

We Are Being Saved from the Controlling Power of Sin

Message 4 of 6 in the series: "Romans: Christianity 101"

- A. Paul wrote a lengthy letter to Christians living in the wicked city of ancient Rome. Two decades earlier, these Christians had escaped religious persecution in Jerusalem and established thriving churches in Rome despite having very little training or theological instruction. Paul's desire was to help them grow strong in the Lord by teaching them what Christians believe and how Christians behave.

"But the believers who were scattered (by persecution) preached the Good News about Jesus **wherever they went.**" Acts 8:4 (NLT)

"This letter is from Paul, **a slave of Christ Jesus**, chosen by God to be **an apostle** and sent out to preach his Good News... I am writing to all of you in Rome who are **loved by God and are called to be his own holy people**... I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual gift that will **help you grow strong in the Lord.**" Romans 1:1, 7a, & 11 (NLT)

1. Jesus wants His own holy people to be in the world, but not of it. "I have given them your word. And **the world hates them because they do not belong to the world**, just as I do not belong to the world. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. **Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world.**" John 17:14-18 (NLT)
2. So far in his letter, Paul has unpacked the Good News that through faith in Jesus, not trying harder, filthy, rotten, undeserving sinners like us can be made right with God and saved from His wrath. "For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. **We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ.** And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For **everyone has sinned**; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. **He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.** For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood." Romans 3:20-25a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! "For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, **saving everyone who believes**—the Jew first and also the Gentile." Romans 1:16 (NLT)

- B. Through a personal relationship with Jesus, we are being saved from the controlling power of sin.

1. When we surrendered our lives to Jesus, our old sinful selves died.

"Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For **we died and were buried with Christ by baptism.** And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. **We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives.**" Romans 6:1-6a (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Dying to our old sinful selves involves repenting of our sinful ways and surrendering control of every part of our lives to God, NOT running up the tab so God can show us more grace.

"That is why the Lord says, '**Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts.** Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead.' Return to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. He is eager to relent and not punish." Joel 2:12-13 (NLT)

"**My old self has been crucified with Christ.** It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

2. When slaves die, their masters no longer have control over them. Therefore, when our old sinful selves died, we were set free from enslavement to sin. We no longer need to let sin control the way we live.

“We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. And since we died with Christ, we know we will also live with him. We are sure of this because Christ was raised from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. When he died, he died once to break the power of sin. But now that he lives, he lives for the glory of God. **So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus. Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires.** Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. **Sin is no longer your master,** for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God’s grace.”

Romans 6:6b-14 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Before we came to faith in Jesus, all of us were slaves to sin and obeyed the devil. **“You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature.** By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.” Ephesians 2:2-3 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! It is only by God’s grace that we have the freedom and the power to change. “For God is working in you, **giving you the desire and the power** to do what pleases him.” Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

3. Now we are free to choose to obey God, our rightful master (Lord). “Well then, since God’s grace has set us free from the law, does that mean we can go on sinning? Of course not! **Don’t you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.** Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but **now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you.** Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living. Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. **But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God.** Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, **but the free gift of God** is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 6:15-23 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! As believers, we have not been set free from the ability to sin, but from the tyranny of sin. After becoming Christians, we need to learn how to live in the power of the Holy Spirit trusting God’s guidance and surrendering every part of our lives to Him. This is the process of sanctification. “I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.” Philippians 3:12 (NLT)

WARNING! Although Jesus has set us free for wholehearted, joyful obedience, we can still be tricked into becoming slaves to legalism. “So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don’t get tied up again in slavery to the law.” Galatians 5:1 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

1. Read Acts 8:4 & John 17:14-18. Why do you think Jesus wants His followers in the world? What’s the difference between being “in the world” and “of the world”? How does it make you feel to learn that the Christians in Rome were thriving in the midst of a hostile culture?
2. Read Romans 6:1-6, Joel 2:12-13, & Galatians 2:20. What has it looked like in your life to die to your old sinful self? How does baptism help us understand this?
3. Why do you think some people are offended when they read that, before we came to Christ, all of us were slaves to sin and followers of the devil? (Ephesians 2:2-4) How did we get free from enslavement? (Romans 6:7-14, Philippians 2:13)
4. What’s the difference between being free from the ability to sin and being free from the tyranny/controlling power of sin? (Romans 6:15-23) Why does God give us the freedom to choose to obey Him?

5. Read Galatians 5:1. Why is legalism often a powerful temptation to Christians saved by grace?
6. Discuss the everyday implications of the following verse: "For God is working in you, **giving you the desire and the power** to do what pleases him." Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

7. Quotations to reflect upon:

"If you do not die to sin, you will die for sin." Charles Spurgeon

"We are never free. Everybody in the world tonight is either the slave of sin and Satan or else the slave of Jesus Christ." Martyn Lloyd-Jones

"Legalism is looking to something besides Jesus Christ in order to be acceptable and clean before God."
Timothy Keller