

## You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free

What does the “the truth will set you free” really mean? What truth? Free from what? Jesus spoke these words to Jewish Believers; however, the phrase can be better understood in the context it was spoken.

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:31-32)

1. Observe carefully that knowing the truth was **conditional**:

“If you continue in My word,... you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

2. Observe carefully that Jesus’ statement came **after** the initial salvation of Jewish Believers.

3. Observe carefully that while Jesus associates Himself as the truth the makes one free, **He is actively** the One that sets you free, and freedom is within the context of sin.

Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. Now the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. **So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.**” (John 8:34-36)

The observations provide some clarity but also some confusion. For readers of the Bible, doesn’t freedom from sin occur at the moment one comes to faith? Why is this truth / Jesus Christ conditional, and by extension, the freedom He brings conditional? For people of the first century, sin was largely never in view; the phrase “the truth will set you free” implied that they were in some sort of prison / enslavement, and for most, Jesus’ freedom was in the context of political freedom from Roman rule. In a similar fashion, the phrase is used today to mean freedom from many things and usually not sin.

And the scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to Him. And He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,  
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO BRING GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR.  
HE HAS SENT ME TO **PROCLAIM RELEASE TO CAPTIVES**,  
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,  
TO **SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED**,  
TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.” (Luke 4:17-19)

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth and picks a passage from the Isaiah that speaks to freedom. Jesus always referred to “captivity and oppression” within the context of the enslavement of sin and freedom to include complete emancipation.

Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and **through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things**, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses. Therefore, see that the thing spoken of in the Prophets does not come upon you: (Acts 13:38-40)

During Paul’s first missionary journey, he stopped at a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch and spoke to the Jews about freedom, and he reiterates Jesus Christ’s message that through Him, one is completely free, and Paul reference is in the context of freedom from the condemnation all sin and the Mosaic requirement of constantly atoning for one’s sin.

Without a good understanding of sin, the emancipation that Jesus speaks of can be easily misinterpreted, and the relationship between salvation and sin misunderstood. To begin with, Paul indicated that the Law of Moses taught what sin was. It was intended to teach God’s people how to be holy and set apart so that God could dwell among them.

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What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? Far from it! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet." (Rom 7:7)

"Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." (Ex 19:5-6)

Sin was, in essence, disobeying God's word.

There are many aspects to the salvation – sin relationship that the Bible does not clearly define. It is through the study of freedom, within the context of being redeemed, that a better concept of the salvation – sin relationship can be derived.

### **A. Freedom (salvation) From the Penalty of Sin.**

The New Testament speaks frequently of Jesus redeeming / paying the price / redemption for human beings, which points to a legal context. This indicates that God views sin from a legal perspective – there is a judicial price for lawlessness.

just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45)

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, but it is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. (Romans 3:21-25a)

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (Gal 5:1)

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace (Eph 1:7)

in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col 1:14)

A genuine faith in Jesus Christ provides salvation / freedom from the judicial death penalty of sin. Here the Truth that sets free is immediate, and it is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that guarantees one's entrance into the kingdom of God and inheritance as God's adopted (Eph 1:13-14; 2 Cor 1:21-22; 5:5).

### **B. Freedom (salvation) From the Power of Sin**

While the Believer's spirit has been sanctified and made holy, there is still the matter of the "unclean" human body. The Believer is metaphorically the Temple of the living God (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19-20) and should live a life befitting as a holy vessel (1 Thes 4:3-7). It is in this context that Jesus presents "to those Jews who had believed Him, 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' (John 8:31-32); He is referring to this aspect of the salvation – sin relationship: freedom from the power of sin.

The imperative "be holy for I am holy" has a special significance (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 1 Pet 1:13-25), because it comes after God reveals that the nation of Israel will be His own possession and intended to be devoted to Himself:

Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." (Ex 19:5-6)

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Thus, the people of God are obligated to be holy.

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and after being freed from sin, you became slaves to righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented the parts of your body as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your body's parts as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in relation to righteousness. (Rom 6:17-20)

For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Cor 6:20)

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Eph 5:1-2)

making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Eph 5:16)

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already grasped it all or have already become perfect, but I press on if I may also take hold of that for which I was even taken hold of by Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, I do not regard myself as having taken hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil 3:8-14)

Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. (Col 4:5)

Therefore, since we also have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let's rid ourselves of every obstacle and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let's run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking only at Jesus, the originator and perfecter of the faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:1-2)

Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev 19:7-8)

After initial salvation, salvation from the penalty of death, the second type of salvation / freedom is presented as an ongoing process where Believers are encouraged to be imitators of God / Jesus Christ. This salvation / freedom from the power of sin occurs during the course of one's life, which is what Jesus is telling Jewish Believers, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32)

The natural desires of human beings have the propensity to sin. To "continue in God's word," to change the focus of one's desire from selfishness to selflessness, is unnatural and, by its method, divine. With growing knowledge and obedience towards God's moral standard, one gradually changes their personal moral standard and step by step alter their behavior in a manner free of sin and pleasing to God. By cooperating with the Holy Spirit in this manner, Jesus Christ is actively making one free.

### **C. Freedom (salvation) From the Presence of Sin**

The final aspect to the salvation – sin relationship takes place after a Believer has died and the human body returns to dust (Gen 3:19). Biblical references to this are in reference to the future and associated with eschatology.

"And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:28-29)

knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for the one who has died is freed from sin. (Rom 6:6-7)

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Rom 8:23)

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. (Rom 8:20-22)

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:30)

The biblical text indicates that salvation process isn't completed until after the end of human history. The idea of salvation from the presence of sin is developed in the end, when Believers are resurrected with restored bodies incapable of sinning.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly. (1 Cor 15:35-49)

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:18)

When a Believer receives God's glory, the transformation is eternal, adoption as the children of God complete, and the inheritance promised by Jesus Christ received.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. (Rom 8:18-23)

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor 4:16-18)

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Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. (Col 3:1-4)

When Jesus spoke, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly My disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32), He was speaking of freedom from the power of sin. The conditional statement indicates that freedom from the power of sin is conditional. Bible study leads one to the truth of God's moral standards, and if one adapts their personal values to God's, then one's desires change from selfish impulses to selfless godly desires. It is through this process that fulfill the purpose of human beings; human beings were created for God's glory.

Everyone who is called by My name,  
And whom I have created for My glory,  
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made." (Isa 43:7)

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matt 5:14-16)

For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Cor 6:20)

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved. (1 Cor 10:31-33)