

He Breaks the Power of Canceled Sin
John 8:31-36
July 24th, 2016

Sing verses 1 & 2 of O For a Thousand Tongues



Both John and Charles Wesley claimed that they weren't converted to a saving faith in Jesus Christ until later in life. John Wesley was 39 when he said he had that experience. Charles Wesley was 35.

We remember John Wesley's conversion as his "Aldersgate Experience" where "he felt his heart strangely warmed and that he trusted that Christ loved and saved him." John Wesley, as most know, was the founder of Methodism and his brother Charles was the Hymnist for the faith.

Charles wrote over 3,000 hymns which we often sing in worship.

Charles put the theology, doctrine and beliefs of the Methodist movement to music, which enabled people with little formal education to memorize their beliefs, because it was set to music.

Methodists have always been a musical singing people.

When John and Charles sent word to their mother Suzanna of their conversions, Suzanna wrote back, "You say that till within a few months you had no spiritual life and no justifying faith (both were ordained clergy). I heartily rejoice that you have attained to a strong and lively hope in God's mercy through Christ. Not that I think that you were totally without saving faith before, but it is one thing to have faith and another thing to be sensible we have it."

My friends today I want you to become sensible of what you can have, what you do have. You have saving faith. You have faith that can

set you free. You indeed are free in Jesus Christ, but might not know it, or claim it.



I had two Beagles. Beagles are very good at running and jumping, but my 2 beagles were never taught they could jump and never figured it out. This allowed me to put them in a side yard with only a 2½ foot fence and they couldn't get out, because they don't know they could. They were held captive, because they did not know freedom and power they had.

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, **“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth will make you free!”** John 8:31

Galatians 5:1 continues this theme, **“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”**

A pastor wrote freedom in Christ is “not freedom to do whatever we want but freedom and ability to be what we could not otherwise be.”

Charles Wesley after his “conversion” experience became very sensible of the saving faith he now had and the power for freedom that came with it. “His life changed, and he gained victory over both his temper and his unfortunate drinking habit.” Yes, Charles Wesley had a drinking problem. He had a head knowledge of his saving faith, but now had a heart knowledge and when these two came together in his conversion experience he was able to use the power God had already given him to break the power of canceled sin.

Charles Wesley wrote **“I was amazed to find my old enemy intemperance, so suddenly subdued, that I almost forgot I was ever in bondage to him.”**

As verse four says, “He breaks the power of canceled sin he sets the prisoner free.”

I had a friend, Nate Holt, who was once the premier personal injury lawyer in the Phoenix area. He then drank it all away. He became so addicted to alcohol; so enslaved that he wound up parking cars for a living. One day his wife talked him into going to a Lay Witness Mission weekend at Central UMC in Phoenix. He was deeply converted to Christ. He told me he never so much as had another urge to drink after that weekend. He went to Seminary, was ordained a pastor, preached and became a D.S.

He lived out the power of verse 3 of our hymn today.

“He breaks the power of canceled sin he sets the prisoner free.” And God not only sets us free, but then gives us the ability to put that freedom powerfully to work. This you can see later in the Wesley brother’s lives

On page 56 in our Hymnal, if you pull out a magnifying glass, you can read part of the story of the origin of this hymn which has had 1st place in our hymnals since 1780. It was originally written in celebration of Charles Wesley’s 1 year anniversary of his conversion experience. It was his first year sobriety pin. Originally it was a poem of 18 verses of which we usually sing 7. Verse one of this hymn was originally verse 7 of the eighteen and no we’re not going to sing all 18.

But let’s sing verses 3 & 4.

“He breaks the power of canceled sin he sets the prisoner free...”

If you remember any part of this message today I want you to remember these words.

These words on the screen have become to me some of the most powerful freeing words of all the songs I know! These words of poetry, put to music describe one of the most freeing experiences of my life.

When I was in Seminary my 2nd year they put everyone, and I mean every one of us in group therapy groups.

I guess they figured we all had to be nuts to be there and I found out they were right.

My group was lead by a Jungian Psychiatrist which piqued a life long interest in dreams and I remember so distinctly one day when we were talking about guilt and regret and the power it had in our lives. This Christian psychiatrist quoted verse 3 of our hymn, **“He breaks the power of canceled sin he sets the prisoner free his blood can make the foulest clean his blood availed for me.”**

In that moment I finally understood in my heart what I’d known in my head.

I was free. Sin had no power over me unless I let it. Guilt and shame no longer needed to be mine. I was free in the present and free to be what Christ was calling me to be. It was a deeply profound moment. But I must admit, I wasn’t like Charles Wesley and Nate Holt. It has taken me years to live into the freedom from shame and guilt God gave me that day.

For you who are feeling guilty over anything that you have done. You are actually free. Your sin has been paid for. The debt of your sin has been canceled.

Are you feeling angry, depressed, guilty, haunted by the past in any way?

Hear God’s word to you today, **“He breaks the power of canceled sin, he sets the prisoner free. He makes the foulest clean.”**

The penalty for your sin has been paid for 2000 years ago. Your sin tomorrow has already been canceled.

Have you had a rotten childhood, suffer from divorce, abandonment, addiction? Christ has already freed you! You can jump

over that fence and move on. You are not locked in a side yard. God has given you that ability, power and freedom.

A word here about guilt, and past sin, and how we let it bind us. Imagine God getting a set of emails from the Devil with all of our sins listed in them. God then looks at Jesus, doesn't open a one of them because he already knows what is in them. God clicks on select all and delete. They all go in the trash bin and are gone.

But we continue to bind ourselves when we open the trash bin rummage around and select something to feel guilty about all over again and then we save it! God says to be free empty the trash, throw out the trash and be free indeed. Forget it!!

In our Gospel reading Jesus says "If you continue in my word (repeat and emphasis "continue") you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

Later on he says in verse 34 "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."

These 2 verses plus verse 5:13 of Gal tell us ways of continuing in our freedom. "We must avoid that which enslaves us." Verses 19 and 20 list a whole lot of things that can bind us and trap us in sin and so we ought to avoid them. And each one of us has our own list. Know it and avoid those things!

My friend Nate Holt and Charles Wesley never had another desire for alcohol. Not so for many others who are as truly converted, but when we are tempted God provides a way out which is why there is Christian Worship and Fellowship to be a part of. Why there are groups like AA, NA, SA and others. Why there are so many devotionals written and Bible studies and Sunday School studies and classes.

And for all of us to continue in freedom we must continue in his Word!

I can't emphasize enough the importance of Scripture, worship and fellowship for this to occur and continue.

Christ has set you free from anger, depression and guilt! Won't you be free? He stretches out his hand to rescue you from the wind and waves and fear.



He breaks the power of canceled sin he sets the prisoner free.

Christ has set you free from rotten childhood, divorces abandonment, addictions, and things I can't even imagine. Won't you be free and accept what God wants you to be?

He sets the prisoner free!

Let's sing verse 5 again to remind us of this and verse 7 to praise God for this.

Sing it and claim it in your lives!

Let us pray: God in this time and place we give to you all we feel guilty for and ashamed of. We give to you our fears. We turn over to you the powerlessness we feel in the face of our addictions and sins. We pray we become sensible to the power of your forgiveness in our lives and live out of that power. In Jesus' Name Amen!