

# Christ Gives Us A Twofold Freedom

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of experiencing freedom in Christ by understanding and applying the two aspects of the gospel: freedom from the penalty of sin and freedom from the power of sin. It highlights the need to take full responsibility for our sins, forgive others, seek forgiveness, repent, and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin. The message draws parallels between the emancipation proclamation in history and the spiritual emancipation offered by Jesus Christ.*

**Scripture:** Luke 4:17, John 8:32, Matthew 6:14, Acts 1:8, Romans 6:14, Hebrews 8:12, Revelation 12:11

**Topics:** "Freedom in Christ", "Emancipation from Sin"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I want to share something with you today from, first of all, reading from Luke chapter 4. We read here Jesus preaching his first sermon in Nazareth. It says in Luke 4 and verse 17, the book of the prophet Isaiah was given to him and he opened the book and found the place where it was written in verse 18, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind and to set free those who are oppressed.

Jesus was anointed to set the captives free, to proclaim release to the captives, but if we don't know this truth or if we know it only partially, we won't experience that freedom. And Jesus said further in John chapter 8 and verse 32, he said you will know the truth and the truth will make you free. Last month, the president of the United States proclaimed the 19th of June as a federal holiday.

That's the first federal holiday that's been declared since I think 1983. And June 19th is known as Juneteenth. And the reason why it's considered a holiday and it's been celebrated in many parts of the U.S. is because that's the day when all the slaves in the United States were completely free.

The emancipation proclamation that President Lincoln made in 1862 did not, the news of it did not get to everyone till two and a half years later in Texas when the general was sent down by the federal

government to proclaim in 1865 on the 19th of June, that was the day when the slaves in Texas were free and everyone was free in the United States. But as we all know, because there was no television those days, no radio, no newspapers that the slaves could read, many of them did not know that they were free. And a lot of their slave masters obviously did not want them to know that they could be free.

But that was a great day and I'm glad that it's being declared as a holiday, federal holiday. Then there was a much greater proclamation of emancipation 2,000 years ago on Calvary, the truth of which Satan the slave master does not want his slaves to know. And I've discovered through the years that many, many slaves of sin do not know this truth, that Christ died to set the captives free.

You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. There are two freedoms that we need to experience. First of all, freedom from the guilt of sin.

And second, freedom from the power of sin. And Satan will try his best to prevent us from knowing both of them. Just like the slave masters did not want their slaves to know about freedom.

You know how for so many decades, people lived in ignorance of the fact that they were free, that there was a proclamation of emancipation for every single slave in the United States. And yet they remained in bondage for years. It's a testimony to how it was among many Christians.

So, first of all, let me talk about freedom from the guilt of sin. In the Old Testament, sin was not cleansed, it was only covered. We read in Psalm 32, blessed is the man, Psalm 32, and verse 1, how blessed is the man whose sin is covered.

There was no cleansing from sin in the Old Testament. Sin was covered. In other words, if you write sin on a board and cover it with a sheet, nobody can see it.

But if you lift up the sheet, it's all there. Whereas Jesus doesn't cover our sin. He cleanses it.

You need to know this distinction that in the new covenant, sin is cleansed, not covered. 1 John chapter 1 and verse 7, the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins, verse 9, he forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

That's like taking a wet mop and wiping out that board completely so that the sins are removed and there's no way of getting it back. It's gone. A lot of difference between sin being covered and sin being cleansed.

And how can our sin be cleansed? Unless we repent and confess our sin, we cannot be cleansed. When you think of Adam, you know, we've all come from Adam. And when the Lord came to Adam in the Garden of Eden and asked him, did you eat of the tree which I told you not to eat of? There was only one answer to that.

Yes, Lord, I'm sorry I did that. But Adam didn't say that. He said, he sort of beat around the bush and said, well, Lord, it's really my wife.

The problem is with her. She's the one who gave me the fruit. And you're the one who gave her to me.

Put the blame on someone else. That nature has come down to all of us from Adam. To put the blame on someone else and not acknowledge it ourselves.

And he was turned out of paradise for that. For one sin. That's how serious sin is.

Now you contrast that with the thief on the cross, the repentant thief. Jesus told him, today, you'll be with me in paradise. The same paradise that Adam was turned out from.

The thief entered. And what is the difference between the two? Adam would not take the blame for his own sin. He blamed somebody else.

The thief on the cross, the repentant one, took the blame. That was the difference between the two thieves. Both are equally guilty.

Criminals condemned to death. And yet, in the last moment, one went to paradise and the other went to hell. And what is it that made the difference? It's not that he asked the Lord to remember him.

Before that, he told the other thief, we deserve this punishment. We are guilty. The other thief said, if you are the Christ, bring us down from the cross.

He was saying, well, maybe I've done a few wrong things, but I'm not so bad that I need to be crucified. Get me down from here. Whereas the other thief, he said, well, I deserve this.

I deserve my punishment. But Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom, which is 2,000 years later. And Jesus said, not 2,000 years later.

You'll be with me in paradise today. So in that last moment, because he repented and acknowledged his guilt and did not blame anyone else, he was forgiven and entered paradise. And then we have the contrast between Adam and that thief.

And we need to ask ourselves, which of these two parts we are on? Do you blame others for anything wrong that you have done? This habit of blaming others comes to us right from childhood, and we don't easily get rid of it. If we don't get rid of it, we will miss paradise. Learn a lesson from the thief on the cross.

People talk about going to the foot of Jesus' cross. I say, first go to the foot of the thief's cross and learn something from there to acknowledge our failure and our sin and not put the blame on anybody else. That thief did not blame his parents for bringing him up badly or blame his friends for taking him into bad company or blame the judge or the police or anyone.

He took the blame himself. And that is the first step by which we can be free. Take the blame.

Acknowledge that we have sinned and be specific. Lord, this is what I've done. Please forgive me and cleanse me.

If we confess our sin, he is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us. So think of your life. I mean, if you, we don't have to confess all the hundreds and thousands of millions of sins we have committed.

When we first come to Christ, we just acknowledge that we are sinners. Just like the prodigal son came back to the father. He said, father, I've sinned.

He didn't give a big list of all the things that he did. We couldn't do that even if we wanted to. And the father welcomed him.

It's the acknowledgement that I'm guilty. God accepts me. But he not only forgives our sin, not only cleanses it.

The wonderful promise in the new covenant in Hebrews chapter 8 and verse 12 is, I will be merciful to their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more. So the Lord not only forgives us, not only cleanses us, but says, I will not remember this anymore. You know, very often we get the feeling sometimes the Lord must be remembering those terrible things I did so many years ago.

Well, not if you're really confessing, the devil would like you to think that God's always holding that against you. And that's what makes a lot of people hesitate to go into God's presence. Oh, he must be remembering all those terrible things I did long ago.

No, he doesn't. In the Old Testament, it says in Hebrews chapter 10, that in verse 3, the Old Testament sacrifices, Hebrews 10, 3, there was a reminder of sins year by year. Every year, the people of Israel were reminded of their sins, but not in the new covenant.

Their sins and iniquities, Hebrews 8, 12, I will not remember anymore. Dear brothers and sisters, it's very important for you to accept this truth and believe it. Say, Lord, I'm going to live in the good of this, rejoicing in this, that when I have confessed something, you not only forgive me, you not only cleanse me, you don't remember it anymore.

This is freedom. This is the Emancipation Proclamation. And not just freedom, not just that the Lord does not remember our sins anymore, that itself would have been great.

But we read further in Romans chapter 5 and verse 9, that we are justified by the blood of Jesus Christ. Now, this is something much more beyond cleansing, beyond forgiveness, beyond even saying the Lord says, I will not remember your sins anymore. Justified means the Lord looks at you just as if you'd never sinned and just as if you were righteous from the very first day you were born.

Do you ever think of yourself as someone who's never sinned in your whole life? It's impossible for us to think like that, right? Because we are so aware of the many wrong things we have done to hurt God, to hurt other people. We feel so guilty. It's a tremendous power in the blood of Christ.

It says here, we are justified by his blood. And the word justified is from the word righteous, to be declared righteous. When he says God justifies somebody, he declares somebody righteous.

And so by the blood of Christ, I stand before God as if I'm a totally righteous person, as if I've never sinned in my whole life because he doesn't remember my sins and he's declared me a righteous person. This is total freedom. If you haven't come to this place in knowing what the blood of Christ has done for you, you're not really free.

And that's why in the back of your mind always there is this feeling, I can't come freely to God, or the devil accuses us, you've done this and you've done this, you've done the other thing. We must be able to turn around to Satan and say, I've been cleansed. I think it was Martin Luther or some saint of God, I think it was Luther who said that there was a time when the devil was accusing him and accusing him of all the sins he'd committed.

And he listened to it and finally he said to the devil, well that's not all. I've committed a lot more sins than what you mentioned. And when you made the list complete, right across it, the blood of Jesus has cleansed me from all sin.

You say that to the devil too. You know that we're supposed to give our testimony to Satan. We hear about giving our testimony to others, witnessing to others, but the Bible speaks about giving our testimony to Satan.

Especially concerning what the blood of Christ has done for us. This is the first step in freedom. Turn with me to Revelation chapter 12.

In Revelation chapter 12 it says, Satan the accuser, verse 10, was thrown down from heaven. And they overcame Satan, this group of people on earth, overcame Satan, Revelation 12 verse 11, by the blood of the Lamb, the blood of Christ, and by the word of their testimony to Satan. Because it's referring to Satan in the previous verse.

This is not our testimony before people how Jesus saved us, but our testimony to Satan concerning the blood of Jesus Christ. It's like it's telling Satan, Satan you can make the list of my sins complete. The blood of Jesus has cleansed me from all of them because I have acknowledged my sin and I have repented.

And it's very important also, I want to make this very clear so that we're not mistaken, in Matthew chapter 5 and chapter 6 there are two additional conditions that we need to fulfill for our sins to be forgiven. First of all in Matthew chapter 6, verse 14 and 15, this is a very important condition. You can confess your sins to the Lord, but if you don't fulfill this condition here you're not forgiven.

Matthew 6, 14 and 15, if you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your transgressions. So you go and confess your sins to the Lord, but there's somebody down there you're not forgiven.

Maybe your wife, maybe your husband, maybe somebody who hurt you in the past, maybe somebody who hurt your children. You have not forgiven them. You say I'll never forgive that person.

I'll tell you God will never forgive you. Either that or you're saying that Christ is a liar when he said this. Heaven and earth will pass away, but these words of Jesus will never pass away.

If you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive you. So what happens if you die like that without having forgiven somebody? We don't believe in some sort of purgatory like our Roman Catholic friends believe, that after you die you can go to some place where you'll be purged and work your way up to heaven. No, that's a lot of rubbish.

It's not in the Bible. It's appointed unto men once to die. The Bible says in Hebrews 9 27 and after that the judgment.

So before I die, I have to forgive everyone. And that's an act of a moment. I don't need to do anything.

I can say Lord that person who hurt me, I've forgiven him. And that other person who hurt me, and that other person who hurt my family, I forgive all of them. We can't remove the memory of what they did.

No. Memory will remain, but I have no control over my memory. Forgiveness is not an act of our memories, an act of our will.

You just got to say in the presence of God, Lord I can't help remembering what these guys did against me or my family, but I forgive them. In Jesus' name I forgive them. That's it.

And hold on to that and wish them good. Lord I wish them good. I wish them the best.

The other thing is in Hebrews 5 is asking forgiveness from those who have hurt. That's also important to be forgiven. I want to make it clear so that we don't, we're not deceived in this area.

Hebrews 5, sorry, Matthew 5. It says here in verse 23, when you come to the altar to present your offering, that is you're coming to God and saying Lord I want you to forgive my sin. But when you come like that, you remember verse, Matthew 5, 23, that your brother has got something against you. What should you do? You've got to stop.

God's not going to listen to you anymore at that moment. Stop asking for forgiveness. Go first to your brother and settle, be reconciled with him.

Do you see that phrase in verse 24? First, before you confess to God, first be reconciled to your brother. You've hurt your brother, you've hurt your sister, you've hurt your wife perhaps, you've hurt your husband. Go and ask forgiveness.

Be specific. I'm sorry brother, sister, I'm sorry darling, I did this. Please forgive me.

It's my fault. Please forgive me. That's it.

Your pride will prevent you from saying it and your pride will keep you from the kingdom of God. I want to make it very clear so that, you know, Paul once said nobody's blood is on my hands. He said in Acts 20 because I proclaim the full counsel of God and I've sought to proclaim the full counsel of God for over 50 years now, nearly 60 years.

Everywhere I've gone I've proclaimed this. If you don't forgive others, you will not be forgiven. If you have hurt somebody, you must ask his forgiveness before you can expect God to forgive you.

Don't blame others. Take the blame yourself. Turn around, repent and you'll be forgiven.

The other thing I want to mention is take the blame and acknowledge our sin, ask forgiveness from others and forgive others, but also repent. Turn around. In a lot of preaching nowadays it's only belief that's mentioned.

But as Paul said, I proclaim repentance and faith everywhere I go. Repentance toward God. This is Acts chapter 20 verse 21.

He says to everybody in the world, the Jews and the Gentiles, I proclaim the double message of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. God has joined repentance and faith together for forgiveness of sins and what God has joined together let no one put asunder. Repentance does not mean I've overcome sin.

It doesn't mean I've finished with it. It means I've turned away from sin. I've turned my back to sin and turned towards God.

Turned my back to the lusts of this world and turned towards God. That's repentance. I may still struggle to overcome areas in my life, but I have turned.

I've turned around. I'm facing God now. I'm going in a new direction.

Without that, there is no forgiveness. So repentance and faith. So it's very important to take the blame 100 percent.

God forgives immediately. I heard a story once of a king in the olden days who wanted to set some of the prisoners free from the prison. So it was his birthday and he decided to set some prisoners free and he went to the prison and asked each prisoner one by one, what did you do? The first one said, well, I never did anything wrong.

They just found something to falsely accuse me of and put me here. So he went to the next cell. That guy said the same thing and every one of them said the same thing.

I didn't do anything wrong and somebody's got anything against me. The judge was against me or the police accused me falsely and everybody had some excuse. Nobody had done anything wrong according to them.

When he went to the last cell, that man said the king asked him, what about you? Have you done anything wrong? He said, oh yes, I'm 100 percent guilty. I deserve to be here. So the king told the jailkeeper, this man is an evil man.

He's done so many wrong things. All the others are good people. So let's release this man.

Otherwise, if you keep him here, he'll spoil all the others. So they released him, the one who took the blame completely himself. Well, that's just a humorous story, but the principle is true.

God forgives those who take the blame themselves. So that's the first aspect of freedom. You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free, cleansed, forgiven, past blotted out.

But there's another aspect of freedom also, and that is to be free from the power of sin. First is to be free from the penalty of sin and now to be free from the power of sin. Because if you turn to Matthew chapter one and verse 21, the first promise in the New Testament is, call his name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

You know, that's the first promise of the New Testament. Not he will forgive their sin, but he will save his people from their sins. And that's the second part of the gospel, which is very often ignored.

The two sides to the gospel coin, and the one side is missing, it's a fake. One side of the coin is repent and confess your sin, forgive others, ask forgiveness. God will forgive you and cleanse you.

He will not remember your sin anymore. The other side is Jesus has come to save us from our sins, not just forgive us and justify us, but save us. He forgives us through the blood that he shed on the cross.

He saves us through the gift of the Holy Spirit. And that's why the Bible urges us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God's given us two gifts.

One is the blood of Christ to deal with our past. And second, the power of the Holy Spirit to help us to face the future. And this is another thing which is very often ignored because of a false emphasis in some circles where you got to speak in tongues or something like that.

What is the mark of a person filled with the Holy Spirit? Well, Jesus said that very clearly himself. He said in Acts 1 and verse 8, you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And that's what

they received on the day of Pentecost.

Power for what? Power to be my witness, he said in Acts 1 and 8. And if I'm living in sin, I'm not being a witness for Christ, not a good witness anyway. I'm always falling into sin and just going to the Lord and asking him to forgive me. Again, falling into sin, going into the Lord, asking him to forgive me.

I'm not a witness for Christ. I need power to be a good witness for Christ by my life. It's not just a question of bearing witness, but being a witness by my life and my words.

And so that is the first promise. I cannot save myself from sin, but you should call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. So if I've experienced Jesus coming and forgiving me for my sin, that's great.

I need to go to the second part of the gospel of freedom and ask him to free me from the power of sin. In the Old Testament, this is pictured in the children of Israel coming out of Egypt and entering Canaan. If you've read the Old Testament, you know that to come out of Egypt, they had to put the blood outside their doorposts, on the doorposts.

And all those who put the blood outside the doorposts, death did not enter that house. And then they came and went into the river, into the Red Sea, and came out, which is a picture of water baptism. They symbolically, they were cleansed in the blood, redeemed by the blood.

And then symbolically, they were baptized unto Moses. A picture of our being baptized in water today unto Christ. But then that was not the end of the gospel.

The Lord didn't say, okay, I'm going to deliver you from Egypt. His promise was in Exodus chapter three, I will take you out of Egypt and bring you into Canaan. There are two sides to that.

One is deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The other was a land of promise. But you know that 600,000 people who came out of Egypt never entered Canaan.

Only two of those people who came out of Egypt entered Canaan. Now I've discovered through the years, the proportion is about the same. Among 600,000 Christians whose sins are forgiven, about two of them come into a life of victory, slaying the giants in the flesh.

Canaan is a place where you slay the giants and occupy their land. And that's the picture of the giants of lust and anger and bitterness and murmuring and complaining and covetousness and cheating and lying and all types of sins. These are the giants that rule in our body.

And they need to be slain in the power of the Holy Spirit. And every giant that was slain in Canaan, they possessed that land. But those 600,000 people wandered in the wilderness for 40 years and never entered Canaan.

And I think that's a picture of many Christians. Yes, they've been redeemed by the blood. They've been baptized and come out, but they've never entered the land of victory, the life of victory.

So my dear brothers and sisters, as we think of freedom, emancipation, the emancipation proclamation that was made 2,000 years ago on Calvary, it's not only to forgive our sins. The Bible says in Romans 6, 14, sin cannot rule over you, will not rule over you because now you're under grace. Grace is not only to forgive our sin.

Grace is to give us power to overcome sin. The Lord told Paul, my grace is enough for you because that is my power. Grace is God's power to deliver us from sin.

So go to God today, take the blame for all your sin, release all the people you're not forgiven and say, Lord, I want to believe that you've forgiven me, cleansed me in the blood, and now I want to seek you for the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God upon my life so that I can be free from the giants of sin that rule in my body. And I want to promise you God will help you. He's true to his promise.

So please remember these two sides of the coin of freedom, emancipation, what Juneteenth should remind you of. Let us pray. While our heads are bowed in prayer, I want to encourage you to think of the one thing God spoke to you, say back to the Lord and say, Lord, I want to acknowledge that.

Help me to experience that freedom. I pray in Jesus' name. Thank you very much.

God bless you all.

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