

The judge looked at the true culprit with peculiar sympathy, and, deeply moved he said, "The sentence was passed. The guilt was paid for. This case was cleared. You are a free man!"

THE CHANGED LIFE

With a heavy heart the pardoned young brother returned to his home where he cried to God in total anguish. "Lord," he pleaded in tears, "Help me! I am guilty, unhappy and I really regret my past life. However, I want to make a new start. My brother died for me so that I could live today. He let me have his clothes but I am totally unworthy to wear them. Lord, I depend on you to change me and protect me from all sin and wrong, so I can wear my brother's clothes without shame."

Then peace entered his innermost being and he knew that his prayer had been answered. The peace of God started to reshape his life. Faith and trust in God swept away all his deceitfulness and suspicion. Love took the place of hatred and instead of living a reckless life, he became attentive and considerate of others. His former friends were the first ones to realize the tremendous change happening in his life. He was no longer influenced by their way of living. Filled with love and praise, he was

determined to live a life pleasing to God as his brother had always wished for him. "See, my friends, I wear my brother's clothes; I can no longer come with you to places where he would never have gone!" he would say to them.

Some turned their back on him. Others were touched and followed his example. They too turned to God and experienced the forgiveness of their sin and peace with God.

THE POWER OF LOVE

Many years later the younger brother died and was buried in his brother's clothes according to his wish. These clothes had become a symbol of the immense power of love which had completely changed him and given him a new purpose of life.

The significance of this story can be found in the Bible. Maybe you have read or heard the gospel many times without it having any effect on your life. However, the message of the Bible is addressed to you personally. Think about the words of Jesus, his life, his death and his resurrection in relationship to your life.

Just as the older brother traded his clothes with his younger brother, so the Lord Jesus Christ wants to make an exchange with you. In the place of your guilt, your

failures and disappointments the Lord wants to present you with his riches and his love.

He has already done everything necessary for this exchange. He died in order to pay for all your sin and guilt. He wants to equip you with the power to live a life pleasing to God.

Do you believe that, "Jesus Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again?" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

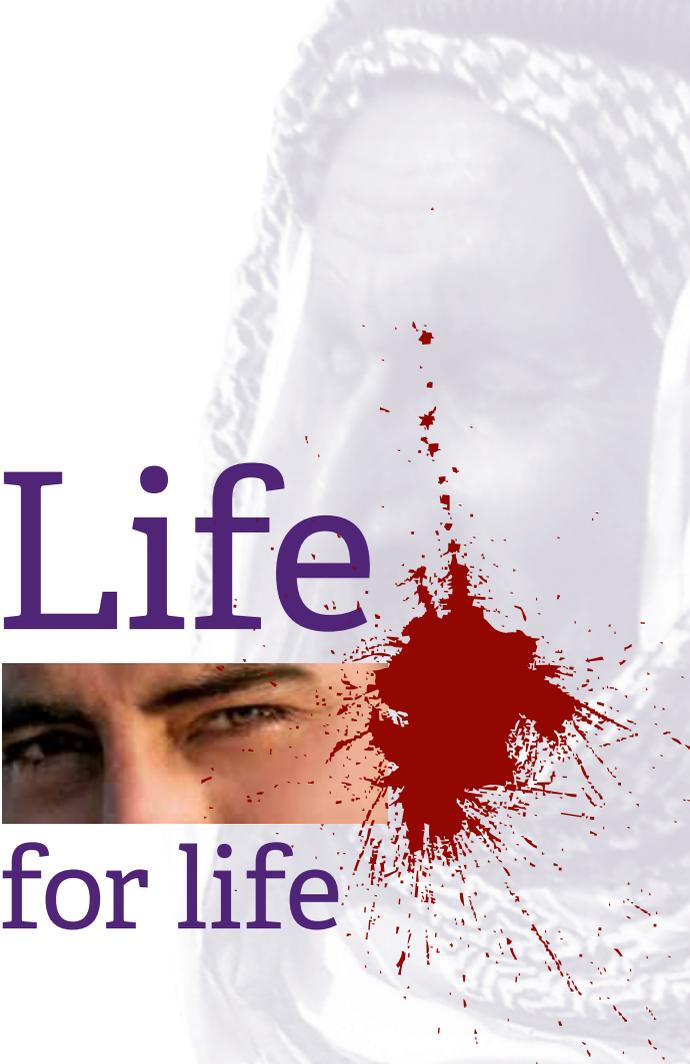
He died for you. It is up to you to decide whether you want to surrender your life to Jesus Christ. If you do, you will be embraced by the power of his love and forgiveness; you will be healed of your guilty conscience and your bad habits, and you will discover life in all its fullness and beauty.

What is your response towards this life-changing offer?

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Life

for life

Years ago two brothers were living in an oriental city. The younger brother hung around with his bad companions, and day and night the power of evil drew him more and more into an abyss that would finally destroy his life. The older brother, however, was considerate towards other people, loving God and following the teachings of the Bible. His brother's careless lifestyle deeply worried him and he often tried to talk to him seriously. In tears he would plead with him to turn from his wicked ways and he showed him a way out of the grip of his bad habits. Unfortunately his brother showed no sign of regret. He totally ignored all the good advice and held on to his shameful lifestyle. His older brother kept on praying for him, waiting for God's intervention.

A HOPELESS SITUATION

Late one night there was a loud knock at the door of the elder brother. He quickly opened – and surprised, he pulled his younger brother inside. “What’s wrong?” he asked. Altogether pale, trembling and with bloodstained clothes his brother gasped, “Help me,hide me!

They are after me. Look at the blood! – I have killed the man! Oh no! It all happened so quickly.” There was no

time to waste as the older brother desperately sought a way out of this hopeless situation.

In great love for his brother an idea suddenly formed in his mind. Without comment he changed the blood-stained clothes of his brother and put them on himself, giving him his own clean shirt to wear. He pushed him into a room and locked the door.

At the same time there was another knock at the door and the police stormed inside. “Do not try to get out of it!” they said sharply. “All the tracks are leading to this house. Look at these bloodstained clothes. You are arrested.” They grabbed him, bound his hands and pulled him along to throw him into prison.

Not defending himself, not even saying a word, the man was sent to prison straight away. The next morning he was ordered to a hearing. He did not defend himself, but kept repeating the words, “I know that I must die because of this crime, and the sooner the better!”

CONDEMNED TO DEATH

After a few days he was taken to court. The judges listened to the accusers. They considered the police report and the bloodstained clothes of the prisoner. They asked the accused man, “Do you want to say anything to justify

yourself?” – “No,” he said firmly,lowering his head so that his innocent look would not betray him.

There was convincing evidence which made the judges pronounce a death sentence on him. The evening before his execution he asked the director of the prison to grant him one last wish. He wanted to write one last letter and asked the director to forward it unopened to the addressee after his death.

The director studied the calm and peaceful face of the condemned man. A bright and heavenly radiance shone from his eyes . There was no doubt about his honesty and so his wish was granted. Late that evening the prisoner handed a sealed envelope to the warden to be delivered. Then he was left to himself for the last hours of his life.

THE SEALED LETTER

In the morning he was taken to the place of execution. After his death a messenger was sent to deliver the sealed letter. A man pale with fear received the letter nervously. After a long stare at it he broke the seal, and moaning in pain he read slowly, “Tomorrow I will die for you, wearing your clothes. And you – may you live in righteousness and holiness wearing my clothes and remembering me!”

The criminal was shaken to the very depth of his heart. He read the words again. They seemed unbelievable to him.

I will die for you!

These words weighed on his conscience like an enormous burden. “This cannot be true!” he reasoned. As fast as he could he ran to the prison in the hope of saving his brother. There he asked to speak to the director urgently and showed him his brother's letter. The director was deeply moved by the words “I will die for you!” Suddenly he realized that the calm and quiet behaviour of the condemned man and his strange last wish had made sense.

GUILT ATONED FOR

The director was speechless and sent the letter to the judges in charge. They questioned the murderer who confessed everything,his past life, the murder, his escape and his cowardly silence. In his terrible guilt he finally cried, “Kill me, I plead with you, let me die!” But there was nothing more to settle. The words of the victim “I will die for you!” had settled it all. It expressed the awesome power of brotherly love.