доложил о своём прибытии, он как взорвётся на меня:

«Я, если бы знал, что твой дед, привезёт новые силы и моральную поддержку, я тот поезд подорвал бы!» И пошла матерщина.

Мне пришлось молчать. Я избрал эту позицию, а в мыслях вспомнилась школьная партка, где писал сочинение на тему: «Коммунизм – это молодость мира и возвещать его молодым!» Вот это лицо офицера, политработника олицетворяющего идеологию коммунизма, своим языком, своим поведением, эти действия являются видимыми и слышимыми. Так а что там гнездится глубже? Эта брань политработника просто поверхностная плоскость, а что творится под ней?

Куда так сильно желают меня втиснуть любым способом и под любым предлогом? Что собой представляет «хорошее будущее» куда меня толкают с неимоверной силой, сами будучи так осквернены своим же языком. Это невидимое дно. Это обещания пустыни в характере дьявола, это есть его природа.

CHAPTER 7 -- WORKING DAYS

On the second day, they send for me for an examination. For some reason the political instructor of the company, a lieutenant-captain, is in attendance. As soon as I made a report of my arrival, he exploded:

"If I knew that your grandfather would bring you new strength and moral support, I would have blown up the train!" And then the foul language began.

I had to keep quiet. I chose this position, but in my thoughts I remembered the school desks where we wrote a composition on the theme: "Communism is the youth of the world, and it will be elevated by them!" And here was the face of the officer, a political worker who personified the ideology of communism, with his own tongue and with his own behavior – these actions show up to be seen and heard. But what teems in the depths of such thoughts? The foul language of the political worker is just the outer surface. But what is going on underneath?

Where do they desire so strongly to squeeze me into, using every available means and under any pretext? What in itself represents "a good future" – to which they shove with incredible strength? And yet, they themselves are so profane with their own tongue. It is an invisible bottom. It is the promises of the wilderness characterized by the devil, and it is his essential nature. (Matthew 4:1-11)

Значить мы на правильном пути, и двигаться необходимо вперед бесспорно. С нами Господь. Мы находимся в Божественной природе, имея брань не против людей, а против зла, и духов злобы поднебесных. (Ефесянам 6:12) На этот раз я ушёл с внутренним покоем. Внутренний мир был вехом моего пути.

Мне приятно было рассуждать о Божьем откровениях, просветивших мой разум. Бог показал ещё раз детали идеологии атеизма, красочно преподанные, языком красочно оформленные. Обещали сколько будущего, хотя сами были весьма несчастны и жалкими, со своими идеями, которые были зыбки, без всякого основания, и исполнялись только лозунгами. В сущности было гниль.

В жизни не один раз мы встречали практический эпизод. Лежит брошена доска, вид поверххростной плоскости довольно не плохой. Но когда поднимаешь эту доску и смотришь плоскость другой стороны – эта доска полугнилая, а под ней черви. Вот практическая идеология коммунизма и атеизма, хотя теоритическая плоскость звучит не плохо: «Коммунизм это молодость мира, и воздвинуть его молодым».

That means that I was on the right path, and it was necessary to move forward without any doubt. The Lord is with us! We are in God's nature, having put on his armor, not against people, but against evil and "against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12) At this time I left with an inner peace. The inner world was the landmark of my path.

It was pleasant for me to contemplate God's revelations, which enlightened my reasoning mind. God showed me once again details of the ideology of atheism. It was taught in colorful language and formed with vivid images by silver-tongued speakers. They promised so much in the future, although they themselves were extremely unfortunate and wretched. Their ideas, which were unreliable, were without any basis and were carried out simply by slogans. In reality, it was rotten stuff.

In life we have encountered not once, but many times, a practical episode. A discarded plank lies on the ground. The appearance of its outer surface seems to be rather good. However, when you pick up the plank and look at the surface of the other side – the plank is half-rotten and has worms. And so it is with the practical ideology of communism and atheism – the theoretical surface sounds rather good: "Communism is the youth of the world, and it will be elevated by the youth."

ГЛАВА 8 – ВТОРОЙ АРЕСТ

На этот раз разыграли ещё одну историю, зараняя нарисовав её картину, а потом пожелали её воплотить практически. История на психологический слом.

В ленкомнате построили весь мой взвод. Входят командиры роты и некоторые из командования отрядом. Входят женщины, только не понятно почему они сейчас в части, в моей роте? Меня вызывают вперед, и устраивают публичный пресс. Это была дешёвая игра, и дешёвая картина, на уровне детского умазаклучения.

Я один стою впереди взвода. Женщины поочереди начали высказывать в слезах о роли патриотизма к Родине, о ношей суперстране СССР, о нашей признательности пред всем миром, о том что в коммунистическую систему входят всё больше и больше стран. А религия – это враг; и религиозные убеждения – это опиум для народа.

Стоя пред строем, ничего не отвечая, просто подумав: А я что против Родины, или против патриотизма к ней? Я всего лишь Христианин, и дайте мне возможность так мыслить и по этому принципу жить. И по правилам Библии поступать в моей личной жизни! Ничего я так и не мог сказать. Мне просто не дали возможности.

CHAPTER 8 – THE SECOND ARREST

This time they performed another event, having drawn up its scenery and plot beforehand. Then they desired to embody it in practice. The event was created to precipitate a psychological break down.

In Lenin's Room, they erected my entire platoon. The commander of the company, and several commanding offers of the detachment, entered. Women also enter – except it's not clear, why are they now in the unit, in my company? I'm called forward. They arranged for public pressure. It was a worthless game, an empty picture, on the level of a child's mental perceptions and conclusions.

I stand alone in front of the platoon. One by one, the women started to speak out with tears in their eyes: of the role of patriotism towards the motherland, of the super-country USSR, of our gratitude in front of the entire world for the many countries who entered into the communist system, of religion being the enemy, and of religious beliefs being the opium of the people.

I didn't say anything as I stood in front of the system. I just thought to myself: 'Why am I against the motherland? Why am I against the patriotism expressed towards her? I'm only a Christian. And I just want the opportunity to think and live by Christian principles. Let me observe the rules and regulations of the Bible in my personal life.' I couldn't say

В этом моменте вдруг один из матросов теряет сознание, и озлобленная публика вся обрушилась на меня. Ситуация накопилась до высокой температуры. Женщины плачут словно на похоронах. Этого матроса выносят на улицу. А в строю матросы гнут маты. Я продолжаю стоять в молчании, как будто бы завис над обрывом и только в разуме молясь Богу. Кому что скажешь? Или кому что объяснять? А командиры разыграв эту историю, выполнили свою грязную работу, очень просто и дешёво, без всяких усилий. Сделали меня врагом Родины и врагом народа.

Всё происходящее в ленкомнате стало подобием какой-то городской площади, где кем-то одурманенна толпа, просто готова меня сейчас растерзать по клочам. Я понимал, что толпа – это всегда плохо, негативно.

Бог дал мне откровение: всё это было заранее подготовленно, и это Божье чутьё в моей душе подтвердили довольно ухмыляющейся лица офицеров. Выполнили!

В конце этой драмы, мне объявляют снова арест. Матросы покидают ленкомнату, а мне задают вопрос:

«Знаешь ли ты что либо об истории Ивана Мойсеева?»

anything like that. They simply did not give me the opportunity.

Suddenly, at this moment, one of the sailors loses consciousness. The embittered public descended on me. The situation heated up to a high temperature. The women cried as if they were at a funeral. They carry the sailor outside. The sailors in the regimen curse everything. I continue to stand silently, as if hovering over a precipice. I pray to God only in my mind. What can I say? And to whom can I make an explanation?

The commanders played out their plot and discharged their dirty work. It was done easily and cheaply, without much effort. They made me into an enemy of the motherland and an enemy of the people.

Everything that took place in Lenin's room started to resemble a city square, where a crowd is intoxicated by someone and is ready to tear you to pieces right now. I understood what a crowd is – it can turn out bad. Negatively.

God gave me a revelation: all this was prepared beforehand. And this intuition from God in my soul was confirmed by the satisfied grins on the faces of the officers. They had carried out their orders!

At the end of this drama, they announce my arrest once more. The sailors prepare to leave Lenin's room.

“Do you know anything about the history of Ivan Moiseyev?” ask the sailors.

«Да», я ответил. «Я не только знаю эту историю зверского убийства Ивана офицерами армии, а он мой земляк. Его родина от моей 25 километров. И даже хорошо знаю ту деревню, где жил Иван Мойсеев. Родители мои живут на границе с Молдовой».

Меня увозят в тот же подвал, в ту же камеру, которая стаёт моей пропиской, с той же целью и без воздуха. Я встречаю тот же железный столик, ту же железную скамейку, тот же щит закреплён к стене крючками. Со мной шинель, которая будет служить мне ночью одеялом. Слава Богу! У меня есть руки, согнув их, ночью они будут служить для меня подушкой.

На этот раз одежда была сухой, но всё равно, снова тяжело дышать и сильные головные боли.

Эта ночь была не до сна. Много анализов в происшедшем. В одном эпизоде была радость. Другой эпизод погружал мои мысли в какую-то глубину колодца, от куда раздаётся только эхо.

1-й эпизод: Разыгранная драма была душевной радостью и сердечным покоем, получив от Господа больше практических навыков и Его откровений. Бог открыл ту черноту, которую мне предлагают как «счастье будущего» – это какая то доля дьявольского царства прелестей. Бог вскрыл поднаготность применённой по предложенной схеме в Еденском саду Еве. Затем на истичении

“Yes,” I answer. “I not only know about the incident of the animalistic murder of Ivan by the officers of the army, but he was my fellow-countryman. His homeland is 25 kilometers from mine. I even know the village where Ivan Moiseyev lived. My parents live on the border of Moldavia.”

They returned me to the same basement, to the same cell, which becomes my established residence. The same mold. Without air. I encounter the same iron table, the same iron bench, and the same plank-bed attached to the wall with hooks. My overcoat is with me; it will serve me at night as a blanket. Thank God! I have arms, and when I bend them, they will serve me as a pillow.

This time the clothes were dry. Nevertheless, again it is hard to breathe, and immense headaches begin.

This night I was not able to sleep. There was a lot of analysis of past events. In one episode there was happiness. Another episode immersed my thoughts in some kind of deep well, out of which resounded only an echo.

Episode 1: The performance of the drama was happiness to the soul and peace to the heart. I received more practical knowledge from the Lord and from his revelations. God opened up that blackness, which was offered to me, as the “fortune of the future” – it was a portion of the diabolical kingdom of charms. God revealed the naked truth – used by the proposed scheme – in the Garden of Eden to Eve.

длительного поста – Иисусу Христу. А сегодня на принципе у дьявола по этой схеме – тысячи Христиан.

Моё ощущение, что я словно побывал в городе Филиппы, где на площади ревела одурманенная толпа против Павла и Силы. Эта толпа и определила судьбу этой ночи наших братьев апостолов. Сценарии схожи, только условия наших братьев оставивших пример для нас были на много сложнее.

Сценарии всегда будут схожи, но страдания и боли разными. Их били палками, меня – нет! Их ноги забиты к колоде – я имею щит где можно спать. Их условия тюрьмы были далеко не сравнить с нашими условиями. А что сценарии схожи – это слава Богу.

Всё это служит утверждением, значить, двигаюсь по правильному пути. Только Боже мой, дай силы и мудрости пройти через эти испытания!

2-й эпизод: Мучили мысли, что им известно о трагедии Ивана Мойсеева. Интересно: по какой линии они имеют информацию о нём? Почему мне они напомнили об этой истории? Как расценить: или страхом хотят делать слом, или предупреждают.

Then, after a long fast, it was revealed to Jesus Christ. (Luke 4:1-13) Today, the principles of that same diabolical scheme are revealed to thousands of Christians.

My feeling was that I actually was in the city of Philippi, where the intoxicated crowd in the square howled at Paul and Silas. This crowd determined the fate that night of our apostle brothers. The scenarios were similar, except that the circumstances of our contemporary brothers, who left an example for us, were more complex.

The scenarios will always be similar, but the sufferings and pains will be different. The apostles were beaten with sticks – I wasn't! Their legs were hammered to a block – I have a plank-bed where I can sleep. Their conditions in prison were far from similar to our conditions. Where the scenarios were similar – thank God for that.

I'm moving on the right path. But my God, please give me strength and wisdom to go through these tests and trials.

Episode 2: My mind was tormented by the thought that they were informed about the tragedy of Ivan Moiseyev. It would be interesting to find out: What kind of information did they have about him? Why did they remind me about this event? How should I regard this: as an attempt to inspire fear in me and cause a break down, or only as a warning?

Я очень хорошо знал об этой трагедии. Это произошло в 1972 году, где действительно, после многих издевательств, его убили офицеры Советской армии, за его Христианские убеждения, за жизнь по принципам Библии. Об этом случае тогда знал весь Христианский мир.

А сегодня меня волновал вопрос: Руководители сегодняшнего сценария знали это событие по информации вооружённых сил СССР, или эта информация сюда попала по каналам КГБ? Для меня сейчас имеет большое значение. Ведь довольно свежие следы этой бесчеловеческой трагедии – убийство Ивана за убеждения. Прошло всего лишь три года.

Но почему об этой трагедии напомнили мне? Страхом хотят ломать, или – или? Что за всем этим стоит? И что можно думать? О Боже! Дай силы только остаться верным! Дай силы дойти до конца!

С такими мыслями проходила первая ночь второго ареста. И снова, молясь Богу, я заснул под утро. А Божье откровение несло до меня слово:

«Предай Господу путь твой и уповай на Него, и Он совершит». (Псалом 36:5)
Слава Богу за Божье обетование слова!

Во время второго ареста, я перестал скромничать. Я начал напевать в камере наши песни. А когда надоело дежурным, они просто стучали сапогам на двери, возмущаясь вслух, что я поехал

I was well informed about this tragedy. It took place in the year 1972, when in reality the officers of the Soviet army killed him after extensive scoffing. They killed him for his Christian beliefs, for living his life according to the principles of the Bible. At that time, everyone in the Christian world knew about this incident. Today, a disturbing question was on my mind: Did the commanders of today's scenario know about the incident by means of information from the armed forces of the USSR? Or did the information get here by the channels of the KGB? For me it was very significant. After all, there were enough fresh tracks of this inhuman tragedy – the murder of Ivan for his religious beliefs. It happened only three years ago.

But why did they remind me of this tragedy? Do they want to break me with fear, or – or? What is this all about? What am I to make of it? O God! Give me strength to remain true to you! Give me strength to make it to the end!

The first night of my second arrest was spent with these kinds of thoughts in my mind. Again, I pray to God, and I finally fall asleep at daybreak. A revelation from God brought his word to me:

“Commit your way to the Lord;
trust also in him,
and He shall bring it to pass.”
(Psalm 37:5)

Thank God for his promise in his Word!

At the start of the second arrest, I stopped being overmodest. I started to sing our songs in the cell. And when it got on the nerves of the person on

головой, или у меня поехала крыша головы. Впереди может быть большой срок, а он поёт. Да, действительно, моя статья шла от 4 до 7 лет. Амплитуда срока в семь октав. Но на какой октаве, или ноте остановится голос прокура, который запрашивает срок – всё теперь зависит от Господа.

Петь Господу и молиться никто не может запретить. Могут поменять тебе условия, могут бить, могут хлеб не дать, лишить тебя всего – а песню и молитву никто не может отнять. Мы имеем много способов, как воспроизводить песню и молитву. Это данно нам одним только Богом, так как он устроил эти истинны – каналом нашей связи с ним. Апостол Павел писал:

«Слово о кресте для погибающих юродство есть, но для нас спасаемых – Сила Божия». (Коринфянам 1:18)

Петь и молиться в подвальной камере, ожидая срока заключения, для мира юродством есть; для нас сила! Петь и молиться для Христианина в этих условиях – сила Божья! Это существующие два источника великой поддержки от Господа!

Петь и молиться – это не значит потратить своё время, использовать время от скуки. Нет!

duty, they simply knocked on the door with the boot. They were verbally indignant, saying that I was out of my mind, or the roof of my head had blown off. There might be a long period of time ahead, but he sings. Indeed, my sentence went from four to seven years. The amplitude of my period of time was in seven octaves. But on which octave or note the voice of the prosecutor, who determines the period of time, would stop – all now depends on the Lord.

To sing to the Lord and to pray was something nobody could prohibit. They could change your conditions, beat you, refuse to give you bread, leave you with nothing – but nobody could take away the song and prayer. We have many ways how to reproduce a song and prayer. This is given to us only by God. For he arranged these truths – through the channels of our connections with him. The Apostle Paul wrote:

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 1:18)

To sing and pray in the basement cell, waiting for the end of the term, is for the world foolishness. But for us it is strength! To sing and pray in these conditions is for a Christian – the strength of God! These are the two existing sources of enormous support from the Lord!

To sing and pray – this does not mean to waste your time, or to pass the time out of boredom. No!

В камере необходимо находится 17 часов только в 2-х положениях: сидеть на железной скамейке и ходить по камере, шесть шагов вперед и шесть шагов назад, и один шаг на разворот, без прессы, без чтения литературы.

Петь и молиться, сейчас моё служение, независимо от условий и обстоятельств. В это время Бог очень много говорит своим нежным голосом во внутренем моём человеке. Песня и молитва – жизнь спасённых Господом людей.

Я абсолютно уверен, каждый из нас переживал такие мгновения: вы просыпаетесь утром с песней на устах, а может быть это будет традиционный псалом с гуслей Проханова, или с сборника «Песни Возрождения». Или это песнь хвалч и прославления – это всё не важно. Важно одно, что вы весь день не можете растаться с мелодией этой песни. Вы не можете растаться со словами этой песни. И она, как на могучих крыльях веры, несёт вас в новый день, освежая ваш дух, вашу душу и ваш разум. Это божественный источник помощи для вас в этом дне. А вы прислушайтесь, что этим хочет вам сказать Бог.

В одно утро, я проснулся с песней на устах, слова которых я знал наизусть. Это песня с сборника «Песни Возрождения»:

«Течёт ли жизнь мирно,
подобно реке,
Несусь ли на грозных волнах,
Во всякое время, вблизи,
вдалеке,

The time spent in the cell for seventeen hours a day was only in two positions: to sit on the iron bench and to walk – six steps forward and six steps back, with an extra step for the U-turn. All this without any newspapers, without the reading of any literature.

Singing and praying is now my service, irrespective of conditions and circumstances. At this time, God speaks often with his tender voice in my inner being. Song and prayer – the life of people saved by the Lord.

I am absolutely convinced that every one of us has experienced such moments: you awaken in the morning with a song on your lips. This can be a traditional psalm from the psalter (hymnbook) of Prohanov, or from the collection "Songs of Rebirth." It can be a song of praise and worship – it's not important. It's only important that you cannot part from the melody of this song throughout the day; you cannot part from the words of this song. And the song, like on the powerful wings of faith, takes you into a new day, refreshing your spirit, your soul, and your mind. This is God's source of help for you in this day. Listen carefully to what God wants to say to you through this song.

One morning, I awakened with a song on my lips, words that I knew by heart. This was a song from the collection "Songs of Rebirth":

"Does life flow peacefully, like a river,
Am I carried on threatening waves,
At any time, near, far,
I rest in your hands.

В Твоих я покоюсь руках.
Ты со мной, да, Господь,
В Твоих я покоюсь руках».
(Песни Возрождения, № 230)

Насколько глубоко вошёл этот псалом в мою душу, меня сопровождал весь мой второй срок моего ареста. Вот именно здесь я и получил множество Божьих откровений, много корректировок в моих действиях. И теперь лишь я понимаю почему именно этот псалом дал мне Бог, этими словами говорил он со мной в этой удушливой камере.

Божье желание было, чтобы я полностью успокоился. Он хотел помочь мне устроить внутри моего духа покой. И сейчас для меня покой на много главнее, чем все последствия моих физических страданий и болей.

Бог дал мне этот псалом в мою камеру как откровение: сейчас главный мой приоритет прекратить всякую бурю в моём духе, которая иногда касается моих чувств несправедливых отношений ко мне. Согласиться со всякими глумлениями, принимать всё с достоинством. Победить полностью себя в мыслях!

Покой! Сейчас самое главное! Бог никогда не общается в бури духа нашего! Бог никогда не будет говорить в бури мыслей и духа нашего! А здесь ему необходимо диалог со мной, чтобы помочь мне!

Теперь мой пыл, моя горячность моего разума утихает. И теперь и приятно становиться, иногда слышать брань в мою

You're with me, yes Lord,
I rest in your hands."
[Songs of Rebirth, Pesni
Vozrozhdeniya, 230]

This song penetrated so deep into my soul that it accompanied me throughout the entire second term of my arrest. It was precisely here that I received numerous revelations from God, many corrections in my actions. And only now did I understand why it was exactly this song that God gave me, and with these words he talked with me in this suffocating cell.

God's desire was for me to completely calm down. He wanted to help me create peace in my soul. And now peace and tranquility are more important than all the consequences of my physical sufferings and pains.

God gave me this song in my cell like a revelation: My main priority now is to put an end to every storm in my spirit, which sometimes concerns the feelings I have of unjust treatment towards me. To agree with every mockery, to accept everything with dignity. To completely conquer myself in my thoughts!

Peace! It is now the main thing! God never associates with the storm of our spirit! God will never speak within the storm of our thoughts and spirit! Here it's essential for him to have a dialogue with me in order to help me!

Now my fervor, my bitterness, my mind becomes calm. Now it becomes pleasant to sometimes hear abusive language hurled in my cell. The result now is – inner peace.

камеру. А результат всего – внутренних мир.

Я был как зажат в угол, как загнан в угол. Теперь я хоть и в камере, ужасные головные боли не прекращаются, ужасно болят зубы. В подвальном холодильнике, но я освобождён с угла беспокойствия, с угла войны и бури. Этот покой, внутренних мир дан Духом Святым, так как я этого и сам желал.

Вот результат пения псалмов и молитвы.

Бог продолжает объяснять мне свои истинны, и одно из них: теперь становится глубоко понятным вокруг подвига Павла и Силы в тюрьме в Филиппах, где после дневного побоища, ноги забиты в колоду, а они молясь, воспевали Бога. (Деяние 16:25) Что послужило такому подвигу? Положение апостольства требовало такого подвига? Нет! Такому поступку послужил внутренних мир, покой! Поверьте! Если бы не было покоя и мира в их духе, в этих мужей веры, эту историю Павла и Силы, вы никогда бы не прочитали бы в Деянии Апостолов. Этой истории там просто не было бы, и вы никогда её бы не нашли.

С самого малого детства я любил слушать – а когда научился читать, много раз перечитал – историю о трёх молодых ребят пленённых в Вавилоне: это Сидрах, Месах, и Авденаго.

I was like a person squeezed into a corner, chased into a corner. Now, even though I was in a cell, the headaches still did not stop, and the teeth still hurt terribly. I was in a basement icebox, but I was free from the corner of restlessness, from the corner of war and storms. This stillness, the inner peace given by the Holy Spirit, was exactly what I had desired.

This was the outcome of the singing of psalms, and the outcome of prayers.

God continues to explain his truths to me, and one of them is: the exploits of Paul and Silas now become profoundly comprehensible. In the prison in Philippi, after daily beatings, with their legs hammered into blocks, they prayed and sang unto God. (Acts of Apostles 16:25) What served them to perform such a feat? Did the attitude of an apostle require such a feat? No! This kind of behavior was the result of inner peace, stillness! Believe me! If they didn't have calmness and peace in their spirits – and were without faith – you wouldn't be reading the historical account of Paul and Silas in the Acts of the Apostles. Their story simply would not be there, and you would never find it.

From my early childhood, I loved to listen to – and when I learned to read, many times I would reread – the story of the three imprisoned young Hebrews in Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Много слышал проповедей и сам проповедовал о их героизме. Для меня они служили просто историческими героями веры Богу. А теперь в камере, Бог даёт понимание секрета бессмертия пред великим завоевателем мира – императором Навуходоносором.

Фундаментом их героического подвига был внутренний покой, мир. Это покой Бога! Не страшась печи, св семь раз сильнее раскалённой, не страшась императорского титула. Эти три юноши открывают природу и подобие Бога, и что от этого Бога они полностью зависимы и ему одному служат.

«Бог наш, которому мы служим, силен спасти нас от печи, раскалённой огнём, и от руки твоей, царь, избавит. Если же и не будет того, то да будет известно тебе, царь, что мы богам твоим служить не будем». (Даниил 3:17-18)

Это были истории, укрепляющие наш дух, нашу веру. А сейчас для меня служат откровением. Бог даёт понимание, что я полностью сейчас зависю от него. И он сейчас эту камеру рассматривает как сито; именно здесь отсеивает чрез это сито зерно. Всё моё личное, человеческое, должно быть отделенно, отсеянно, разделенно. Моё человеческое будет сильно мешать в борьбе, может служить бо́льшим препятствием. А может послужить и поряжением.

I heard many sermons, and I also preached, about their heroism. For me, they served as historical heroes of the faith in God. And now, in the cell, God gives an understanding of the secret of fearlessness in front of the great conqueror of the world – the emperor Nebuchadnezzar.

The foundation of their heroic feat was inner stillness and peace. This is the stillness and peace of God! They weren't afraid of the furnace, which was heated seven times hotter than usual. They weren't afraid of the emperor's title. These three young Hebrews reveal the nature and likeness of God; they were completely dependent on this God and served only him.

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods." (Daniel 3:17-18)

These were historical stories that strengthened our spirit, and our faith. But for me they presently served as revelations. God gives understanding that I am now completely dependent on him. And he looks at this cell as a sieve; namely, he sows his seed through this sieve. All of my personal, human life must be separated, sifted, and divided. My human aspect will interfere in this battle, and it will be a big obstacle. It might even cause my defeat.

А я должен двигаться вперед без замедления, не своим энтузиазмом, не своим героизмом или своим мужеством. О нет! Я должен положить всё только на него. Я должен дать возможность позаботиться обо мне только ему, гораздо больше, чем я сам о себе. Я должен дать возможность ему управлять мной, и упорядочить меня. Он может это сделать, несомненно, но он сделает когда я позабочусь чтобы мне иметь покой, внутренних мир.

Закончиваю я свой второй срок моего ареста. И меня снова увозят в отряд. И снова смотришь на людей, в них жизнь, солнце-воздух ресурсы жизни. Эти дни, этих привилегий я не имел. Мне не дали даже время прогулки. Все эти дни были без солнца и естественного света. Бледный как стена, не мыт и заросший. Возде зеркала себя страшишься.

Привёл себя в проядок, и начал жизнь службы. Прохожу возле штаба, и меня останавливает один из офицеров, уводит в сторону, и признаётся мне, что он сам тоже с наших краев, и знает моё место жительства. Начинаются увещавания:

«Послушай! Откажись от убеждений этой рклии. Даю тебе слово офицера, если ты это сделаешь, я вытяну тебя с этой ямы. Я помогу тебе. Ещё всё можно поправить и восстановить.

Nevertheless, I must move forward without hesitation, not with my own enthusiasm or my own heroism. And definitely not with my own manliness. Oh, no! I must place everything only on him. I need to give only him the opportunity to be concerned about me, by far more than my concern about myself. I need to give him the opportunity to direct me, and regulate me. He can do this, without any doubt, but he will do it when I take the trouble to be calm, and have inner peace.

I finish the second term of my arrest. Once again, they take me away to the detachment. And once again, I look at the people and their life. I look at the sun and fresh air, and the resources of life. I didn't have the privileges that they had. I wasn't even given time to enjoy a walk in the outdoors. All these days were without sunshine and natural light. I was pale like the wall, unwashed, with overgrown stubble on my face. I frightened myself when I looked in the mirror.

I brought myself into a semblance of order and returned to my life in the service. I walk near the staff, and one of the officers stops me. He takes me to the side and confesses to me, that he is also from my homeland and knows where I live. Then the admonitions begin:

“Listen! Renounce the persuasions of this religion. I give you my word as an officer, that if you do this, I will rescue you from this hole. I will help you. Everything can still be

Пред тобой, все двери открыты многих возможностей. Ты молод, весьма напорист. Такие люди с таким упорством, в своей карьере многое достигают! Ты что не видишь, что они тебя уничтожают! Ты себя видел в зеркале на кого ты похож?»

Бог дал мне сильное слово для ответа: «Поверьте, товарищ командир! Мне они сделают то, что позволит им сделать Бог. Мне они причинят столько страданий и болей – сколько разрешит им Бог»!

Мы расстались. Я иду и рассуждаю, а мне было тепло на душе. Ох какая только победа! Слава Богу! Получилось так как будто бы хорошо пообедал и запил хорошим по вкусу напитком. После ареста Бог возвёл к победе!

Эти слова были голосом Божиим для меня. Проходя дальше у меня сорвались слова под мелодию на устах. Я так и не знаю какой это псалом, но переполнен вдохновением произнес:

«Я иду вперёд, меня влечёт Твоё течение».

corrected and restored. All the doors of opportunity are open before you. You're young and very energetic. These kinds of people, with this kind of persistence, achieve a lot in their chosen careers. Don't you see that they're destroying you! Have you seen yourself in the mirror and whom you resemble?"

God gave me a powerful word for an answer:

"Believe me, comrade commander! They will do to me only what God permits them to do. They will cause me only as much pain and suffering as God allows."

We went our separate ways. I walk and reason in my mind. It felt nice and warm in my soul. My, what a victory! Praise God! It felt as if I had a good dinner and finished off the meal with a flavorful beverage. After the arrest, God raised me up to victory.

Those words were the voice of God for me. As I walked a little forward, a song with melodious words broke loose in my mouth; I didn't even know what psalm it was, but I was overfilled with inspiration as I uttered:

"I go forward, your flow draws me."

Через несколько дней, утром перед построением роты на завтрак, подходит до меня мой политрук капитан-лейтенант, и предупреждает:

«Ты не можешь идти в столовую кушать. Ты верующий, ты Христианин. В тебе не советская вера. И ты есть работник американского империализма. Ты веришь в их Бога. Пусть дадут тебе передачу и кормись»!

Я спросил: «Я могу не становиться в строй?»

«Да»! ответил офицер. «Не становись»!

Я развернулся и ушёл, но теперь в моей душе нет бури. Я имею покой. И я точно знаю, что Бог о мне позаботится больше, чем даже я помышляю. Уходя, я прошептал устами:

«Так я же на правильном пути, и в правильном направлении! Если дьявол, как рыкающий лев, готов терзать меня, всё святое во мне, тогда всё означает, что я имею в себе Божьи частицы, которые его дразнят, и от него отнимают спокойствие. Раздражают, и приводят его к безумию, к крайним мерам».

Дьявола не устраивает одна проблема во мне – открытое, практическое исповедание Божьей природы, его характера и подчинение его воли, и словом и в действиях. Дьявол предлагает всеми силами,

After several days, in the morning during the formation of the company for breakfast, my political instructor (a captain-lieutenant) comes up to me and issues a warning:

"You are forbidden to enter the dining hall to eat. You are a believer, a Christian. You don't have the Soviet faith. You are a worker for American imperialism. You believe in their God. Let them feed you with their communications!"

"I don't have to stand in line?" I asked.

"That's right!" answered the officer. "Don't stand in line."

I turned around and left. There is no storm in my soul now. I have peace. And I definitely know that God will be more concerned about me than I can even imagine. As I walked away, I whispered to myself:

"So I am on the right path, and in the right direction! If the devil, like a roaring lion, is ready to tear me (and everything that is holy in me) to pieces, then it all means that I have in me small parts of God, which tantalize the adversary and take away his composure. It makes him short-tempered and brings him to the brink of insanity, to extreme measures."

One problem in me does not suit the devil – an open, practical confession of God's nature and his characteristics, and obedience to his will, in word and in deed. The devil offers with all his might, with all

всеми изощрениями оставаться нам верующим в своей душе, то есть, одеть на какое то время маску и сыграть с Богом в игру, быть просто хамелеоном в отношениях с Богом, с Творцом Вселенной, с своим Создателем. И если мы отклоняем его предложения, тогда готовься к страданиям и болям. А противостояние побеждается борьбой.

В этот день, действительно я был лишён еды, но это только придало мне больше дополнительных духовных сил.

Эта акция дошла до высшего командования учебным отрядом. Меня вызывают в штаб, и когда я зашёл в кабинет командира отряда, я увидел стоящего политрука, который лишил меня еды. Я доложил о своём прибытии, и мне последовал вопрос от командира отряда:

«Кто дал тебе приказ, чтобы ты не шёл в столовую? Кто тебя лишил еды?»

Я ответил, что мне запретил идти в столовую мой политрука и указал на него жестом руки. Командир подходит до офицера, берёт рукой за его пагон, и предупреждает:

«Если повторится эта акция ещё хоть один раз, сорваны будут погоны Советского офицера, и будешь уволен с Советской армии».

his refinements, to us Christians in our hearts – that is to say – to put on a mask for a period of time and play a game with God, and to be simply a chameleon in our relationships with God, our creator and creator of the universe. And if we refuse the devil's offer, then be ready to face pain and suffering. But opposition is defeated through struggle.

On this day I was indeed left without any food. However, this provided me with supplemental spiritual sustenance.

News of the instructor's action reached the highest commanding officers through the training detachment. They called me before the staff, and when I entered the office of the detachment commander, I saw the political instructor standing there. He was the one who deprived me of food. I announced my arrival, and the commander of the detachment followed with a question:

"Who gave you the order, prohibiting you from entering the dining hall? Who deprived you of a meal?"

I answered that my political instructor prohibited me from going inside the dining hall, and I pointed at him with a gesture of my hand. The commander walked up to the officer, grabbed him by the shoulder-strap, and gave a warning:

"If this kind of action is repeated ever again, the epaulette of a Soviet officer will be torn off your shoulders. And you will be discharged from the Soviet Army."

Затем, обратившись ко мне, сказал: «Обо всех акциях против тебя, что грозит мне опасностью, я должен прийти напрямую в кабинет и доложить командованию».

Я ушёл, только непонятно, это имеет место действительности или показательная игра. Всё произошедшее я отнёс к разряду Божьей сверхъестественной защиты. Мне было приятно в моём духе, что все мои обстоятельства есть под контролем моего Бога. Вся моя жизнь во власти Господа, и вспомнил слова с Библии, слова Божьего заступничества:

«Не воздремлет хранящий тебя. Не дремлет и не спит хранящий Израиля. Господь – хранитель твой; Господь – сень твоя с правой руки твоей». (Псалом 120:3-5)

Then turning towards me, he said: "About all these actions against you, which threaten me with danger, I'm required to come out straight and report this to the commanding officers in the consulting-room."

I left, but it was incomprehensible whether this had the semblance of reality, or was it only an exhibition, a game. All that happened I attributed to the category of God's supernatural protection. It felt pleasant in my spirit that all my circumstances are controlled by my God. My entire life was under the authority of the Lord. I remembered the words from the Bible, the words of God's intercession:

"He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand." (Psalm 121:3-5)

ГЛАВА 9 – ПРИЕЗД РОДНОЙ СЕСТРЫ

Обычный день, обычное утро которое предвещало служебный день в армии, по своему графику. Я слышу по связи мои имя и фамилию, что мне срочно необходимо прийти на КПП (Контрольный Пропускной Пункт). Что случилось? Как будто бы я никого и не ожидаю, середина недели. Никаких нет соющений, ни моих к ним ни их ко мне.

Прихожу на КПП. О! Какая встреча. Меня ожидают на КПП моя родная сестра с девушкой нашей Церкви, в последствии на которой я женился, с которой мы создали семью. Сюда уже успело прийти командование раньше меня, и началась политинформация о моих делах. Мне в увольнение в город разрешили. Ущё раз поиграв на моих чувствах:

«Мол, сделай решение, и с ними сейчас иди, хоть и на двое суток. Мы даже дадим адрес, где можно остановиться в доме».

Мой ответ был, «Мной сделанно однажды решение, и я его не меняю».

Тогда объявило командование, что в моём распоряжении, только два часа в комнате КПП. Благодарение Богу и за эти крохи времени. Волнение.

CHAPTER 10 – MY SISTER'S ARRIVAL

An ordinary day, an ordinary morning – according to schedule – heralds another military day in the army. I hear my name called out by intercommunication, and I'm to report without delay to the KPP (Control Checkpoint). What happened? It's the middle of the week, and it's not as if I'm expecting someone. I haven't had any communications from me to anyone, nor from anyone to me.

I come to the KPP. O! What a meeting awaits me at the KPP. My own sister is there with a girl from our church, whom I subsequently married, and with whom I established a family. Needless to say, the commanders had already come here before me, and they had started divulging political information from my personal file. I was not permitted to obtain a leave-pass into the city. Once again, they were playing on my feelings.

"Make a decision," they say. "And you can go with them right now, even for two whole days. We'll even give you an address, where you can stay in a house."

My answer was: "My former decision that I made still stands. I am not changing it."

Then the commander announced that my instructions allowed for only a two hour visit in a room of the KPP. Thank God for at least these small crumbs of available time. Nervousness.

Многое что хочется спросить, узнать, и о молодёжи, и о нашей группе молодёжи. Приятно было слышать, что очень сильно шагают младшее поколение; а некоторые сели за инструменты уже в нашем оркестре. Место моего аккордеона уже освоил мой младший родственник Виктор. Жизнь на свободе кипит. Слава Богу, если в ней есть применение, значить это жизнь. И все начала есть благословением будущего.

Назначенное время встречи подходит к концу и нам необходимо прощаться. Мы склонили головы и кратко помолились. Буквально через несколько минут нас разлучают, и разлучают на какое время – мы не знаем.

Я ушёл в отряд, а в это время произошла невероятная ситуация. Командование повелело сестёр в штаб отряда, подняли на третий этаж, откуда просматривался хорошо весь плац. На плацу проходят занятия матросов по физподготовке.

Командиры говорят: «Вот мы сейчас можем пригласить этих матросов, чтобы они вас насильствовали, а мы посмотрим на это зрелище – защитит ли вас Бог?»

Девочки ответили: «Да наш Бог защитит нас!»

Им устроили допрос. А после отправили с отряда, дискриминировав их.

There's so much I want to ask and learn – about the youth, and our older group of youth. It was pleasant to hear that the younger generation was making great strides; some were making progress learning how to play instruments in our orchestra. My place at the accordion was already mastered by my younger cousin, Victor. Life at liberty is in full swing. Thank God. If a person applies oneself to spiritual work – that means it is life. Every beginning is a blessing to the future.

The appointed time for the meeting came to an end, and it was necessary for us to say goodbye. We bowed our heads and said a short prayer. Punctually, after several minutes, they separated us. How long we were to be separated – we did not know.

I left for the detachment. At this time an unbelievable situation occurred. The commanding officers led my sister and her friend to the staff office, which was on the third floor. From here they could see the entire parade-ground. Sailors were undergoing physical training exercises there.

The commanders said: "See those sailors. We can invite them here right now, to have them take you by force. And we will watch this spectacle, to see – will God defend you?"

The girls answered: "Yes, our God will defend us!"

They arranged an interrogation for them. Afterwards, after having shown discrimination towards the girls,

Это событие я узнал уже гораздо позже от моей сестры на свидании (уже в тюрьме). А моя жена вспоминает этот случай до этого времени. Очень долго это событие занимало мои частицы моего разума.

Кто мне постоянно предлагает что-то лучшее? Грязная дьявольская политика, грязная игра. Пугать девочек насиланием, ничем не причастных к моему делу – это есть безумием, это есть позором чести коммуниста, чести офицера Советской Армии. Есть ли смысл, стоять, бороться за такую идеологию? Есть ли смысл исповедывать, насаждать такого образа политику? Это природа дьявола, и его характер.

Моя Библия, её мораль есть природой Бога. Наша Библия такими суждениями не обладает: решать вопросы путём насилвания, лишь бы добиться своего, или путём глупых сравнений. Библия против всякого насилия, против всякой политики в отношениях, против всякой грязи. Библия учит рассуждать, вести беседы, и любую проблему решать чрез её призму видимости. Вот почему в ней приоритеты! Таким образом, Бог подвергает позору любую идеологию позорящую принципы и действия нашего Бога!

После уезда сестёр, началась снова псих атака. Снова начали подымать дежурные по роте, или дежурные по отряду, и просто часами желали болтать на такие

they dispatched them from the detachment.

I learned of this event much later from my sister during a meeting (when I was imprisoned). But my wife remembers this incident to this day. For a long time, this event occupied a prominent part in my mind.

Who keeps constantly offering me something better? Filthy diabolical politics, filthy game. To scare the girls with violent coercion – this had no connection to my case. This is insanity. This is a disgrace to the honor of Communism and the honor of the officers of the Soviet Army. Is there any sense in standing, and fighting, for such an ideology? Is there any sense in professing – in propagating – this form of ideology? This is the nature of the devil, and his character.

My Bible – and its moral standards – is the nature of God. Our Bible does not possess such judgment: to settle a question by violent means or through foolish comparisons in order to get one's own way. The Bible is against every act of violence, against any kind of politics in relations, against every kind of filth. The Bible teaches to reason, to hold discussions, and to solve any problem through the prism of appearances. That's why the priorities are in the Bible. Thus, God puts to shame any ideology that disgraces the principles and actions of our God!

After the departure of my sister and her friend, the psychological attacks began again. Again the duty personnel started to awaken me at night, and they would chatter for hours

темы, не по существу, лишь бы отнять у меня вкрямя моего сна.

Внутри моего духа кроется чувство: зачем этот процесс возобновили, чтобы ломать меня от бессонных ночей? Да и так понятно, что они выполняют чью-то волю, догадываться не сложно.

Бог начал побуждать к молитве. В этой молитве я просил Бога, чтобы по его милости, подвёл меня к какой-то конкретности, каким-то изменениям стабильности. Ибо продолжать так жить невозможно.

on trivial subjects, just so the time for my sleep would be taken away.

Inside my spirit lurks a feeling: Why did they restart this process, to break me through sleepless nights? Yes, it is obvious that they are following someone's will. It's not difficult to figure that out.

God started to motivate me to pray. In this prayer I asked God to lead me – through his mercy – to something specific, to some stability. To continue to live like this was impossible.

ГЛАВА 11 – УПЛАЧЕНАЯ ЧЕНА: СВИДЕТЕЛЬСТВО ОФИЦЕРУ

Несколько месяцев у меня сложились хорошие отношения с одним офицером. Всякий раз, когда он дежурил по отряду, он вызывал до себя, как вызывали все офицеры. Затем мы шли в его кабинет, и мы с ним долгое время беседовали, имели полезные дискуссии.

Затем он предложил работу, в его квартире. Необходимо было сделать ремонт. Зная, что я могу делать эти работы, он приглашает домой, а дома он знаком со своей семьёй. Действительно, это была интеллигентная семья, достойная хорошего слова.

Вечерами. Когда я приходил делать работу, мы имели хорошие назидательные беседы. Это было уникальное время, и я видел, что Бог что-то делает в этой семье. Закончив ремонт, а меня они продолжают приглашать на ремонт. Только теперь на ремонт душ человеческих. В их доме появилась Библия, и мы теперь пьём чай, много беседуем, читая места с Библии.

Бог повёл меня в свою струю, и я понимал, вдруг обнаружится всё. За них придётся мне заплатить огромную цену, цену свободы, хотя и так, без этого, ситуация была как на волоске. Затем они просили молиться за них, и мы стоя за столом, уже по обычаю, ставали и молились Богу.

CHAPTER 11 – A PRICE TO PAY: I WITNESS TO AN OFFICER

For several months, a good relationship was formed between me and one officer. Every time, when he was the duty officer at the detachment, he would call me – as did all the officers – to the office. Then we went to his private study, and we would have long conversations and useful discussions.

Then he offered me a job in his apartment. Some repairs needed to be done. Knowing that I had the ability to do such work, he invited me to his home and acquainted me with his family. Actually, this was an intelligent family, worthy of a good word.

In the evenings, when I came to do the work, we had good-natured, edifying discussions. This was a unique time, and I saw that God was doing something in this family. After I finished the repair work, they still continued to invite me to their home for repairs. However, now the repair was of the human soul. A Bible appeared in their home, and now we drank tea and read passages of Scripture as we proceeded with our discussions.

God led me into this stream, and I understood that this could suddenly come to light. I would have to pay an enormous price for them – the price of freedom. As it was, even with this situation, I was already hanging by a thread. After that they asked me to pray for them. When we stood around the table, according to custom, we now would pray to God.

В один день, я слышу его фамилию по селектору. Его вызывают почему-то по кабинетам, а моё сердце учащённо издаёт стук внутри моего тела. Что-то подозрительно. Я пытаюсь его разыскать. Это трудно сделать, но всё таки Бог дал нам встречу аж под обед. Мы встретились за одним из зданий, соблюдая меры предосторожности. При встрече он объяснил мне ситуацию:

«Наши разговоры в моём кабинете – всё прослушивались. Меня отправляют по службе, а что будет дальше – не знаю. Продолжай за нас молиться Богу. Тебя в течении дусяь дней арестуют и будут судить. Ты приготовься. Большое тебе спасибо от нашей семьи. Мы очень много интересных вещей узнали. И что теперь у нас есть Библия, мы знаем теперь как она читается и как оно работает. Ты всегда останешься в нашем сердце. Мы очень рады за знакомство, работу, и беседы с тобой. Мы не жалеем обо всём, даже если и уволят с армии».

Мы горячо пожали друг другу руки и расстались. А расстались, как оказалось, навсегда.

На второй день после как мы попрощались, вызывает меня заместитель командира отряда по политической подготовке. Услыхал свою фамилию, я иду да штаба. Оказывается он преднамеренно ожидал у дверей штаба, и когда я доложил о своём прибытии, он пригласил пройти с ним по территории отряда. Мы пошли.

One day I heard his family name announced on the selector (intercom system). He was being called for some reason throughout all the offices. The beating of my heart within my body became more rapid. Something is suspicious. I try to find him. It's hard to do that. Nevertheless, God gave us an opportunity to meet around lunch time. We took precautionary measures; we met behind one of the buildings. When we met he explained the situation to me:

"They eavesdropped on our conversations in my private study. They're sending me away – a reassignment – and I don't know what will happen next. Continue to pray for us. Get ready, for they are preparing to arrest you within ten days. Many thanks to you from our entire family; we learned many interesting things. And now we have a Bible, and we know now how it should be read and how it works. You will always remain in our hearts. We're truly happy that we got acquainted with you, and your work and our discussions brought happiness to us. We don't regret anything, even if they discharge me from the army."

We shook hands warmly and parted. The parting, it turned out, was forever.

On the second day, after we had said goodbye to each other, the substitute commander of political training called for me. I heard my name, and I went to the headquarters. It turned out that he was deliberately waiting at the door, and when I announced my arrival, he invited me

Он задаёт вопросы, я отвечаю что могу. А когда зашли мы за здание штаба, он стаёт лицом ко мне. Глаза полились как у животного пред своей добычей. (Сам он сильного телосложения.) Схватил двумя пальцами мой нос, подтянул меня до себя, затем обозвал самыми тяжёлыми плохими словами. Ну, а потом меня толкнул от себя, что я улетел от него спиной назад на землю, в какие-то кусты. Он только произнёс:

«Гадина! Я тебя всё равно посажу и сгною за моего офицера. Я этого тебе не прощу».

Он ушёл. У меня с носа шла сильно кровь. Я быстро шёл в здание роты, придерживая кровь. Все были в ужасе, я весь оказался вымазан в крови. Где-то около часа, мокрым полотенцем я остановил в носу кровотечение.

А идти вперед необходимо, продолжать ожидать развязки. И верить Богу, ибо только он должен всё устроить в воле своей. Я знал, за что заплочена цена. Слава Богу!

for a walk through the territory of the detachment. We went walking.

He asks questions, and I answer what I can. When we arrived at the back of the headquarters building, the commander stopped and faced me. His eyes filled up with the look of an animal facing its prey. (His physical frame was very muscular) He grabbed my nose with two fingers and pulled me to himself, then swore at me with the harshest vulgarities. Well, and then he shoved me away from himself with such strength that I flew backwards to the ground, into some bushes.

"You reptile!" he pronounced distinctly. "I will still imprison you and make you rot for my officer. I will not forgive you for this."

He left. My nose was bleeding profusely. I quickly went to the company building, holding back the blood. Everyone was horrified to see me all smeared in blood. I spent nearly an hour trying to stop the bleeding with a wet towel.

It was necessary to go forward. I had to hope and wait for a final outcome. I had to believe that God would arrange it, as only he could. It would be according to his will. I knew for what the price was paid. Praise God!

ГЛАВА 12 – ТРЕТИЙ АРЕСТ

Проходит десять ожидаемых дней. Полное затишье, точно как пред какимд-то взрывом. Одиннадцатый день. Все на утренней физзарядке. После физзарядки время заправить кровать и привести себя в порядок на весь служебный день.

Один из матросов подошёл до меня и спросил: «Это не за тобой ли идут»?

Я спросил: «Кто»?

«Подойди к окну и посмотри на плац», сказал матрос.

Я подошёл, смотрю со второго этажа нашей роты. О да, идут за мной, солдаты краснопогонщики, ВВ (Внутренние Войска). Идёт мой следователь, идёт моё командование. Теперь уже всё! Твердит моё сознание, что мой последний день в отряде, и по вероятности, я больше в отряд не возвращусь. Теперь меня ожидают совсем другие пути по которым необходимо идти, и другие условия жизни. Другие сражения и на других полях, ничем не походяие на прежние. О Боже! Дай силы устоять!

Вся рота в сборе, коммунистическая стандартная заготовка, точно как на футбольном поле; одна из команд быёт штрафной удар, наигранный по домашней заготовке. Подымаются матросы, те, кто ещё вчера

CHAPTER 12 – THE THIRD ARREST

Ten days pass by. Anticipation builds. Complete calm, exactly like the calm before a storm. Or an explosion. The eleventh day. Everyone is at the morning physical exercises. After the physical exercises it was time to fix the bed and bring myself in order for the entire military day.

One of the sailors came up to me and asked: "Are those soldiers coming for you?"

"Who?" I asked.

"Come to the window and look at the parade-ground," said the sailor.

I approached the window of the second story of our company and looked. O yes, they're coming for me – the soldiers of the "red-drivers" (VV – vnutreniye voiska – internal troops). Here comes my investigator; here come my commanding officers. It's all over! My consciousness confirms that this is my last day in the detachment. In all probability, I will not return to the detachment. Completely different roads now wait for me, and I will have to travel those roads. There will be different conditions, different battles on different fields – nothing resembling the past. O God! Give me strength to withstand!

The whole company was assembled – the standard Communist stockpiling – exactly like on a soccer field; one of the teams kicks the penalty shot, won by the home field advantage. The sailors rise up against me. They're the same ones who just

улыбался со мной, общались, с которыми за одним столом завтракали, обедали, делились новостями спорта, и другими впечатлениями. А сегодня в их руках записки обвиняющие меня. Не трудно догадаться, кто писал эти записки, но они все гласили одно и то же: я опасен для общества, и меня необходимо убрать от него.

Подымается один офицер, и проталкивает ложь, что я ночами хожу по другим ротам, бужу усталых матросов, которые добросовестно несут службу, рассказываю им про свою религию, и агитирую их стать на мой путь. Эти матросы не выспавшись, приходят на теоретические занятия и там дремают.

Какая только ложь. Кто кому не давал спать? Вот вам и приёмы КГБ, с их устаревшими методами. И кто эти методы не знает? Эти методы и приёмы знают многие люди, которые имеют свои мысли, свои взгляды, и хотят их выразить в свободе, и по их принципам поступать, и за это они заплатили большую цену жизни. Для этих людей очень знакомы эти методы ложных обвинений и все их заготовки.

Затем следователь зачитывает постановление прокурора, что с сегодняшнего дня, я арестован, и что суд у меня будет чрез 15 дней. Суд будет показательным здесь в части.

yesterday smiled with me and interacted with me; we sat at the same table and ate breakfast and lunch; we talked about sports news and other impressions. And yet, today they hold notes in their hands that accuse me. It's not hard to guess who wrote those notes that state the same thing: I am a danger to society, and it is imperative to take me away from it.

One officer rises to promote a lie: That I visit other companies at night and wake up tired sailors, who conscientiously fulfill their military service, and tell them about my religion and agitate them to follow my path. The sailors don't get enough sleep, and they come to theoretical studies classes and doze off.

What a lie! Who did not allow them to sleep? Here are your KGB techniques, with their antiquated methods. Who is not familiar with them? These methods and techniques are known by many people, who have their own thoughts and views and want to express them in a free way and live by those principles. And for this they paid a heavy price in life. For these people, the methods of false accusations and all their provisions are well known.

Afterwards, the investigator read out the resolution of the prosecutor, that from this day I was under arrest, and that my trial would occur within fifteen days. The show trial would take place in the unit.

Все процедуры закончены, и меня снова увозят в те же подвальные камеры, в тех же условиях. Сейчас мне объявляют, что мне разрешенно читать газеты и журналы. За эти 15 дней я должен ознакомиться с моим личным делом. Если есть какие вопросы, их необходимо все расставить до суда. Вопросов много – отвечать некому. Эти люди не отвечают ни за себя, ни за свой язык, ни за свои действия. Такая их позиция руководства своей личностью, такая их оценка ценностей.

Жаль, что на родине никто и ничего не знают. Если бы хоть какое-то сообщение отослать, я абсолютно уверен, что эти дни моего ожидания суда, были бы днями постов и молитв. Молились бы и родные, молились бы множество друзей по другим разным городам. Но этого процесса никто не знал.

Меня Бог вел одним, который всё моё неведомое, взял под своё подчинение, под свою власть в своей воле. Теперь начинается мой срок, а каким длинным он будет – не знаю. Сейчас решение неземного суда. Фанатизм? Нереальность? Всё реально! Бог очень часто отвечает чрез страдания, слёзы, и боли.

All the procedures ended, and they carried me off again to the same basement cells, with the same conditions. At this time they announced that I was permitted to read newspapers and magazines. During these fifteen days I was supposed to become familiar with my personal file, and if there were any questions, it was necessary to arrange them before the trial. There were many questions – but nobody to answer them. These people are not responsible for themselves – neither for their words nor for their deeds. The position they take towards the management of their own person is the same as their appraisal of values.

It's a pity that no one in my motherland knows about my situation. If only I could send them some kind of communication, I am absolutely confident that these days before the trial would be committed to fasting and prayer. My relatives would pray, and most of the friends from various cities would pray. But no one from my homeland knew about this process.

God led me on a solitary path. He took all that was unknown to me under his discipline, under his authority, and under his will. Now begins my term. But how long it will be – I don't know. At the moment, the decision is in the heavens! The decision is of an unearthly (heavenly) court. Is it fanaticism? Non-reality? It's all real! God very often answers through sufferings, tears, and pains.

Ночь пред судом была абсолютно спокойная. Это была молитвенная ночь, где я продолжал молиться и полагаться только на его помощь. Приходят воспоминания судов, на которых много раз присутствовал сам; некоторые из друзей уже осужденны, тянут срока. Я это время был в линии. Сегодня мой черед. Сегодня моё время.

The night before the trial was absolutely calm. This was a night of prayer, where I continued to pray and depend only on God's assistance. There comes to mind other trials, which I had attended many times; some of the friends are already sentenced and serving their terms. At that time, I was in line. But today it's my turn. Today is my time.

ГЛАВА 13 – СУД И ПРИГОВОР

Интересное совпадение этого дня:

26 сентября – моему отцу день рождения.

26 сентября – два года тому, я принимал святое водное крещение, вступив в завете с Богом.

26 сентября – меня судят.

Привёл себя в порядок, теперь уже под конвоем везут в отряд на суд. Благодарность Богу, за абсолютный покой в душе.

В машине по дороге я вспомнил псалом молодёжи, который мы любили исполнять:

«Молодым капитанам веры,
Направляющим в небо путь,
Я желаю веры без меры
И чтоб мужество крепла грудь!
На пути будут ветры гонений,
И затишье, как мели обман,
И подводные камни сомнений,
И неверья гнетущий туман».
(Песни Возрождения, № 772)

Да, сегодня я в линии. Сегодня я должен быть именно здесь. Боже мой! Помоги сегодня пройти этот коридор. Помоги пережить день суда. Теперь будет хоть какая-то определённость.

CHAPTER 13 – TRIAL AND JUDGMENT

There was an interesting synchronicity on this day:

September 26th – my father's date of birth;

September 26th – two years since I accepted holy water baptism, entering into a covenant with God;

September 26th – the day of my trial and judgment.

After I had tidied myself, they took me by convoy to the trial at the detachment. Thank God for absolute peace in my soul.

In the car along the way I remembered a psalm that the youth loved to perform:

“Young captains of faith,
Leading the way into heaven,
I desire faith without measure
And courage to strengthen my chest.
On the path will be winds of persecution,
And calm on the shore of falsehood,
And underwater rocks of doubt,
And unfaithful oppressive fog.”
[Songs of Rebirth, No. 772]

Yes, today I was in line. Today I was meant to be, namely, here. Oh, my God! Help me pass through this corridor today. Help me live through the day of trial. Now at least there will be some kind of certainty.

Суд начался в 9 часов утра. На суд прилекли много посторонних людей, общественности города, много людей, которых вижу впервые в части. Мой суд оказался общественным зрелищем. Процесс суда проходил продолжительностью восемь часов.

Все обвинения в мой адрес:

- (1) Я инакомыслящий. Моя вера не моей страны; это зерно религии из-за границы, запад или Америка.
- (2) Такой религии нельзя доверять; она в подполье имеет много грязных дел, вовлечение молодых людей. Печатаются подпольно Христианская литература.
- (3) Всё это продукт империализма. Людей, которые попали под их влияние, их необходимо убирать с общества, ибо они будут дальше рассеивать эти семена зла для нашего атеистического коммунистического общежития.

Офицерами выливалась та же ложь, что я занимаюсь пропагандой, хожу ночью по зданиям других рот уговариваю матросов в свою религию.

Как всё только дешёво смотреться. Суд проходит на уровне подросткового ума заключения. Как можно пройти ночью в другую роту, где на посту три дневальных и один дежурный по роте? Так, кто задурманен? Кого пытаются здесь задурманить?

The trial started at 9 A.M. The trial attracted many bystanders from the local community, many people that I saw for the first time in the unit. My trial turned out to be a public spectacle. The process of the trial went on for the duration of eight hours.

The following charges were addressed:

- (1) I was a dissident. My faith was not from my country; it was a seed from a foreign religion, from the west or from America.
- (2) This kind of religion was not to be trusted; it was known for many dirty deeds in the underground. It enticed young people. It printed underground Christian literature.
- (3) It was a product of imperialism. People who fell under their influence needed to be taken away from society, for they also would spread the same seeds of hate for our atheistic communist society.

The officers also spread the same lies, that I was spreading propaganda, and that I went at night to the buildings of other companies and persuaded sailors to accept my religion.

How cheap everything appears. The trial proceeds at the level of a juvenile mentality. How can someone pass through to another company at night when there are three orderlies and one duty guard in each company? So, who is fooled here? Who are they trying to stupefy?

Эту систему службы знают здесь в зале сотни сидящих людей, что это практически нереальное обвинение. Люди сидят тихо и спокойно. из них не промолвит и слова, хотя при всём, все понимают что им промывают мозги. Не меня одурманивают. Нет.

Мне только хотят доказать: «Вот мы и наша власть. Не согласился отказаться – получай! Это в нашей силе сделать с тобой что мы хотим»!

В зал вводят всех матросов. Два тысячи.

Зал получился напичкан, словно рыба в сети. Дышать нечем. От перенапряжения сильные головные боли, а здесь ещё и воздуха нет.

Громовым голосом, прокурор, от имени народа Советского Союза, на основании моей вины, запросил семь лет строгого режима.

«ВА»! понеслось в зале. «Запросил потолок этой статьи».

Суд удаляется на заседание. Это время гробовой тишины. Все в ожидании, а что скажет судья? Какое-то мгновение и развязка, в окончательном определении.

Слава Богу! В этот день Господь хранил моё сердце в полном мире, в покое. Я видел конкретно защиту Божью. Он давал слово на устах тогда, когда необходимо было сказать.

This system of service is known here in the hall by hundreds of assembled people; they know it's a fictitious accusation. The spectators sit quietly and calmly. None of them dares to utter a word, even though through the entire proceedings they all understand that they are being brain-washed. They are not trying to benumb me. No.

They simply want to prove to me: "Here we are and here's our authority. Since you refused to renounce your religion – take this! It is in our power to do with you whatever we want!"

They bring in all the sailors – two thousand of them. The hall becomes very stuffy. It's like fish in a net. There's no fresh air to breathe. The pressure is too much to bear, and my head starts to ache severely.

With a thunderous voice, the prosecutor announces: "By the name of the people of the Soviet Union, based on his guilt, he receives seven years of a strict regime."

"Wow!" was the sound that traveled through the hall. "He received the ceiling of this provision." Seven years was the highest sentence permitted by law.

The court withdrew for a conference. This was a time of grave silence. Everyone waits for the final verdict: What will the judge say? It will happen in an instant – an outcome with a final decision.

Praise God! On this day the Lord kept my heart in perfect peace, in stillness. I saw the actual protection of God. He had given the word in those situations when it was necessary to speak, and he had given

Давал мудрость видеть всю ситуацию, и в ней ориентироваться. Для меня особого значения не имел мой срок. Я просто хотел чтобы быстрее бы всё закончилось бы. Срок, полюбому уже буду тянуть я.

«Встать! Суд идёт!»
раздалась команда.

Судья зачитывает моё обвинение, моё преступление и останавливается на сроке четыре года общего режима. Время проведённое в части под следствием не засчитывать. Тогда общая сложность четыре с половиной года. Всё! Закончилось! Взяли под стражу и в ту же камеру!

Много анализов, итоги, воспоминания прошедшего дня отодвинули сон на второй план. Не сделал какой-то ошибки в моей речи? Всё ли было понятным что я высказывал? Всё ли я сделал так, как должно было быть?

Моя молитва к Богу! Слава тебе Господи! Мы прошли этот этап времени с тобой вместе, и прошли то твоей схеме и по твоей воле.

Как только хочется передать эту весть отцу и матери! В нас нет никаких контактов. Я полностью от них отрезан в информации уже сколько времени. Они ничего не знают обо мне, и что со мной. Одно только знают – что я под следствием. Разумом понимаю, что полюбому, какие-то чувства проходили чрез их сердце. Хочется передать:

«Папа и мама! Не волнуйтесь!

wisdom to see the entire situation and be guided by it. For me, there was no specific meaning to my sentence. I only wanted for all this to end as soon as possible. I will have to carry out the sentence either way.

“Stand up! The court is in session!” the command resounded.

The judge reads out the charge and my crime. He stops at a period of four years for the total sentence. The time spent under investigation in the unit would not be counted. So the total sum was actually four-and-a-half years. That's it! It was finished! They took me under guard and returned me to the same cell.

A lot of analysis, review, and recollections of the preceding day pushed away any chance of sleep. Did I make any mistakes in my speech? Was everything I said comprehensible? Did I do everything the way it was supposed to be?

My prayer to God – thank you, Lord! We went through this stage together. We passed over it according to your design and your will.

How I wish I could communicate this news to my father and mother! We don't have any contact, and I'm completely cut off from them. I haven't received any information from them for such a long time. They don't know anything about me, and what's happening to me. They only know one thing – I am under investigation. Mentally, I understand that either way there are certain feelings that passed through their hearts. I want to transmit:

“Papa and Mama! Don't worry!

Уже есть определение! Теперь только молитесь чтобы Бог дал силы пройти и дальше достойно». Как только хочется, после тех бурь переживаний, принести им только словом своим тишину, донести им внутреннее исцеление в их страданиях и болях, разрушить все предположения, тревожные ожидания печальных новостей. Как хочется донести к ним слова:

«Слава Богу! Теперь будьте в покое».

Но увы! Они ничего не знают о всём свершившемся.

Глубокой ночью, Бог посетил меня в молитве. Мне сильно хотелось молиться, и остановится просто не хотелось. Бог наполнял особой радостью. А затем я поднялся со своего спального щита (норы) и громко вскрикнул:

«Слава Богу»!

Дежурный открывает двери моей камеры: «Что случилось, осуждённый?»

Я объясняю ему: «Послушай меня. Какие только соютия в один день. Сегодня папе моему – день рождения, сегодня в родном доме семья была в сборе. Два года тому назад я принял водное крещение, вступив в завет с Богом. Сегодня 26 сентября я получил срок. Сколько событий 26 сентября»!

Ничего не сказал, дежурный постоял минуту, две, и закрыл дверь моей камеры.

A decision has been made! Pray that God will now give me strength to continue forward in a worthy manner." How I would like – after all the storms of their personal experience – to bring them stillness with only my word. And to dispatch inner healing for their sufferings and pains; and to destroy all the assumptions that trouble them as they anticipate receiving sad news. How I wish I could deliver to them the words:

"Praise God! Be at peace now!"

But, alas! They are not aware of all that has come to pass.

In the dark of night, God visited me in my prayers. I had a strong desire to pray, and I simply did not want to stop. God filled me with a special joy. I got up from my plank-bed (hole) and loudly exclaimed:

"Praise God!"

The guard opened the door of my cell and said, "What happened, condemned man?"

I explain to him: "Listen to me. What an extraordinary sequence of events in one day. Today is my father's birthday, and today the family is assembled in our house. Two years ago, on this very day, I accepted water baptism and entered into a covenant with God. Today, the 26th of September, I received my sentence. How many events coincided on this day!"

The duty officer did not say a word. He stood for a minute or two, and then he closed the door of my cell.





Pastor Vasil Zavgorodniy gave me two discs that had his story translated by his daughter Inna and narrated by Paul J. Wigowsky. I spent hours at a recording studio in a church in Sacramento narrating Pastor Zavgorodniy's story. I was glad to work with Vasil on his story (CDs and book) for free because I was sympathetic with his story, especially since my father had also spent time in a Soviet prison for his Christian faith.

Listen to the audio version:

<https://wigowsky.com/RGT/books/VasilZ1.MP3> Part 1 (28:50)

<https://wigowsky.com/RGT/books/VasilZ2.MP3> Part 2 (27:55)

<https://wigowsky.com/RGT/books/VasilZ3.MP3> Part 3 (37:18)



See Chapter 2 (Voronaev) 2 audio files

<https://wigowsky.com/RGT/books/Voronaev1.MP3> (narrated by Paul J. Wigowsky)

<https://wigowsky.com/RGT/books/voronaev2.MP3>



*Bishop
Pastor Evangelist*

Vasily Zavgorodniy was brought up in the *Evangelical Church in the former Soviet Union*, where almost three generations of Christian brothers had been banished in jails and labor camps. Some of them passed through the GULAG system in the 1940's. In the 1960's, many brothers from a church served time in jails under the strict regime.

During his childhood and teenage years, Vasily went through many difficulties. The church, as well as the families in the church were heavily persecuted by the KGB.

Vasily was arrested in 1975 and passed through the jails of the former atheistic communist KGB: Brest, Bryansk, Kharkov, Odessa, then Kherson.

He was released in September, 1979. Soon afterwards he accepted a church position in the city of Odessa, and he was ordained as a pastor, and continued to be followed and persecuted.

The year 1988 was the beginning of a new epoch for Christians. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, there was freedom to preach the Gospel. A new church called "Re-birth" opened up in the city of Odessa, where Vasily served as the pastor. He continued to serve as pastor in another church that opened up, "Emmanuel." He was also ordained to serve as a bishop in the Odessa region. All this time he was dedicated to evangelization, opening new churches, and participation in Bible seminars and conferences.

In 1995, the Zavgorodniy family moved to live in the USA, where Vasily continued to work in churches and in the organization of new churches and evangelization services. He was a speaker at seminars and conferences.

In our time God has moved Vasily to a new service to reach people who are in pain and tears, and many of those who suffer.

"The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary" (Isaiah 50:4)

Vasily has many moving testimonies which help people of this country who experience difficult crises. Many people receive liberation from despair and depression and God keeps many of them from the brink of crises.

[Note: My personal assessment of Vasil Zavgorodniy's book "My Crucible of Suffering" is that the title is appropriate for the subject matter. Vasil spent time in a gulag. In spite of some brethren making him change the title later to "The Treasure of Strength in Adversity", the original title makes sense in the context of biblical references to the imitation of Christ that a believer performs when he becomes a Christian, and when he does as Jesus said, "Take up thy cross, and follow me." I add an endnote citation to clarify why the original title should stand on solid ground. No changes!]

Endnote citation:

In the Bible, the "crucible of suffering" refers to a period of intense trials and hardships that serve as a test of faith, much like a crucible refines gold by burning away impurities. This concept suggests that suffering is not random or meaningless, but rather a divine process that can lead to spiritual growth, deeper understanding of God, and ultimately, greater faith.

The Bible uses the metaphor of a crucible, a vessel used to melt and purify metals, to illustrate how suffering can purify and strengthen one's faith. Just as a goldsmith removes impurities from gold by exposing it to intense heat, God can use suffering to remove sinful tendencies and imperfections from believers' lives.

Through suffering, believers can develop virtues like patience, endurance, and hope. The experience can also lead to a greater appreciation for God's grace, mercy, and faithfulness.

The Book of Job, the life of Joseph, and the Apostle Paul's experiences offer examples of individuals who endured profound suffering and ultimately found redemption and a deeper understanding of God's ways.

Jesus himself experienced the ultimate "crucible of suffering" on the cross, demonstrating the depth of God's love and sacrifice for humanity. His suffering provides a model for believers facing their own trials, offering hope and assurance of God's presence. <https://dailyverses.net/suffering/kjv>