



GOOD NEWS GUIDE

REMEMBER: **GOD LOVES YOU!**

Brother Roland, PO Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222

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“Get Right with God”

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WHEN I was much younger than I am now, there were billboards on many highways all over the southern United States that said, “Get Right with God.” I think many of them were provided by the Southern Baptist Convention. Probably some of them are still there.



One Sunday in our church a seminary student preached, as he had been taught, that there is nothing you can do to make yourself “right with God,” because salvation is by grace, a free gift from God. You can receive it, by faith, but you cannot ever earn it or deserve it.

This young man was rightly communicating the truth of the Bible: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9) But I believe he was not correctly understanding the message on the billboards.



We humans have been created by God to have a relationship with Him. It’s really a simple relationship: He is God; we are His creatures. He is the wise and caring Shepherd; we are His foolish and needy sheep. He is the loving Father; we are His confused and rebellious children. If we listen when He speaks, go where He directs, and do what He commands, then we’ll be safe, secure, and fulfilled in every way.

Sadly, we aren’t satisfied with our role. “Move over, God,” we say. “I want to be in control.”

Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden:

... when the woman saw that the [forbidden] tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its

fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6)

Adam and Eve wanted to be wise “like God,” so they disobeyed Him.



Do you want to understand the concept of “original sin,” which declares that we are all sinners even before we’re born? It’s simply this: selfishness. We are born selfish, and we never fully get over it.

Our relationship with God is broken. We inherited the spirit of selfishness and rebellion from our ancestors, Adam and Eve, and the relationship that each of us should have had with God was broken before we were born.

And the seminarian was right. We can’t fix it. We cannot do something that will make us “right with God.”

What about the billboard message: “Get Right with God”? Is that foolishness, as the young seminarian supposed? No, I believe it is simply a restatement of something the Apostle Paul said in a letter:

We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:20b-21)

The relationship is broken, but God has made a way to repair it. He has done all the work — by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, He Himself paid the penalty for all of our sins, all of our rebelliousness, all of our selfishness, past, present and future. That debt is paid in full for all people, for all time. We don’t need to add to it, and in fact we can’t add to it even if we want to. Our sins are forgiven. WE ARE FORGIVEN! Amen.



God does not ask us to do anything to deserve forgiveness. He offers it to us freely, though it cost Him dearly, as the suffering of Jesus on the cross makes quite clear. God's forgiveness is ours at no cost to us. It is His gift of love.

That's not the whole story, of course. We do have a part to play, but our part is passive, rather than active. We have to accept the gift. We have to receive it. But — and this is important, too — even the ability to receive it is a gift of God's grace. Our selfish, prideful souls would never let God save us unless He gave us the grace to be saved on His terms.

Of course it is the Holy Spirit who gives us the spiritual strength to overcome our selfish nature and surrender to God. Jesus told His disciples, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." (John 16:13a) And Paul added, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (Romans 8:14)

And that is the whole story of salvation. "Get Right with God." "Be reconciled to God." Some say, "Let go and let God." They all mean the same thing. Let God be God. He is qualified for it, and you and I are not. We are His creatures; we can become His children, His servants — we have to be willing to embrace whatever role He wants us to have.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

That's our part of the whole process in a nutshell.

Trust God. Hmm. That is much easier said than done, isn't it? God often does not operate like we want Him to or expect Him to. And we say, "Why, God? Why did you do that? Why did you allow that to happen? Where were you when I needed you?"

And when we ask those questions, when we think we're entitled to answers, then we are once again trying to be God, to be in control. It's the way we are. That's when we have to remind ourselves again that "God is God, and I am not," and bow to Him and once more ask for and receive His forgiveness. And ask for, and receive from God's Word and the Holy Spirit, the "blessed assurance" that His love for us has not grown cold. It is as strong and potent as ever.

As you can see, it's not a "one and done" proposition. It's a process. Every day we will fail to live up to the standard set by the example of Jesus, who did not sin, who never offended God. It might even seem to be too much for us, so that we are tempted to throw up our hands and admit defeat. So ... do that.

When you know that you cannot do what God demands; when you admit that you can't even surrender to His will; when you give up and throw yourself on His mercy—then you are at the starting point of "getting right with God." You must fail in order to succeed, because you won't find God "rightly" until you come to the end of yourself.

When we embrace the reality of His god-hood and our creature-hood; when our attitude becomes that of children who really wants to please our Father, then the relationship is "right" — it's what it should be. And as we go on with God, we can grow into the relationship and come to embrace it with pure JOY! Because it is infinitely better than anything we could ever ask or even imagine.

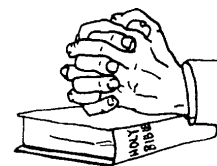


And the beginning of that relationship is also the beginning of the process that makes us fit for Heaven. It's called "sanctification," but what it means is becoming more like Jesus; more holy; less inclined to do what we shouldn't, or skip doing what we should.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us [to make us "right with God"], to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

Blessings and Peace,

Brother Roland



How can you pray for prisoners and prison revival?

1. For prison ministry volunteers:

- Anointing
- Traveling safety
- Wisdom in answering questions/counseling
- Open doors of ministry
- Protection and health

2. For inmates:

- Revival of repentance, right living, love, and forgiveness
- Strength to resist temptation
- Growth and maturity (Fruit of the Spirit)
- Opportunities to be a witness to inmates and staff
- Protection and health
- Salvation, provision, and healing for their families.

3. For Christian chaplains:

- Wisdom
- Joy (repeat offenders can be discouraging)
- Favor with administration
- Anointing
- Protection and health

4. For jail and prison staff (wardens, guards, others):

- Wisdom
- Understanding
- Compassion
- Protection (physical, mental, emotional)
- Grace to respond appropriately in all situations

Specific Needs:

1. Summer is when riots and unrest are most likely to occur.

- Pray for protection of Christian inmates.
- Pray that God can use them to defuse dangerous situations.

2. For prisons where the only chaplain is a Muslim chaplain. This is a huge stressor for the Christian inmates.

- They can lose extra services allowed by Christian chaplains.
- They no longer have a Christian mentor/leader/counselor available.
- They struggle to keep a Christ-like attitude as they submit to authority.

3. For unity in the church behind prison walls.

- Satan loves division because it keeps the focus inward instead of outward! Inmate churches struggle with doctrinal debates, power struggles, gossip, etc., just like a church on the outside. But inmates can't switch churches when it becomes overwhelming or discouraging.

4. For released inmates.

- That they will find a home church where they will be accepted into Christian fellowship, be encouraged, be held accountable, and grow in their faith.
- That their family relationships can be healed. As God changes these men and women, they can become a blessing to their loved ones.

Yes, your prayers can help. So please pray.

Mount Hope Prison Ministry, 25 Summit Ave, Hagerstown MD 21740 301-091-2550

WANT AN EXTRA COPY TO SHARE?

Every month I send an extra copy of the "Good News Guide" to a few inmates and some others. If you would like to receive two copies so you can share one (or both), just write and let me know. Your willingness to share with others will spread the Good News of the Gospel a little farther, which will bless us both and, I'm sure, please God.



Questions? If you have a question about Bible truth or the Christian life, I'll be glad to share my thoughts with you, and maybe with the other readers of the "Good News Guide." Write to me.

Moving? If you're being released, or moving to another facility, please send me your new address. 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.

Here is my address: **Brother Roland, P.O. Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222**

“Right” with God

The book of First John has much to say about what it means to be in right relationship to our Heavenly Father. This puzzle is from Chapter 1 and a few lines from Chapter 2. Enjoy!

Puzzle:

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

Words:

THAT WHICH WAS
FROM THE BEGINNING
WE HAVE HEARD
SEEN WITH OUR EYES
TOUCHED WITH OUR HANDS
THE WORD OF LIFE
MADE MANIFEST
ETERNAL LIFE
WAS WITH THE FATHER
WE PROCLAIM TO YOU
YOU TOO MAY HAVE
FELLOWSHIP WITH US

WITH THE FATHER
WITH HIS SON
JESUS CHRIST
JOY MAY BE COMPLETE
GOD IS LIGHT
NO DARKNESS IN HIM
IF WE WALK IN LIGHT
WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP
THE BLOOD OF JESUS
CLEANSES US FROM SIN
IF WE CONFESS
HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST

FORGIVES OUR SINS
MAKES US CLEAN
MY LITTLE CHILDREN
I WRITE THESE THINGS
SO YOU MAY NOT SIN
IF ANYONE DOES SIN
WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE
JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS
HE IS THE PROPITIATION
FOR OUR SINS
AND THE WHOLE WORLD