



GOOD NEWS GUIDE

THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

March, 2016

Are You Ready for Holiness?

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Why were you born?

I imagine if I asked you that question, you might say something about your mother and father getting together, and conditions being right, and presto! you just naturally resulted. Or some variation of that, with more details.

That describes how you were born. It doesn't really address the question of why.

The answer to why is that God created you. An echo of His mighty word, "Let there be light!", came down the ages and spoke you into being: "Let there be Jim!" (Or Ralph, or Susan, or Albert—put your own name in place of "Jim".)

Why did He do that? We can't know the mind of God, that is totally, infinitely beyond our ability to understand, but His word tells us that we are created for eternal fellowship—communion—with Him. This earthly life is, somehow, the road we must travel on the way to our heavenly home.

But there's a big problem about that. It's called sin. Because we have each inherited the nature of our father Adam, we are sinful creatures, and we sin against God. We can't argue about this; we all know what sin is, and we all know we're guilty. Many people think God doesn't really care, as long as we try to "live a good life," but the Bible is very specific about this. God cares very much. In fact, because of His own nature, He cannot allow us to enter into Heaven. Sin cannot exist where God is. So if you think you'll get into Heaven as your same old sinful self, think again. You won't.

Our sins dig a big ditch across the road to heaven. Big sins dig it deeper, but even little sins make a ditch so wide and deep that we can never get across it by our own strength or goodness. Our sin condemns us to an eternity without God—otherwise known as Hell.

God did not want to abandon us on the wrong side of that ditch. That's why Jesus came to Earth as a man. When Jesus died on Calvary's

cross, He made a bridge across the ditch for you and me. Now the resurrected Christ comes over to us on our side of the ditch and says, "Come on over to the Father's side. I'll help you cross the bridge."

Many people ignore Him. A few recognize His Good News as just what they are longing for, and eagerly cross over the bridge to the Father's side.

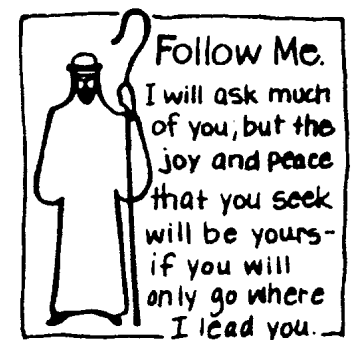
Too many of us, though, say "Yes" to His invitation, but don't cross the bridge. We accept Jesus as our Savior. We acknowledge and confess our sinful state, and ask for God's forgiveness. We get baptized, join the church, and call ourselves Christians. But we're often reluctant to abandon all the stuff from our old life and cross over to God's side.

I knew a man who came to Christ in his forties. In his younger years he had collected Playboy magazines. His collection was complete, all the way back to the very first issue. He was reluctant to destroy them, though he knew he should. As far as I know, he never did.

Does that mean he didn't go to Heaven when he died? I don't know. I believe he must have eventually gotten his priorities straightened out. But I'm very sure of two things: first, he didn't take those magazines across the bridge to Heaven with him; and, second, he surely missed out on some of the joy he might have had by being obedient to the Holy Spirit and letting go of them.

What about you? Are you holding on to any ungodly thing from your life before Christ? It could be something tangible, like those magazines or a bad habit. Or it might be something intangible, like a grudge against someone, or a confession you need to make.

Usually we're aware of the things that keep us distant from God, but we don't have any sense of urgency about them. We think, "I still have time to



get my act together. Someday I'll give up this little sin that I love so much, but today is not the day." We need to get rid of this attitude. This very day may be our last one on Earth.

God wants His people to be holy—that is, totally dedicated to Him, completely obedient to His will, righteous, sinless, loving—in other words, just like Jesus. The Bible says this in a thousand different ways—in fact, it is one of the most central themes of the Bible. Here are a few scripture passages for your consideration.



But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15-16)

For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. (1 Thessalonians 4:7)

For he chose us in him [Jesus] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. (Ephesians 1:4)

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. (Colossians 1:22-24)

These are by no means all of the places where God's word tells us, "Be holy." But they are a fair sample, enough to show that He really means it.

If you have come this far with me, I can imagine an objection or two. One might be, "But I'm so far from perfect. I still sin. How can I ever become holy?" Another might be, "It's impossible. If God demands holiness, then the only human being in Heaven is Jesus!"

Here's what I want you to understand from this whole teaching: First, you don't just suddenly get rid of your sin nature and become perfectly holy. It's a process. It begins the moment you accept Jesus as your Savior, and it is finished when God says it is—probably when you enter Heaven through those "Pearly Gates."

Secondly, your part in the process is pretty minimal. All you have to do is show up. God does all the work.

Romans 12:1: ***"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."***

Think of an altar, and picture yourself climbing up on the altar and lying down, offering your body as a living sacrifice to God. This is what God wants, and this is what we owe him—our "spiritual act of worship." And if you find that you have somehow slipped off the altar, climb back up there. And, as the next verse says, give God free rein to transform you "by the renewing of your mind,". And Philippians 1:4 completes the message: ***"he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."***

Make the decision to be holy before the Lord. Let that be your goal in life. It is certainly God's goal for you—and you know, I hope, that what He wants for you is much, much better than anything you could wish for yourself.

And don't worry very much about failures. Even Saint Paul had his share of them:



I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:18-19,24-25)

If you are committed to the process and surrendered to God's will, that's all you need to do—and, indeed, all you can do. The rest is up to God. His Holy Spirit will guide you and empower you, and you will become like Jesus. Your sins are covered by His blood, and all record of them is thrown away into the sea of forgetfulness. Your new nature will be perfected by God, sinless, and ready to sit with Jesus on the throne of Heaven.

God wants to make you holy. In fact, He has already begun. Are you ready to go on with Him?

I wish that each of you may feel God's joy in your obedient submission to His will, and be moved more and more to submit and obey. To God be all glory forever!

Your brother in Jesus, the Lord,

Brother Roland

THE BUZZARD, THE BAT, AND THE BUMBLEBEE

(Author unknown)

It is said that if you put a buzzard in a pen that is 6 feet by 8 feet and is entirely open at the top, the bird, in spite of its ability to fly, will be an absolute prisoner. The reason is that a buzzard always begins a flight from the ground with a run of 10 to 12 feet. Without space to run, as is its habit, it will not even attempt to fly, but will remain a prisoner for life in a small jail with no top.



The ordinary bat that flies around at night, a remarkable nimble creature in the air, cannot take off from a level place. If it is placed on the floor or flat ground, all it can do is shuffle about helplessly and no doubt, painfully, until it reaches some slight elevation from which it can throw itself into the air. Then, at once, it takes off like a flash.

It is also said that a bumblebee, if dropped into an open tumbler, will be there until it dies, unless it is taken out. It never sees the means of escape at the top, but persists in trying to find some way out through the sides near the bottom. It will seek a way where none exists, until it completely destroys itself.



Whether or not these sayings are completely accurate, there is a valid point being made here. As we struggle with all of our problems and frustrations, far too often we forget to “look up” for the answers that we need. Jesus has promised to be with us always. He has sent the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us. And even when we are not able to rise above life’s difficulties, He will always give us strength to get through them.

The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 ESV)

If you have a Bible question, or would like to be put on our mailing list, write to

Brother Roland, PO Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222

INMATES: For a valid address I need both your DOC and SID numbers and the institution name.

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Holiness

“... 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 1:15-16) This puzzle looks at what that means in terms of our character and our behavior. Enjoy!

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