

Have a BLESSED YEAR 2022
in the Lord JESUS CHRIST!

New Year Thoughts

January, 2022 — the start of a whole new year to know for certain and be amazed that GOD LOVES YOU!

Does the start of a new year have any special meaning for you? People used to make New Year's resolutions. A few people still do. Their resolutions are made with serious intentions to make changes for the better — to lose weight, quit smoking, 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 firmly resolve: "This year I'm really going to do it!" But the trouble is, you don't really want to quit smoking, you just know that you should. And as for passing up that dish of ice cream or slice of chocolate cake — well, it's always easy to resist anything except temptation, right?



So forget making New Year's resolutions. They don't help. I have found that the only thing that really helps is desire. When I finally came to the point 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 I asked the Lord to help me, and He did.

Smoking is a pretty 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 fool, 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?

That's 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 or self-indulgent or prideful. Where do you draw the line?

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

Those are the devil's arguments, my friend. He does not want us to get with God's program. He wants us to believe that a sin isn't really a sin if "everybody does it" or if "it doesn't hurt anyone." He also wants us to believe that we will never be able to quit sinning, so why try?. As usual, he takes a biblical truth — "all have sinned" — and twists it to tell a plausible lie — "Give it up; there is no way you can keep from sinning."

But what does God's word say? I want us to look at some Bible verses to show that God's plan is that once we are saved, we don't have to sin anymore. I'm including these verses on page 3, but I hope you will take time to read them, and even look them up in your Bible 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. 12:1-2) until we have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:16). 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 (Phil. 3:12).

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

And then, like Paul, we will still do something sinful again. (Romans 7:22-25). When this occurs, what shall we do? Simply confess the sin, ask for God's forgiveness, and keep trying to please Him by doing what's right and not doing what's wrong. (Look again at 1 John 2:1-2 and Philippians 3:12-14.)

Years ago I went to a weekend "fasting retreat." What an awesome experience! On Saturday morning the teacher spoke for an hour on the two verses of Romans 12:1-2. This is what he said: In your mind, picture an altar. See yourself climbing onto the altar and lying on it, offering your body as a living, willing sacrifice to the Lord. And if at some point you realize that you have slipped off of the altar, get up, say a prayer, and climb back on the altar. This is your spiritual worship. And by doing that, you submit to the Lord's will, and you learn what it is.

I've tried to do that. And often failed, of course, but I still try. It's still worth doing. That's why the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write what he wrote.

I want to leave you with this thought: There are three important reasons why we should strive to keep from sinning:

- It's healthier — even forgiven sins can produce guilt that, like unforgiveness, is a burden much heavier than anything God wants us to have to carry.
- It pleases God when we try to live in obedience — He loves obedience more than any other sacrifice we could give Him. (1 Samuel 15:22; John 14:15).
- When other people see us living as God intends for us to live, doing works of love and blessing, they notice, and it brings glory to God. (Matthew 5:16).

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 truly "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

Referenced Bible Verses *

Philippians 2:12-13 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Philippians 1:6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 5:48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Romans 12:1-2 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Philippians 2:5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ...

1 Corinthians 2:16 "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Philippians 3:12-14 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. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Romans 7:22-25 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

* Bible passages are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®),
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Do you have Questions? If you have a question about the Bible or the Christian life, write to me and ask it. I will do my best to answer in a biblically correct way. If I just don't know, I'll say so. But maybe your question or concern will strike a responsive chord with another brother or sister who is wondering about the same thing. Maybe together we can help someone.

Moving? If your address is changing, please send me your new address. Maryland inmates, don't forget to include your SID number. I would like to keep sending you the "Good News Guide" for as long as you'd like to receive it, even after you are released. I'll also send it to your friends, if they want it.

My address: **Brother Roland, P.O. Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222**



Getting Better, Doing Better

It's always desirable to change for the better, and now is always the very best time to start. As you enjoy the puzzle, see if you notice anything in your actions or attitudes that ought to be improved.

Puzzle:

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

* Being a New Creation

TRUSTING JESUS
RECEIVING SALVATION
ASKING FOR WISDOM
SEEKING GODS WILL
BEING OBEDIENT
STUDYING GODS WORD
PRAYING MUCH
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
OPERATING IN LOVE
GETTING EDUCATION

* Building Character

HELPFULNESS
CLEAN SPEECH
ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY
GIVING UP BAD HABITS
HOLDING TEMPER IN CHECK
FORGIVING PAST WRONGS
CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS
MAKING WISE CHOICES
FAITHFULNESS
HAVING PATIENCE
TRUTHFULNESS
INTEGRITY
DEPENDABILTY

* Gaining Favor

GOOD BEHAVIOR
POSITIVE ATTITUDE
HARD WORK
COOPERATION
SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE

* Living in New Freedom

AVOIDING TEMPTATION
AVOIDING TEMPTATION
AVOIDING TEMPTATION
BEING A BLESSING
ENJOYING BEING YOU