

# (The Full Gospel) 4. the Threefold Exchange at the Cross

by Zac Poonen

---

*The full gospel is about what God has done for us in Christ, including the threefold exchange at the cross: Jesus became sin, poor, and a curse for us.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, John 6:38, Romans 10:10, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Galatians 3:13-14, Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 10:20

**Topics:** "Identity in Christ", "The Cross"

---

## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the transformative power of the cross, detailing the threefold exchange that occurs through Christ: He became sin for our righteousness, became poor for our wealth, and became a curse for our blessing. Poonen explains that many believers remain spiritually impoverished due to ignorance of their blessings, lack of faith, and selfish motives in prayer. He encourages believers to understand their identity in Christ, asserting that true Christianity begins with recognizing what God has done for us rather than what we do for Him. By accepting these truths, believers can experience the fullness of life and blessings that God intends for them.

---

## Transcript

Everything that God does for us is by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). Grace is God's hand reaching down from heaven offering us every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Faith is our hand reaching up and taking those blessings from God's hand.

There are at least four reasons why believers remain defeated and poor when God would have them be overcomers and spiritually rich:

They are ignorant of the blessings God has given them in Christ.

Although they know about them, they do not ask God for them.

Although they ask for them, they ask in unbelief.

Although they ask in faith, they ask with selfish motives. (John 8:32; Romans 10:14; James 4:2; John 16:24; Matthew 13:58; James 1:7; 4:3).

The Bible begins with the words, "In the beginning God..." (Genesis 1:1). This is the primary characteristic of any work that is truly Divine: It has its origin in God Himself. On the other hand, human work - even if it is called "Christian work" - has its origin in the mind of man.

Jesus said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant will be rooted up." (Matthew 15:13). The plant (idea, work, ministry etc.) itself may be a good plant. But that makes no difference. If it was not planted by God, it will be pulled out and burnt up one day.

There are many good things in Christendom today that did not originate in God. But in the day when God shakes heaven and earth, all of that will be destroyed by God Himself. Only that which is unshakable - that which originated in God - will remain in that day (Hebrews 12:26-28).

There is a strong urge in the flesh of man to want to do things for God. All false religions flourish by catering to this urge. It makes man feel big and important when he feels that he has done something for God - whether it be building a temple or a mosque, or giving money to the poor, or practising righteousness, or preaching, or doing good.

In true Christianity however, everything begins with God.

"In Christ"

Our salvation began in God's mind. It was He Who "chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). In Ephesians, Paul describes first of all what God has done for us (Chapters 1 to 3). Only then does he proceed to describe what we must do for God (Chapters 4 to 6).

In evangelical circles, the phrase "accepting Christ" is very commonly used. Although the New Testament does speak about "Christ IN us" (Colossians 1:27; Ephesians 3:17), it speaks much more about OUR BEING IN CHRIST.

Accepting Christ is what WE do, whereas placing us in Christ is what GOD does. It is not surprising therefore that a man-centred theology places much more emphasis on what we do rather than on what God does. If we want our Christian life to be strong, we must first of all be rooted and grounded in what God has done for us IN CHRIST.

To illustrate what it means to be "in Christ", consider a piece of paper placed inside a book. If the book is posted to Bombay, the paper also goes to Bombay. Similarly, since we were placed in Christ before the foundation of the world, when Christ was crucified on Calvary's hill, we were crucified in Him too. When He was buried, we were buried in Him. And when He was raised, we were raised in Him. When He ascended, we ascended in Him. And where He is now, we are - IN HIM.

Only if we believe this truth of God's Word, can we experience it - not otherwise. "According to your faith be it unto you", is a law of God.

It is something like God having put millions of rupees in our bank account and then giving us blank cheque-leaves signed with Jesus' Name on them (2 Corinthians 1:20). All we have to do now is fill in the amount and go to the bank and claim our inheritance - in Jesus' Name.

The good news of the gospel centres primarily around what God has done for us in our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of what Christ has done for us, we can have a foretaste of heaven in our hearts right now.

Heaven is a place of perfect peace and perfect joy. No-one is ever gloomy or depressed or sour or bitter in heaven. No-one is fearful in heaven, because there is no problem that God cannot solve. The gospel message is that we can enter into that heavenly life now itself.

Why is heaven such a wonderful place? Basically because no-one does his own will in heaven. Everyone does the will of God. This is why Jesus taught us to pray: "Our Father Who art in heaven. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". When that is our sincere prayer, the atmosphere of heaven will pervade every part of our hearts too.

Those who pray that prayer will eagerly seek to find God's will - as a husband or a wife, as a father or a mother, or as a brother or a sister in the church. And they will want to do God's will in its entirety. To such believers, the will of God will not be a burden, but a joy and a delight. They will never be depressed or gloomy or fearful, for they know that they can never face a problem that God cannot solve.

When Jesus said, "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me" (John 6:38), He was saying that He had come to earth to bring the atmosphere of heaven to earth. And throughout His life on earth, He demonstrated what it was to live with the atmosphere of heaven ruling His life. Wherever Jesus went He was a blessing to others. This is the life that He now wants to give us too.

But in order to enter into this life, we must first understand what God did for us in Christ on the cross.

Our life is like a building. The foundation is what God does for us, and the superstructure is what we do for God. No building can be strong without a strong foundation. Herein lies the reason for failure in the lives of many Christians: Without being gripped first with what God has done for them in Christ, they have stepped out seeking to do things for God. The end result is always depression and frustration.

The Bible teaches that Jesus took our place on the cross. He exchanged places with us. There are three areas where this exchange took place. When we accept this exchange in faith, we can become what God wants us to become in these three areas:

#### 1. Jesus Became Sin in Order to Make Us Righteous

"God made Christ Who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Christ became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God IN HIM. This is justification, and it is a free gift of God for those who are humble enough to recognize that they can never become righteous enough to meet God's holy standards. It is by grace alone that we are justified, and as the Bible says, "If it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (Romans 11:6).

Those who seek to become righteous before God on the basis of their good works (putting the flesh to death etc.) will fail just like Israel failed (Read Romans 9:31, 32 and 10:3 carefully). Only those who seek to be justified by faith will attain to God's righteousness (Romans 9:30).

Many believers in their eagerness to get victory over sin, take a long jump from Romans 3:23 ("All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God") to Romans 6:14 ("Sin shall not be master over you"), bypassing the process of justification by faith described in Romans 3:24 to 5:21. As a result they become Pharisees. Two clear evidences of their Pharisaism are their pride in their own "holiness", and their despising of others who they feel are not as "holy" as they are!!

Jesus not only bore the punishment for our sins. He actually BECAME SIN. We cannot fully understand how awful an experience that was for our Lord, because we have unfortunately become as familiar with sin as a pig is with eating human dung. To understand, even faintly, the revulsion that Jesus had for sin, consider two illustrations:

Think first of what it means to jump into a septic tank that is full of human dung, and to become assimilated with it permanently. Or think of what it means to voluntarily receive a dreadful, incurable disease that covers your whole body with sores from head to feet.

Even those illustrations are imperfect and can give us only a faint picture of the depth of Christ's love for us, that made Him choose voluntarily to become what He hated, in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Only when we see Jesus face to face will we be able to understand fully what it cost Him to save us. But even now we should be able to see something of the awfulness of sin and learn to hate it - when we see that it was our sin that crucified Christ.

Basically, there are two grounds on which Satan constantly seeks to accuse us: (1) Our past sins; and (2) Our present state. Thus he robs us of our confidence before God. But God has made provision in the gospel for a solution to both these problems.

To solve the problem of our past sins, God "justifies us through Christ's blood" (Romans 5:9). The blood of Christ cleanses us so thoroughly from our past record, that God promises not even to remember our past sins (Hebrews 8:12). If God remembers none of our past sins, then we can truthfully say that He looks at us just as if we had never sinned in our entire life!! The Devil will try his best to prevent you from believing this truth. If you believe Satan's lie, you will live in condemnation perpetually, and never be bold to come before God. But if you resist Satan, "through the blood of the Lamb, and the word of your testimony" concerning your being cleansed in Jesus' blood, you can be an overcomer (Revelation 12:11).

To solve the problem of our present state, God places us in Christ. Nothing good dwells in our flesh. Even if we put the flesh to death for a hundred years, we will still be unfit to stand before God. This was why God forbade the Israelites from entering within the veil into the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle, where He dwelt. That veil symbolised the flesh which prevented man from coming before God's face (Hebrews 10:20).

God's righteousness is as high above the righteousness of the holiest man on earth, as heaven is above the earth (Isaiah 55:8, 9). Even sinless angels cannot look at God's face, but have to cover their faces before Him (Isaiah 6:2, 3). Only Christ can look straight into the Father's face. And so God places us in Christ, so that we can now come before Him, without any fear - because we are in Christ. God justifies us by placing us in Christ, and accepting us as being as righteous as Christ Himself.

We can rejoice now in our perfect acceptance before God, because we have become the righteousness of God in Christ. The preaching of "any other gospel" that teaches acceptance before God on the basis of the works of the Law will bring the curse of God upon such a preacher (Galatians 1:8). Only after perfectly

justifying us, does God lead us on to sanctification - a life of victory over sin and partaking of His nature.

## 2. Jesus Became Poor in Order to Make Us Rich

"Though the Lord Jesus Christ was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Christ became poor for us, that we might become rich IN HIM.

The poverty and wealth spoken of in this verse could be taken spiritually. But the context in which the verse appears indicates that the Holy Spirit is speaking of material poverty and material riches as well.

What does it mean "to be rich"? It does not mean having plenty of money and property, but rather having enough to meet our needs and some extra to help and bless others with.

Being rich is described in Revelation 3:17 as "having need of nothing". That is how God is rich. God does not have silver or gold or a bank account or even a wallet. But He has need of nothing.

Jesus was not poor when He was on earth, for He had "need of nothing". He could even provide a meal once for about 10,000 people - 5000 men, and a number of women and children (Matthew 14:21). Only a rich man could do that! He had enough money to pay His taxes (Matthew 17:27). He never had to borrow money from anyone at any time. And He even had enough money to give to the poor (John 13:29).

Jesus once said, "The poor you have with you always, but you do not always have Me" (Matthew 26:11). There He contrasted Himself with the poor. On another occasion, when Jesus told a rich young ruler to give all his money to the poor, Jesus was certainly not including Himself also among the poor to whom the money was to be given!! No. It is clear that Jesus was rich when He was on earth in this sense: He lacked nothing.

The early apostles too were not poor. When they told the believers "to remember the poor" (Galatians 2:10), they were not asking the believers to remember them!! No. Those apostles may not have had silver and gold (Acts 3:6). But they had all that they needed. In this way they were rich like their Master before them. That is how God wants us to be rich too.

But we see that Jesus did become poor when he hung on the cross. A poor man is described in the New Testament as one who has "threadbare clothing" (James 2:2). The poorest beggar we have seen in India usually has at least a torn rag around his body. But Jesus did not have even that when He was crucified. He was stripped naked and crucified. He really became poor for our sakes, when He was crucified.

Jesus became poor on the cross, so that we might become rich - or in other words, that we might have "need of nothing" in our lives. God has not promised to give us all that we want, but all that we need (Philippians 4:19). Wise parents do not give their children all that they want or ask for, but only all that they need. So with God too.

The old covenant promised earthly wealth to those who obeyed the Law. But under the new covenant, God promises that if we seek His kingdom first and His righteousness, He will give us something even better: Everything that we need for life on this earth (Matthew 6:33; see also 2 Peter 1:4). The Bible clearly teaches that riches are both deceitful and uncertain (Matthew 13:22; 1 Timothy 6:17). So it is dangerous to desire riches or to long to have more and more money (1 Timothy 6:10). But God's promise is something

far more glorious: He will always give us "all that we need, according to his riches in glory IN Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

Do you find you cannot make ends meet with the salary that you earn? Since God draws everyone's financial boundaries, it is impossible for Him not to give His children enough for their earthly needs. Your lack must then be because the blessing of God is not on your life. Maybe you are lazy, or wasting money, or living in a selfish way, violating God's laws. If you are rich towards God, God will be rich towards you as well.

Let me tell you the good news of the gospel: It is not God's will that His children should live with constant financial lack in their earthly lives. However high the cost of living may be, those who seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness first in their lives will always find that their earthly needs are met. If that does not happen, we would have to say that Jesus was a liar - for that is what He clearly promised (Matthew 6:33).

Jesus became poor - so that we might be rich. So we need never live with a lack in our lives. We need have no fear about the future - either for ourselves or for our children. Jesus has purchased the provision of every earthly need for us and our family-members - on the cross.

Unfortunately, money-loving preachers (especially in the last thirty years or so) have exaggerated and misunderstood this truth and turned it into an excuse to preach a "prosperity-gospel" - teaching that Jesus came to make us wealthy millionaires. That is a falsehood and a misrepresentation of the truth. God has not promised us wealth in the new covenant, but something far better - all that we need.

So be free from all your fears, dear brother and sister. Jesus has already become poor for you on the cross. There is no need for you to live with constant financial lack in your lives any more. You can always have all that you need. Claim your birthright in the gospel.

### 3. Jesus Became a Curse in Order to Make Us a Blessing

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us - in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to us, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:13, 14).

Christ became a curse for us, so that we might receive the blessing of Abraham - that is, the promise of the Holy Spirit.

The curse for not keeping the Law is described in Deuteronomy 28:15-68 as confusion, incurable sicknesses, plagues, constant failure, blindness, madness, no rest or peace of mind, being exploited by others, children being captured by the enemy (Satan), abject poverty etc.

The good news of the gospel is that because Jesus has already become a curse for us, none of these curses of the Law need touch us any more. That itself would have been good news. But there is more. We can have instead, the blessing with which God blessed Abraham.

Note that the blessing we are promised in that verse, is NOT the blessing of the Law (described in Deuteronomy 28:1-14), which consists mainly of material prosperity and many children. No. We are promised something better - the blessing of Abraham.

The blessing with which God blessed Abraham is described thus in Genesis 12:2, 3: "I will bless you....o you shall be a blessing....nd in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed". This is the blessing that Christ has purchased for us on the cross through His becoming a curse for us. He wants to bless us and make us a blessing to every person that we come across on earth, all our life.

This blessing (the verse tells us) comes to us through receiving the Holy Spirit. Jesus described the Holy Spirit as a well of water springing up within us and BLESSING US (John 4:14), and then as rivers of water flowing out through us and BLESSING OTHERS (John 7:37-39).

If you seek to receive the Holy Spirit by trying to make yourself worthy, you will never receive Him. There is no difference between that and Simon the magician offering money to Peter to receive the Spirit's power (Acts 8:18-23). Peter told Simon to repent. And you must repent too - for imagining that you can buy the Holy Spirit with your good works.

Come to Jesus as you are and confess your unworthiness, and receive the Spirit by faith, **JUST BECAUSE JESUS BECAME A CURSE FOR YOU** - and not because you are worthy.

How has your own life been in the past? Have you found that whatever you have put your hand to has been a failure? Have you found that the words that you have spoken to others have only brought confusion and chaos? Have you found frustration and depression and gloom and loss everywhere you have turned.

Here is the good news of the gospel, dear brother and sister. You can be free from all of that permanently. Christ has taken the curse of the Law so that you might never receive it. Not only can you be free from those curses, you can now be a blessing to others.

The Lord's promise to even the worst sinner living in sin and failure today is:

"Even as you have been a CURSE in times past, you can be a BLESSING to others in times to come" (Zechariah 8:13).

Perhaps you have been a curse to others in the past, by polluting everyone you've met, with your criticisms, your gossiping and your backbiting. Have you been a spreader of spiritual plague everywhere you have gone? Things can be different from now on. You can be a spreader of spiritual healing and blessing to others now. God can make rivers of living water flow through you, so that wherever you go, others are healed and blessed through the Holy Spirit working through you (Ezekiel 47:8, 9).

This is the will of God that we should be a BLESSING to every family we meet on the face of the earth. But you must believe God's Word and claim your birthright in Christ. Satan has robbed you of this for so long. You must now believe that since Jesus has already become a curse for you, no curse can touch you henceforth. You are going to be a blessing to your family, to your neighbours and to the church. Hallelujah!

We read about King David in 2 Samuel 6 that after a busy day in which he had been serving God, he then returned home "to bless his family" (verse 20). What beautiful words! He had been dancing the whole day before the ark when it was being brought into Jerusalem (verse 14), and was undoubtedly tired. He had also been busy blessing the people (verses 18, 19). But he did not forget his wife at home. He went home and blessed her too - even though she was a wicked, nagging wife (verses 20-22).

What a wonderful example for every head of the family to follow! Even if you had to dance to the tune of your boss the whole day at work, you can still return home in the evening to bless your family, instead of coming home in a foul mood and bringing a bad spirit into your home.

Since Jesus has defeated Satan also on the cross, and stripped his armour from him completely, Satan too has no right over any part of our lives. Satan is now like a helpless thief who has lost all his weapons. We however are now armed with every heavenly weapon against him. So we don't ever have to be afraid of him. We are commanded to resist Satan in Jesus' Name. The promise of God is that Satan will flee from us.

We cannot any more be affected by black magic or witchcraft or any evil that anyone may seek to do against us. We are living under the blessing of God in Christ. No evil can touch us anymore, as long as we remain IN CHRIST. God Who "turned the curse into a blessing" for Israel years ago, can turn every curse into a blessing for us too (Deuteronomy 23:5).

If there has been a curse upon your family, because of the way your parents lived, or because they worshipped idols or dabbled with the occult, you can break that curse in Jesus' Name and drive it out of your life - permanently. It can have no power over you from this day onwards. Jesus has become a curse for you. Take the blessing He offers you NOW.

When people curse us, Jesus told us to bless them in return (Luke 6:28). This is our calling - to be a blessing even to those who are evil towards us (See 1 Peter 3:9). This is why we are anointed with the Holy Spirit - so that as Jesus "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38), we too can go around doing good and blessing people everywhere. No-one who comes in touch with you in future, will be polluted or hurt by your words, as in past days. Instead, they will be blessed - and blessed abundantly.

Every blessing in the heavenly places is ours in Christ. We must first of all believe that in our hearts. Then we must confess it with our mouths. The Bible says that "with the heart man believes....nd with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation (and deliverance)" (Romans 10:10).

It is not enough that you believe all these truths in your heart. Confess them with your mouth to Satan, and be an overcomer always. In that way, "by the word of your testimony", you will put Satan to flight, and be a blessing to others around you (Revelation 12:11). Yes, EVEN YOU can be a blessing to every person you meet - not because of what you are or what you have done, but because of what Jesus has done for you.

When Paul was going to Rome, he told the Christians there, "I KNOW that when I come to you, I will come in the FULLNESS of the blessing of CHRIST" (Romans 15:29). He was absolutely certain that he would be an overflowing blessing to them in Rome, in Jesus' Name.

Every disciple of Jesus can make that confession and believe that God will make him a blessing to everyone he meets. I have claimed that as my birthright in Christ, for many years now, and believed that everywhere I go, I WILL go in the fullness of the blessing of Christ - not because of what I am, but because Jesus became a curse for me on the cross.

We go to God now in Jesus' Name - in Jesus' merit - and not our own: In His Name Who became sin for us, we become the righteousness of God. In His Name Who became poor for us, we are rich forever. In His Name Who became a curse for us, we can be a blessing to others forever.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/the-full-gospel-4-the-threefold-exchange-at-the-cross/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**