

# Two Types of Sins & Two Types of Blessings

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon discusses two types of sins - those that hurt only ourselves and those that hurt others, and the importance of seeking to be a blessing to others through the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:17-19, Genesis 4:11-12, Genesis 12:3-4, Matthew 23:14, Luke 4:18-19, Luke 11:5-13, John 7:37-39, Acts 1:8, Acts 10:38, Galatians 3:14

**Topics:** "Sin and Its Consequences", "The Purpose of Blessings"

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## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the distinction between two types of sins and blessings in his sermon. He explains that Adam's sin harmed only himself, while Cain's sin harmed others, highlighting that God takes the latter more seriously. Poonen urges believers to recognize the gravity of sins that hurt others, such as gossip and judgment, and to understand that true blessings come from being filled with the Holy Spirit to serve others, not just for personal gain. He calls for a shift in perspective within the church regarding the seriousness of different sins and the purpose of blessings. Ultimately, Poonen encourages believers to be channels of God's blessings to others, following the example of Jesus.

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## Transcript

### TWO TYPES OF SINS

The first two sins that man committed that are mentioned in the Bible, are the ones described in Genesis 3 and 4. Those who sinned there were immediately judged by God. But we notice a difference in the way God judged Adam and the way He judged Cain.

God never cursed Adam or Eve (in Genesis 3) after they committed sin. He only cursed the ground. But in Genesis 4, we read that when Cain sinned God cursed him immediately. This is the first time we read of God cursing a man. Why this difference? What was the difference between Adam's sin and Cain's sin?

Just this that when Adam sinned he hurt only himself. But when Cain sinned he hurt another human being as well. There are some sins that we commit that hurt only ourselves. There are other sins that we commit that hurt others as well. God takes more seriously the sins which hurt others.

If you smoke or drink or take harmful drugs or indulge in dirty habits or thoughts, or keep bitterness or anger in your heart, etc., you hurt only yourself. But if you gossip, speak evil of others, judge others, lose your temper at others, act in jealousy or bitterness or anger or hatred against others, or commit adultery or

murder, etc., you harm those others too.

Ask yourself what you are more horrified to hear - that a brother in your church got drunk or that a brother in your church spoke evil of another brother? Your answer to that will show you clearly whether you look at sin the way God looks at sin or not.

Think of all the sins that you can commit that harm only yourself. There are many. They fall under the category of Adam's sin. Then think of all the sins that you can commit that harms others as well. These too are many. These fall under the category of Cain's sin.

Jesus condemned the Pharisees primarily because their sins hurt others. The sinful woman caught in adultery (on the other hand) may have hurt only herself (John 8:1-11). She may have been forced or blackmailed into adultery, we don't know. Jesus however, gave her the benefit of the doubt and was merciful to her and forgave her. But the self-righteous Pharisees who criticised her for adultery were guilty of far greater sins, such as evicting poor widows from their rented apartments for not paying their rents on time! And Jesus denounced those Pharisees severely for that (Matt.23:14)!! Why? Because their sin hurt others. They may have been legally right in turning those widows out on to the streets. But they were morally wrong and evil in doing so!

We too may be legally right in certain situations. But if we hurt others, we will always be doing serious wrong in God's eyes. The true Christian is merciful to others just as God has been merciful to him. Judgment will be merciless in the final day of judgment to those who have shown no mercy to others who sinned against them.

The Christian church has unfortunately not distinguished between these two types of sins. That is why almost all believers are more horrified to see a believer drunk than to hear a believer backbiting against another. Most believers consider smoking cigarettes to be a more serious sin than losing one's temper at others.

Both these groups of sins dishonor God. But when God cursed Cain He indicated clearly which type of sins He hates more. I have never yet heard of an assembly that prevented a brother or sister from taking part in the "breaking of bread" for gossiping (and thus ruining the reputation of others). But almost every such assembly will prevent a believer from taking part in the "breaking of bread" if he is found to be drunk even once!! What does that prove? Only this that such churches are totally out of tune with God's mind. Both such believers should be prevented from taking part in the breaking of bread. But why is it only the latter who is invariably disciplined?

Is there a difference between stealing a man's money and stealing his reputation? We call the first theft, and we call the second gossiping. But the latter is far worse than the former - because a man's reputation is far more valuable than money. But how many believers recognise that?

Make a list of the sins that you have committed that have harmed others. Recognise those sins as the worst sins of all. Thereafter, when you look at smokers and drunkards and drug-addicts, humbly acknowledge that all of them are far, far better people than you are.

He who has ears to hear let him hear.

TWO TYPES OF BLESSINGS

The Bible says that the gift of the Holy Spirit is meant to bring to us "the blessing of Abraham" (Gal.3:14). When God blessed Abraham, He told him, "I will bless you and you will be a blessing. In you all the families of the earth will be blessed...." (Gen.12:3,4).

There are two parts to that blessing: "I will bless you" and "You will be a blessing". This is what happens when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Most believers seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit to be blest themselves and not in order to be a blessing to others. This is why there are so many counterfeit experiences of the Holy Spirit rampant in Christendom today.

Jesus said that the power of the Holy Spirit would make us His witnesses ("a blessing to others", as He Himself was) to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8). This is "the blessing of Abraham" who was told that "the entire world will be blessed because of you" (Gen.12:3-Living). Families living in the uttermost parts of the earth would be blessed through Abraham. And families living in the uttermost parts of the earth will be blessed through us, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus told the Jews in the synagogue at Nazareth about His being anointed with the Spirit and the blessings that would flow out as a result, He mentioned, "preaching the gospel to the poor, healing the brokenhearted, delivering the oppressed and announcing freedom for the captives and sight for the blind and the blessings of God to one and all" (Lk.4:18,19-Living). Notice that every single result of the anointing was blessing to others. Peter's words in Cornelius' house agrees with this : "Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power and He went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil." (Acts 10:38). Again we notice that the emphasis is on blessing to others.

When Jesus taught His disciples to ask their heavenly Father for the Holy Spirit, He illustrated it with a parable (see Luke 11:5-13). He spoke of a man who went to his neighbour's house and kept on knocking until he got the loaves of bread that he needed for feeding a visitor. The main point of the parable is persistence in asking for the Holy Spirit (as becomes clear in v.13). But we must also notice the fact that the man did not go to get bread for himself, but for another. It was someone else's need that drove him to his neighbour's house. Once he had got the bread from his neighbour and had fed his visitor, I presume he must have gone to bed and not gone around "reporting" this good deed to others. I can't imagine this man getting someone to take a photograph of him giving the bread to his visitor at midnight and then sending copies of the photograph to all his neighbours.

Yet many Christians do just that: They advertise the good they do, in order to impress people that they are serving God. Jesus told us that even our left hand should not know what our right hand does.

God wants to bless us - immensely. But He does not want us to become reservoirs or lakes. He wants us to be channels through which rivers of living water flow out to others (Jn.7:37-39). And He wants those rivers to flow secretly and quietly, for the glory of God alone.

Every gift of the Spirit mentioned in the New Testament epistles is meant to bless others (1 Cor.12; Rom.12; Eph.4). Even the gift of tongues that edifies us personally is given primarily so that we might always be spiritually fresh and in touch with God, so that we can serve others better.

Those who seek after personal blessing primarily - whether physical health, material prosperity or emotional excitement - have not understood God's purpose at all. These are only the crumbs that fall from

His table.

Our calling as believers is to follow in Jesus' footsteps - and He did not come to earth to BE blessed Himself but to bless others.

He who has ears to hear let him hear.

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