

Mr. Yevsukov: Vices Versus Virtues

Paul C. Semenchuk

A retired Russian engineer lay dying on a hospital bed in Marseilles, France. He was religious and he also knew a lot about a lot. In fact, any subject you would bring up, he immediately gave the impression he knew everything there was to know about it. He was, in the vernacular, a know-it-all.

Just before going to revisit him, I told the Lord about my frustration with Mr. Yevsukov.

“Go in peace. I will tell you what to say.” So I went reassured.

After exchanging greetings, I asked him: “Mr. Yevsukov, do you think it’s possible for me to live in such a way that when I die, I will go to heaven?”

For a moment, he silently digested the question and somewhat hesitatingly said,

“Yes...I believe... it is possible.”

“And how might that be?”

“Well... if our virtues continue to outnumber our vices, there will come a time when we will cross the line and we will be on the safe side, assuring us entrance into heaven,” he concluded with an unexpected surge of confidence.

I thought about his answer and asked: “And when will I know I’ve crossed the line?” His face turned more ashen than it already was. In fact, it took on the appearance of utter despair. “You can never know in this life.”

He stared into space, shocked and crushed by the impact of his own words. He was facing impending death without a scrap of hope, without a shred of assurance.

“Mr. Yevsukov, you believe the Bible is God’s inspired word, don’t you?”

“Yes, I do,” he responded meekly.

“Would you like to know what God says about assurance of salvation?”

“Yes, I would.”

I handed him my Russian New Testament and had him read several assurance verses aloud, starting with the Gospel of John, chapter one, verse twelve. As he continued to read additional Scripture, the truth of God's word progressively began to sink in. I could see on his⁴ face that he understood and appreciated its meaning. At one point, I asked him, "Would you like to receive Christ into your heart and life right now?"

Without verbally responding to my question, he resolutely folded his hands and began to pray. As he prayed, I looked up and saw him transformed from a man without hope to a man full of assurance. He ended his prayer by expressing great gratitude for God's gift of salvation. It was obvious he had just been spiritually born into the family of God.