



How to Get Free From Me


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***So now there is no condemnation for those
who belong to Christ Jesus.***

***And because you belong to him,
the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed
you from the power of sin that leads to
death.***

Romans 8:1-2





We live in an ever-changing, fast-paced world, one in which we are always “on” and always connected, making it difficult for us to get free from ourselves and the world in which we live to focus on and connect with God. The problem is we need it so badly – to connect with God – so much so our overall health (physical, mental, and spiritual) depends on it as do our relationships.

Getting closer to God requires a personal relationship with Him, time in communication with Him through prayer and His Word, following His example, living in obedience to His Word, and seeking to follow His will for our lives. Why is it so important? Connecting with God on a deeper level helps us live lives which are fulfilling and meaningful. When we draw near to Him, we are transformed, we experience the peace and joy only He can provide, we become more like Christ. If that's not enough, we also have a greater understanding of His love and as a result, we can love and serve others more effectively. Plus, the stronger our relationship with Him, the greater our power to resist temptation and overcome challenges.

How do we do it? Get free from ourselves and get closer to God? Let's look at Romans 8 as we study these seven steps to get free from self and closer to Christ!

1

REMINDE MYSELF DAILY WHAT JESUS DID FOR ME

In Romans 8:1-4 (NLT), Paul writes, "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving SPIRIT has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death. The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so the requirement of the law would be fully accomplished for us , who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow THE SPIRIT."

Most of us know what Jesus did for us, at least in part. He died for our sins and when we accept Him as Lord and Savior and follow Him here on earth, we will spend eternity with Him in heaven. Of course, that isn't

all – He grants us forgiveness, provides guidance for us, and gives us power every day. We have to remind ourselves of the entire message of the Gospel (the good news of what Jesus did for us) every day.

Jesus took our sin upon Himself and as a result we take on His righteousness in God's eyes (2 Corinthians 5:21). He did it voluntarily because of His great love for us. The truth is we all know we are saved by Jesus's death and resurrection, but we don't always live like it, do we? We often live our lives as if we still have to earn God's approval. Instead, how about starting each day with a reminder – we are all sinners, but as believers God has forgiven us. Even when we mess up, it doesn't affect our status as believers. He still loves us – “there is now no condemnation awaiting those who belong to Christ Jesus.”

2

ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO GIVE ME BETTER THOUGHTS

Romans 8:5-8 (NLT) tells us, "Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God."

Did you get that? As Christians, we are living supernaturally with the Holy Spirit within us. Living according to the Holy Spirit's guidance affords us life and peace and allows us to do those things which please God. We have God's power at work in us, at our disposal, the same power which raised Jesus from the dead. It is greater than any earthly power.

God is all-sufficient so we do not need to think negative thoughts but we can simply call on the Holy Spirit to help us in our lives.

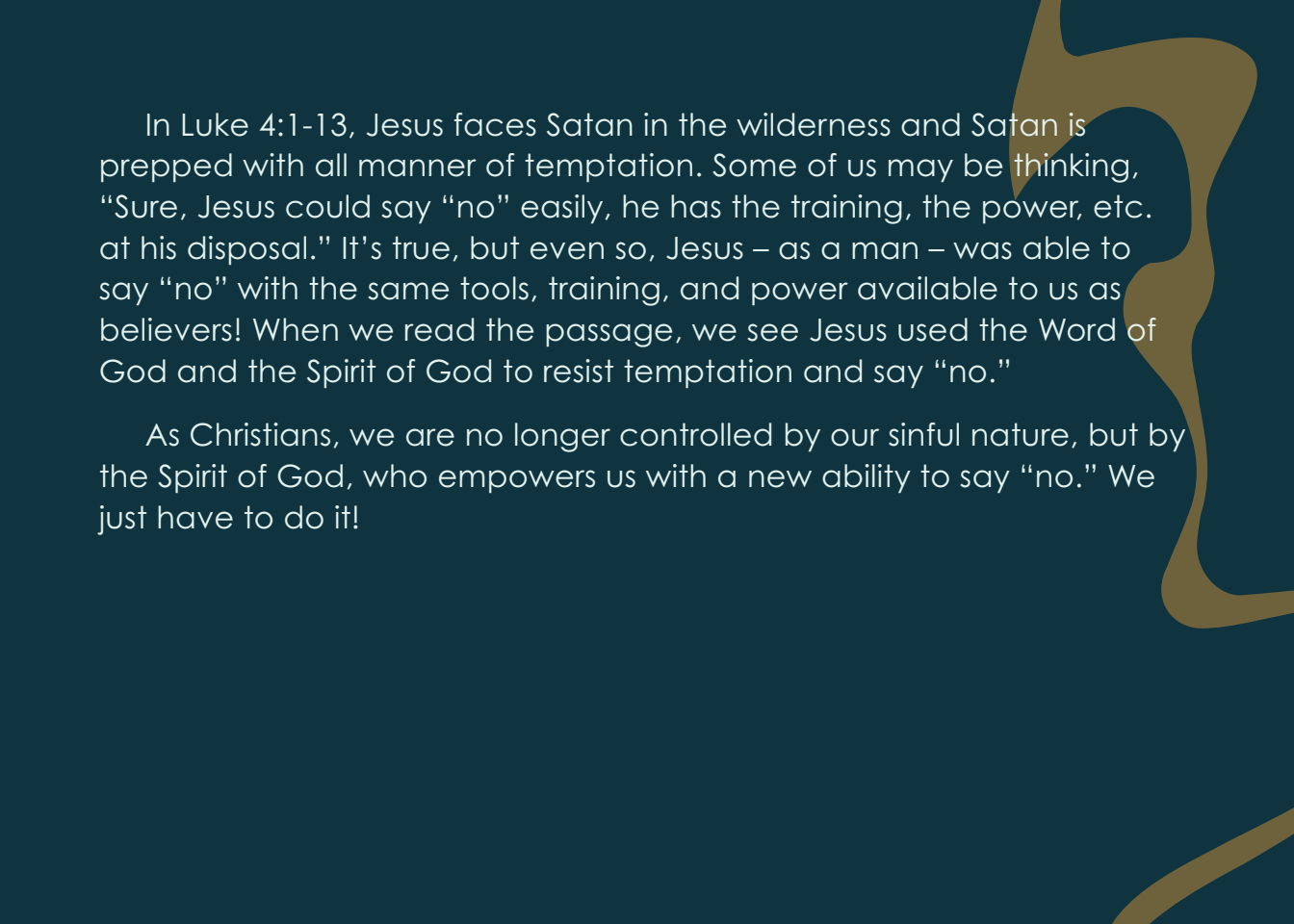
With God's help we can control our thoughts and get out of our own heads – our former way of thinking! We have to get ourselves into the mindset of Christ, after all it is what defines us as believers. We are to walk, think, and live according the Spirit – the alternative (walking, thinking and living according the flesh) is death. Asking the Holy Spirit for better thoughts opens the opportunity for the Spirit to not only shape our mind, but to help us live and walk according to God's plan for our lives. If we don't allow the Spirit to help us with our thought life, we ultimately get in our heads and follow our sin nature which is always hostile toward God because it prefers independence! Let us then seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in our thoughts so we can get free from ourselves and have a mindset which loves Christ fully and embraces God's way and His perfect plan for our lives.

3

REALIZE I HAVE A NEW ABILITY TO SAY “NO”

Paul continues on in Romans 8:9 (NLT) explaining, *“But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are now controlled by the SPIRIT if you have the SPIRIT of God living in you. Anyone who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them does not belong to Christ.”* He adds in Romans 8:12 (NLT), *“Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, **you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do.**”*

We all desire an extra measure of self-control. Sometimes we have it, at least until it is time to say “no.” Temptation comes, and though our motives are good, we still find it difficult to muster our self-control and say “no.” God knows and understands. No temptation we face is beyond His plan or unknown to Him. Jesus faced temptations and was able to say “no.” Through Him, we too have a new ability to say “no.”



In Luke 4:1-13, Jesus faces Satan in the wilderness and Satan is prepped with all manner of temptation. Some of us may be thinking, "Sure, Jesus could say "no" easily, he has the training, the power, etc. at his disposal." It's true, but even so, Jesus – as a man – was able to say "no" with the same tools, training, and power available to us as believers! When we read the passage, we see Jesus used the Word of God and the Spirit of God to resist temptation and say "no."

As Christians, we are no longer controlled by our sinful nature, but by the Spirit of God, who empowers us with a new ability to say "no." We just have to do it!



TURN MY THOUGHTS TO GOD WHENEVER I'M AFRAID

Paul goes on in Romans 8:14-16 (NLT) giving us these words to encourage us when we are afraid, *"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, 'Abba, Father.' For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children."*

As believers who are led by the Spirit, we are God's children. We have the incredible privilege when we feel trapped or afraid to turn our thoughts to our Father, to call on Him to help us. Often when we face fear we find ourselves paralyzed. It is not surprising, after all, there is much danger in our world and much to fear. At other times, we choose to run and hide, seeking comfort in someone or something that is not the One who could truly help us. How, then do we turn our thoughts to

God when we are afraid?

Paul tells us in Romans 8:14-16, when we became believers we were not endowed with a spirit of fear, but rather we received God's powerful, loving Spirit. In Psalm 56:3 (NLT), David says, " But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you." These two men of God are in agreement, when we are afraid, we have to turn to God, our Father, focus our thoughts on Him and put our trust in Him.

Here's how:

- Recognize the source of our fear. Remember fear is a part of life, something most of us face on a daily basis, but is it seldom from God. When we are afraid, we have to identify the fear and its source.
- Ascertain the lie beneath our fear. Doing so helps us turn our thoughts to God, believe His promises and stop doubting. Paul advised his protégé Timothy, *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline"* 2 Timothy 1:7 (NLT). Most

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often a lie is behind our fear, but God wants to be free from fear so we can walk confidently with Him.

- Know the truth. As believers, we don't have a Spirit that makes us fearful slaves (Romans 8:15). Turning our thoughts to God when we are afraid, takes us directly to the truth and greater intimacy in our relationship with God our Father.

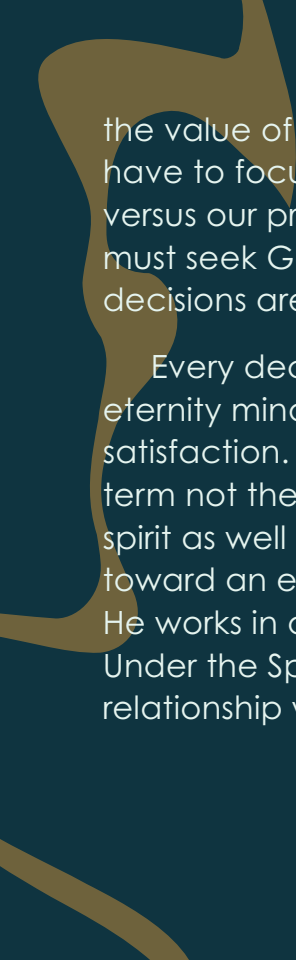


FOCUS ON THE LONG-TERM, NOT THE SHORT TERM

Romans 8:17-18 (NLT) tells us, "And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering."

It is hard for us not to focus on the day-to-day, the short term, after all we have families to take care of, bills to pay, work to do, schedules to keep, and so much more. All the "things" keep us busy and focused on today and tomorrow, rather than our eternity with Christ. We experience suffering, trials, and hardships which also turn our focus to the here and now rather than our ultimate future with Him.

How often have we, like Esau in the Old Testament (Genesis 25:27-34) who sold his birthright for a bowl of stew, surrendered a valued asset to satisfy a temporary need or want? Like Esau, we have overlooked

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the value of the long term to satisfy the desires of the short term. We have to focus our minds on that which has eternal value, the long term, versus our present desires and needs. As believers, in order to do so, we must seek God's wisdom and guidance over our own so that today's decisions are properly founded toward their long term effects.

Every decision should be made with eternity in mind. Why? An eternity mindset keeps us from wasting time and pursuing material satisfaction. We need to focus our passion and our energy on the long term not the short term. As born again believers, we have a renewed spirit as well as a desire to become more and more like Jesus and strive toward an eternal perspective. As we are filled with the Holy Spirit, He works in our lives, transforming us with an eternal point of view. Under the Spirit's control, we can more readily focus on our long term relationship with God.

Having an eternal focus also helps us store up treasures in heaven as Jesus commanded in Matthew 6:20-21 (NLT), when He said, “Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.” Storing up treasures in heaven means simply following Christ's example and doing that which is pleasing to Him. To accomplish this, we need to spend time with God in prayer and in His Word. Finally, we need to realize this world (our short term wants and needs) is just that – short term. Our focus should instead be on all that is eternal (our long term).




REMINDE MYSELF GOD IS GOOD AND IN CONTROL

In Romans 8:26-28 (NLT), Paul writes, "And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." In Romans 8:31-32, Paul adds, "So what can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? And since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?"

Paul's words, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, remind us the truth that God is indeed good and in control, causing *"everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."* He loves us, guides us, and wants the very best for us. When we doubt God's Word, we allow worry and anxiety to overwhelm us and we end up at the place of despair, the place where we must remind ourselves that God is always good and always in control.

Worry and anxiety are a big part of today's world, but as believers, though we aren't immune, we have a means of escape. How can we take a breath and remind ourselves daily of God's goodness and control? In our fully connected, always on world, one positive step is unplugging for a little while each day. Whether 30 minutes or three hours, unplugging offers benefits as it decreases our access to stress, negativity, work, and politics. During our downtime, we can take a respite in nature, God's creation. You can walk along the beach,

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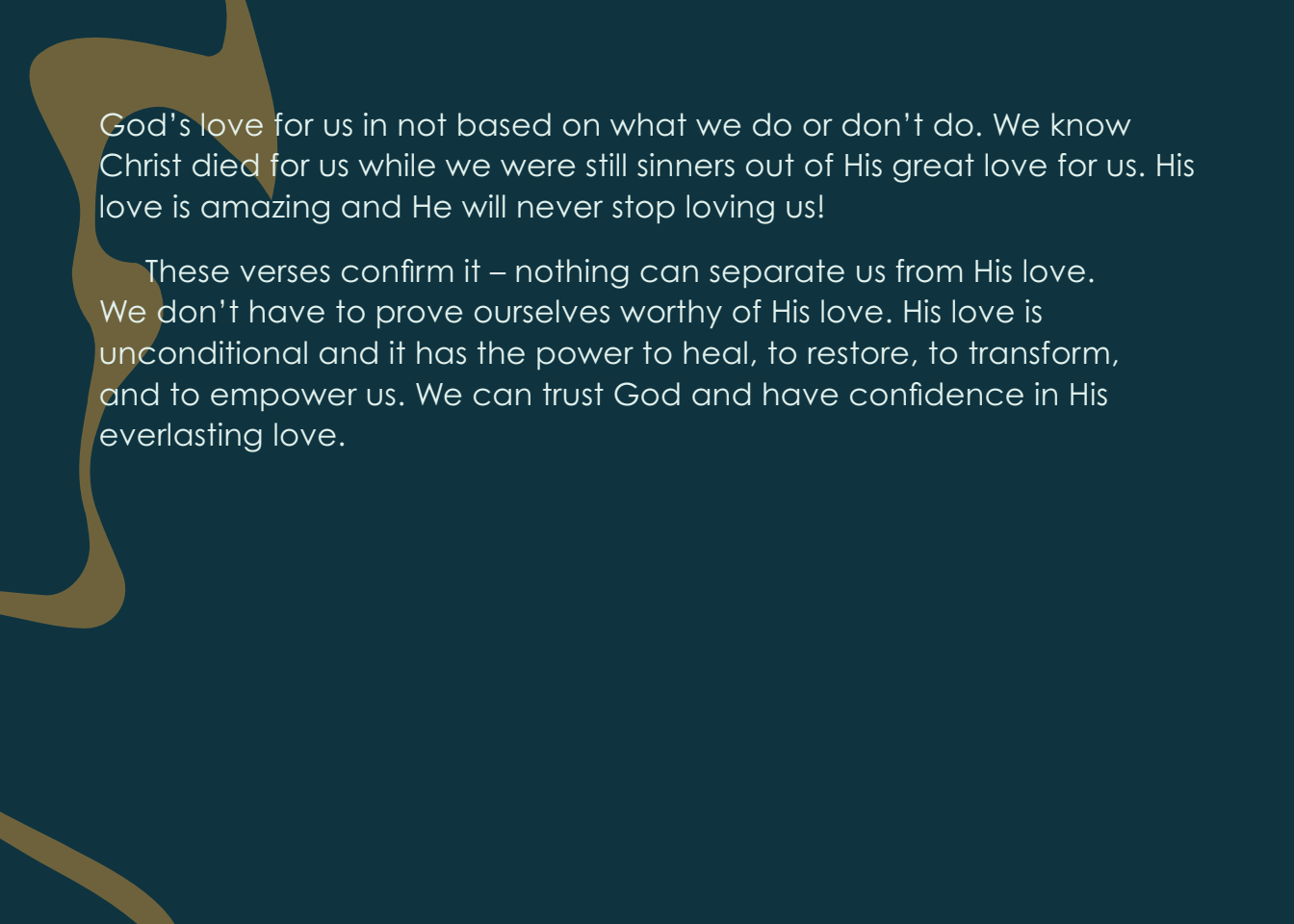
ride a bike through a park, or relax mindfully in nature. Reminding ourselves of God's care for all creation can guide us to remember His goodness, care, and control over His creation. Another great way to remind ourselves God is good and in control is through prayer and thanksgiving.

7

TRUST THAT GOD WILL NEVER STOP LOVING ME

Paul's final step to get free from self and closer to Christ comes in Romans 8:38-39 (NLT) where he proclaims, *"I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Nothing can separate us from God and He will never stop loving us! The Bible is clear on this and yet we seem to struggle with this truth. Maybe it is because here on earth, we often experience conditional love. The truth is, as believers, God will never stop loving us – in spite of our sin, guilt, shame, and in spite of our "religion" (works rather grace).



God's love for us is not based on what we do or don't do. We know Christ died for us while we were still sinners out of His great love for us. His love is amazing and He will never stop loving us!

These verses confirm it – nothing can separate us from His love. We don't have to prove ourselves worthy of His love. His love is unconditional and it has the power to heal, to restore, to transform, and to empower us. We can trust God and have confidence in His everlasting love.

Are you ready to get free from yourself and closer to God? Now you know how — reminding yourself what Jesus did for YOU, focusing on better thoughts, using your power to say “no,” keeping your thoughts on Him when you are afraid, having an eternal perspective, remembering God is good and in control, and understanding God will never stop loving YOU!

Why not take the first step today?