

Good News Guide

THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

January, 2015

Another New Beginning

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

January, 2015. Another new year is beginning.

Does this time of year have any special meaning for you?



People used to make New Year's resolutions. A few people still do. These resolutions quite often represent a serious intention to make a change for the better—to quit smoking, lose weight, get out of debt, work on relationships, or take some other positive action.

The problem with New Year's resolutions is that they hardly ever result in anything worthwhile. Consider an example. Suppose you smoke, and you're fifty pounds overweight. You know you should quit smoking and lose weight, right? Along comes January 1, and you make a resolution: "This year I'm really going to do it!" But the trouble is, you don't really want to quit smoking, you just feel that you ought to. And as for passing up that piece of chocolate cake, well, it's easy to resist anything except temptation, right?

So forget making New Year's resolutions. They don't help. I've found that the only thing that really helps is desire. When I finally decided that I wanted not to smoke more than I wanted to smoke, I simply quit smoking. It was relatively easy, because I was doing what I really wanted to do. But it took me several years to get to that desire, and in fact it did not happen until the Lord helped.

Smoking is a rather easy target. It is obviously a serious health hazard; it makes you stink; you look stupid doing it; you feel like a fool trying to defend it, and it costs a lot more money than most folks can afford to just send up in smoke. So, if you are honest and reasonable and not a complete idiot, and if you ask for the Lord's help, you will come to a strong desire to quit smoking, and you will be able to quit.



What about something a little less obvious? What about sinning? Are you ready to try to give that up? Do you really want to?

Not fair, you say. "Sinning" is too broad a word. It includes some really bad things, like stealing and murder. But if you take the Bible seriously, sin includes a lot of stuff that most people don't even consider wrong, like cursing, telling a little lie, cheating a bit on your taxes, or even just being a bit selfish. Where do you draw the line?

Besides, nobody can ever really quit sinning entirely. We all sin, and we always will, because we're all fallen creatures.

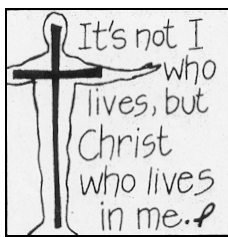
Those are the devil's arguments, my friend. He does not want you to get with God's program. He wants you to believe that a sin is not a sin if "everybody does it" or if "it doesn't hurt anybody." He also wants you to believe that you can never quit sinning. As usual, he takes a biblical truth—"all have sinned"—and twists it a little to tell a plausible lie—"there is no way to keep from sinning."

But what does God's word say? I want to take you through some Bible verses to show that God's plan is that we no longer sin, once we are saved. I hope you will take time to look up these verses and read them in context, to make sure they say what I'm telling you.



God's word says we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12), expecting that God will faithfully complete the transforming work of redemption that He has begun in each of us (Phil. 1:6). The word says we are to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48). How does this happen? By our no longer conforming to this world's patterns, but allowing the Holy Spirit to renew and transform our minds (Rom. 12:1) until we have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5). We can't do it by our own efforts, but if we truly believe God and surrender to Him, He will bring it about.

God's word speaks to us so that we might refrain from sinning (1 John 2:1a), and that is His desire. That should be the goal that we desire with all our heart and strive for every day. If we miss it on a given day, Jesus has that covered (1 John 2:1b-2), but even though we have grace we should be striving not to sin (Rom. 6:1-2). And though we fall short at first, we should keep trying, as Paul says: "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." (Phil. 3:12)



You made a new beginning when you accepted Christ as your Savior and Lord, and asked Him to manage your life. Why not make another new start today, and ask Him to take away not only the punishment for your sins, but all desire to keep on sinning? If you will do that, and desire it with your whole heart, you will find that it isn't impossible after all. "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13).

I wish each of you a new year filled with the joy of the Lord—His Joy, His Peace, His Love and His Light filling your heart each day. Though your circumstances may be dark and difficult, if you are "in Christ" then you are where you need to be. And if you are not yet in Christ—what are you waiting for, a special invitation?

"The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price." (Rev. 22:17)

Consider yourself invited!

Your friend in Jesus, the Lord—

Brother Roland



Perseverance



One morning a couple of cowpunchers went out on the range to bring in a wild steer from the mountains. They took along with them one of those shaggy little gray donkeys — a burro. Now a big three-year old steer that's been running loose in the timber is a tough customer to handle. Nevertheless, these cowboys had a technique for handling this steer. They got a rope on the steer and then they tied him neck and neck, right up close, to the burro and let them go.

At first, the burro had a bad time. The steer threw him all over the place. He banged him against trees, rocks, into bushes. Time after time they both went down. But there was one great difference between the burro and the steer. The burro had an idea. He wanted to go home. And no matter how often the steer threw him, every time the burro got to his feet he took a step nearer the corral. This went on and on. After about a week, the burro showed up at the corral. He had with him the tamest and sorriest-looking steer you ever saw.



The thought of this little burro, being overpowered and abused, can encourage us when we find ourselves struggling with difficult problems or people in our lives. We often feel tied, "right up close". If we could only have some slack! But our God had a purpose in tying us to our problems. He knows that our faith will enable us to hang in there. No matter how often we are thrown, our stubborn Christian attitude will enable us to get to our feet and take a step nearer to God's solution! We may be abused and hurt. But just think of the tremendous outcome — that we might eventually stand before the throne of our Savior, tied to that special person who has now been brought to Christ! Maybe God's techniques make sense after all!

If you have a Bible question or a question about the Christian life, send it to me at

**Brother Roland,
PO Box 14
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I'll do my best to answer it, and your question may be helpful to someone else as well. God bless you!

Holiness

"...Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:13-16)

We may not achieve it today or tomorrow, but this is our goal as Christians.

Puzzle:

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Words:

*Holiness is:

A LIFELONG PROCESS
BECOMING LIKE JESUS
BELONGING TO GOD
BEING SET APART
CARING
COMMANDED
COMMUNION
ETERNAL DELIGHT
FAITHFULNESS
FORGIVING
FREEDOM FROM SIN
FULLNESS OF JOY
GENTLENESS

GIVING
GOD'S WORK IN US
GODLINESS
GOODNESS
JOY
LIGHT
LIVING SACRIFICE
LONG-SUFFERING
LOVE
MEEKNESS
MORAL PURITY
OBEDIENCE
OUR TRUE GOAL
PEACE

PRAISE
PROMISED
RESTING IN THE LORD
SANCTIFICATION
SELF-CONTROL
SERVING
SONSHIP
SPIRITUAL WORSHIP
SURRENDER
THE DIVINE NATURE
TRANSFORMATION
WHOLENESS
WORSHIP