



GOOD NEWS GUIDE

THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

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Where Will I Go from Here?

Years ago, when it was still okay to do things that showed you were a Christian, I used to see signs like this on someone's desk, or on an office wall:

Please be patient -- God isn't finished with me yet.

Sometimes it was just meant to be funny, but for some people it was a serious statement: "I know I'm not perfect. If I let you down or fail to satisfy you, I'm sorry. I intend to get better—bear with me."

We all need to have that sign tattooed on our foreheads, don't we?

Jesus said to His followers, "*Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" (Matt. 5:49) He could just as easily have said, "Be perfect, as I am perfect."

Right, Lord. Just let me make a couple of small corrections ... there, that ought to do it

No way. "Perfect" is not a state we can expect to achieve; it's a goal, something to aim for. And we never will get any closer to it without the Lord's help. Still, He commands us to work toward that goal.

The Apostle Paul said something about this on several occasions. To the Romans he wrote, "*I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but I keep on doing the evil I do not want to do.*" But on a more positive note, he wrote this to the Philippians: "*Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal ...*"

Each of us has come to our current situation in life through a combination of circumstances—things that have happened to us—and choices we've made. How we got to where we are may be worth knowing. Maybe we can learn from our past mistakes. But the most important question is not "How did I get here?" but "Where will I go from here?"

Each of us can decide how to deal with that question. We can just "go with the flow" and let life happen to us—*Que sera, sera*. Or we can take responsibility

for our life, make some important decisions about what we need to change; what we will or won't do; where we will or won't go. And then get serious and do whatever it takes—like Paul, "press on" to follow the best path for our future.

There's another trite saying I used to hear: "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." Think about it—choices you make today and in the coming days cannot change the past, but they will surely affect the shape of the future.

Am I making this sound easy? It is not easy, it's hard to change our way of looking at things; to change behavior that has been (more or less) successful in the past, or at least has kept us alive. The decision-making and the doing are both beyond our capability. Fortunately, we don't have to do it alone. We have guaranteed help from God, in the person of the Holy Spirit. As a friend of mine used to say, "Nothing is going to happen today that the Holy Spirit and I can't handle."

Check out this promise that God gave to His people as they were preparing to enter the Promised Land: *The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.* (Deuteronomy. 31:8 NIV) Was that meant only for Israel, only for that time? No, I am confident God makes the same promise to each person who is willing to enter the "promised land" of being His child. He will always be with us and ahead of us.

God is always, always, ready for us to start fresh on our walk with Him from right where we are.

Consider this story from the Bible. Jesus, with Peter, James, and John, came down from the mountain after Jesus' Transfiguration and found a crowd waiting for Him.

And someone from the crowd said, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. ... it has often cast him into fire and

into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.”

Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out.

And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.” (Mark 9:17-29 ESV, abridged)

“I believe, help my unbelief!”

Notice that Jesus did not tell the man to go away and build up his belief, and then He would help him. Instead He demonstrated that Jesus’ own belief was enough—all things, even miracles, were possible for Him. And He explained the source of His belief: prayer.

A main point of this story, for me, is that Jesus is always willing to meet us where we are and go on from there. If our faith is weak, He knows how to strengthen it. If our behavior is sinful, guess what—Jesus is called “Friend of sinners.” His example and the Holy Spirit’s guidance will help clean up our act.

We might say, “I have faith; help me because my faith is weak” Or, “I am obedient; help me to stop being rebellious.” Or, “I am humble, Lord: help me overcome my pride.”

Jesus meets us where we are. He knows our hearts. If we truly want to be faithful, humble, obedient servants of God, doing the Father’s will, then He is always beside us, ready and eager to help us do it.

But we must do our part, as well. What makes muscles stronger? Exercise. If we never do something that requires a step of faith, our faith remains weak. But if we step out in faith—for example, turning a conversation to the subject of Jesus and the salvation He offers; or giving money you need yourself to someone who needs it more—that step of faith encourages us to do more. Our faith in God’s provision and His promises is built up.

Humility also improves with practice. Jesus told the disciples to “wash one another’s feet”—in other

words, make yourself a servant of others. What a freeing thing this is; those who give their time to help people often say, “We receive more from them than we give.”

Where does prayer fit in this picture? Do you imagine that when Jesus went off by Himself to spend an hour or two in prayer, He was praying through a list of requests, as many of us do today? “Father, please heal Sylvie, and by the way Tommy needs a job really badly!”

Of course He may have made some requests like that, but I suspect most of His prayer time was spent just listening, not with His ears but with His Spirit—seeking to understand the Father’s will and receiving the spiritual energy and power to carry it out.

Let’s summarize this message:

- Every day of our lives we must decide: Where will I go from here?
- God’s standard for our behavior is high: *Be perfect, as I am perfect.*”
- We aren’t there, but Jesus meets us where we are and helps us work toward that goal.
- The Holy Spirit has been given to us to help and guide us. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.* (Proverbs 3:5-6)
- Our faith, our belief, our obedience—every Christian virtue—is strengthened by exercise and practice.
- Finally, the source of Jesus’ power to obey the Father, even to work miracles, is available to us: prayer. Spending time alone with God, letting Him fill us to overflowing with the “living water” of the Spirit of God—this is how we overcome the world, the devil, and our own fleshly temptations.

Am I there yet? No. But God hasn’t given up on me, and He hasn’t given up on you. Like Paul, we need to push on toward the goal, with God’s help, *being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 1:6)

My hope and prayer is that I, and all of you, will always confess that, with His help, we can get from where we are to where the Lord wants us to be.

Be blessed. Praise the LORD always. Amen.

Brother Roland

Ask me ... Send your Bible questions to me and I’ll try to answer them in the “Good News Guide.” Your question may help someone else. **Brother Roland, P O Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222**

The Holy Spirit

God promised to “pour out His Spirit on all people” (Joel 2:28) and He has done that. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are His children. (Romans 8:14) Thank you, Father, for sending us your Holy Spirit.

Puzzle:

J V S A O Z R B H Z O S E L F C O N T R O L E S H W E Z D D C F L E
 S X P P R H Q N R W K T J H V U Z Q B H V Q R P Q O C R E V D S T Y
 T B I O F E V S S M A I W N S U M I C K C L U O U R U U Q E E A C S
 F N R R E S T M K X Q R L Y T I S H S E G P T Q M K D S L C C E U Q
 I C I M K G L R U X X I Q U I L J V O N X T P N I I G N A O H Y M B
 G I T B O X D G O I M P L O R X E O D F E P I A Y N B E V P F C Y B
 L T O Y C H C E B F V S R S I H O L Y S P I R I T G P D O I V A S F
 A E F O O E M N L T M F Z M P V N X N F L A C T A M A R T T R X G E
 U O T R S J I T B W X O B L S X G S P B K G S B P I P C I P G S N O
 T Z R Y E S Z L G I O T C X N R R B V H L W F E X R N T S K R I I O
 I K U G U I D E U S I N T O A L L T R U T H O P L A U U X N E C H S
 R Z T B G S Z N A B C E K Q M M A A W C S R R V S C P W B F O X T U
 I S H K N H P E R N M M F K U J L L A D O Z O H U L K V I U O J L E
 P V S G O A U S N G Z N Y O H S T M S S U W H L E E M L N H M I L J
 S L C E T S Z S U D R R M B E E S I S L K A T H K S F S F Z Q R A V
 E I Y H N U S I J W C E N G T M L E U Y A T U C K O E A G V O H S V
 V H E H I L D E I B Z C V G A D C P N R M V A S T L I L G N E E U A
 I L I C G E U D N O H S H C R R E U E D F N V I O T H X Z A E D H M
 G K K H N H T F K D P I N F E F I V O R N E R R H P Q K L X X A C Q
 P M P P I E O E H X O D U T N E E C O N V I C T O F S I S L M Y A R
 A N A X K Y I E A T Y O B R E I F E Z S P L K U T P N Z P G P L E I
 L G A N A Z W T P C I I G S G W R N C S N N Z X D G T R I A F Q T Y
 T M R G E W R I A T H A X G E H I D R A W U S C L O S E R T O G O D
 V C Z R P D V M S P K E F F R Z K T F L K C E A P M R A I L G Z R E
 Z E I O S C C A A D N O R D W X Q T N R Z K V H B P C P T W R V G S
 S E U G N O T F O N O I T A T E R P R E T N I G T L L A O U C J O Y
 T C D M A Y H A Y O V M N Y I T X C L Y S A I T E W P D F B M Q L R
 G I V E U S P O W E R T O O B E Y G O D A S J T K U A E G T C Q U A
 V K P D J U C D V G D U M P H F S Q V P D Z E U N W R R O Z D Z N U
 S U T R O F M O C D N A P L E H S B E S N F C I K Y L C D L Z W L J

Words:

* Names of the Holy Spirit

ADVOCATE
 AUTHOR OF SCRIPTURE
 COMFORTER
 COUNSELOR
 GUIDE
 HELPER
 HOLY SPIRIT
 INTERCESSOR
 PARACLETE
 SPIRIT OF GOD
 SPIRIT OF LIFE
 SPIRIT OF TRUTH
 TEACHER
 WITNESS

* The Fruit of the Holy Spirit

FAITHFULNESS
 GENTLENESS
 GOODNESS
 JOY
 KINDNESS
 LOVE
 PATIENCE
 PEACE
 SELFCONTROL
*** Gifts from the Holy Spirit**
 DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS
 FAITH
 HEALING
 INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES
 KNOWLEDGE
 PROPHECY

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

WISDOM

WORKING MIRACLES

* Ministries of the Holy Spirit

CONVICT OF SIN

DRAW THE UNSAVED

DRAW US CLOSER TO GOD

GIVE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

GIVE US POWER TO OBEY GOD

GUIDE US INTO ALL TRUTH

HELP AND COMFORT US

HELP US PRAY

PRODUCE FRUIT

REGENERATE HUMAN SPIRITS

SANCTIFY US

TEACH US ALL THINGS

A fresh Start

This second puzzle was originally intended for inmates who were about to be released, but most of its messages apply to all of us who want to "start fresh" with Jesus today. Enjoy.

Puzzle:

A N D E V E R Y O N E T O H R Y U F U V M U S D W E L S N O R T I
J D W Y K K H S X E N A E R I G Y B R Z O P N O W A I R K E I J L
Y B N A N O M O R E C R I M E A T E Z J D H R H F R P O O D J G P
A U O I M T P V T P F T P V P L Q F D R A K A S V N R B J I S K K
K F J K K J G N I M E H C S E R O M O N H T R T P Y A H W V R R C
U E Y D Q Y O G Y Y K D Y I M G X W N A Y Z N H Q O S G Z O H Q O
E Y N O Y C N K N F C A Q D M U E E R O V E L G H U M I T R Q L G
U L U U E G F A S I D O C B C H G D U T A Z N U B R L E H P X I I
M R Z B J K W J F H K I Q Q T O A H Q O O B J O K L E N Y L J U R
T L D U T F M Q C O L O D N J Z A B H X H L F H K I Z R Y L N K E
N N U A N D W A N T S T O G I V E Y O U M E E T W V T U W I F D T
A W I Z G M E J D A U D D L E R Z N B K Q D S R M I M O E W S U F
K D Y U R R Y C T Y E A J W N J Y K Q Q L B R U M N F Y Y D Z B A
S K W D O D A R Q E K S C H H O Q J Q K L Y Q O L G W H C O O T T
Q F N F I R D A F X B B K A J P P U W N L T W Y W Q B T K G Q G S
S U S E J F O E V O L E H T T E L E Z M A H L N O E K I U R A P U
M A E G C N T C L Y D S L Y L R C U E N T E Z R M U H W H L M Q L
Q N M O B U E A M M Z T R O R T K G D K R S C E Q Y C T T G F D T
L H S D F C F R P A C Y D U O R E S S H T P F V P A Z A D N D H O
A O M K O G I G T T T O Q R O D H V Z N I I F O A B E D N A A G N
M N B N J F L N Z E E U J N O A T F Y H O R U G W A L W E D E U O
H E V O V Y T I A R S C H E R G D C X O L I V E B Y T H E W O R D
D S E W A A N W G I U A K E W J Z C U A J T T R N C B F G E Z I Z
C T L S P N A O J A Z N W D B O J A T E G N A C U O Y E C E Y A T
Y D P E G X D R G L J I H S Q J I U Y M D A E L A Z C A R Z X N C
H A L X A X N G S T T S J A L L E H M O R F U O Y D E V A S O H W
P Y L A M G U O T H R S B R W L A P N D P V F V T P N L J D M W M
L S N C P U B Y O I Y P L E H S D O G H T I W M N N E A H F I S F
N W O T I H A T A N D K N O W L E D G E O F H I M B R P S L M L Q
E O M L P M H J V G W Q Y Y O C A V N N G H E O T T L A O D C G Y
J R V Y X E T U D S W P N K X R I V X I N V I N M C R A E S R J C
Z K I P R Y E N O M Y S A E T E G O T O I T O J E H Z S S L S O L
S L O S I Z U J T E R L N C A Z V I O L Q D W C Y E W T F Y C L W

Words:

YOU CAN GET A JOB
KEEP ON LOOKING
GOD WILL PROVIDE
DON'T BE LAZY
WORK HARD
AN HONEST DAY'S WORK
FOR EACH DAY'S PAY

NO MORE SCHEMING
TO GET EASY MONEY
NO MORE CRIME
OF ANY KIND
EARN YOUR LIVING
AND SHARE WITH OTHERS

DO NOT LUST AFTER
MATERIAL THINGS
GOD KNOWS EXACTLY
WHAT YOUR NEEDS ARE
LEARN TO ENJOY
WHAT YOU HAVE
AND BE CONTENT

READ THE WORD
FEED ON THE WORD
LIVE BY THE WORD
LED BY THE SPIRIT
GROW IN GRACE
AND KNOWLEDGE OF HIM

WHO SAVED YOU FROM HELL
AND WANTS TO GIVE YOU
ABUNDANT LIFE TODAY

AS BEST YOU CAN
LIVE IN PEACE
WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS
AND EVERYONE

LET THE LOVE OF JESUS
GOVERN YOUR THOUGHTS
WORDS AND ACTIONS

YOU CAN DO IT
WITH GOD'S HELP