

Barriers to Blessing

by Alan Bartley

The main barrier to blessing in our lives is ignorance, which can lead to pride and unbelief, hindering our spiritual growth and preventing us from fully trusting in God's promises and abilities.

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Scripture: Exodus 23:24, Psalm 66:18, Hosea 4:6, Matthew 6:14-15, Mark 9:24, Ephesians 6:11, James 4:7

Topics: "Spiritual Freedom", "Repentance"

Description

This sermon addresses the barriers to blessing in the Christian life, focusing on the dangers of occult involvement, the impact of unbelief, the consequences of unconfessed sin, and the importance of forgiveness. It emphasizes the need for spiritual discernment, repentance, and reliance on Jesus for true freedom and healing.

Transcript

Thank you so much. It's lovely to be with you here tonight in Lurgan and to share in this service. It's a real privilege to be here and I want to thank those who made it possible for us to come.

I want to turn with you this evening in the Scriptures. If you would turn with me please to the book of Ephesians. And what we're going to do is by way of reference we're going to introduce a subject.

So if you turn with me to the book of Ephesians and chapter 6. Ephesians and chapter 6 and from verse 11. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 11. Paul the Apostle is writing to the church that is at Ephesus and he says to them in verse 11 put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against all the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high or in heavenly places. Amen and God will bless this reading. We're going to turn to some other Scriptures throughout the message but let's bow together in prayer again and ask the Lord for specific help for our gathering.

Heavenly Father we thank you that we are able to come boldly to the throne of grace and Lord we're able to approach thee because of what Jesus has done. And I ask Lord that you would draw near to us by the power of the Holy Spirit and Lord that you would speak to our hearts. We pray Lord that you would open our minds and our spirits to your word.

I realise Lord that I am completely helpless so afresh I give myself to you. I claim your cleansing and sanctifying power on my spirit, soul and body. Lord for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the extension of your kingdom and for the fulfilment of divine promises I now take the promised Holy Ghost, that blessed power of Pentecost.

To fill me to the uttermost I take and I thank thee that he the Holy Spirit will undertake. I pray Lord that you would put a wall of fire round about this meeting tonight and grant that thy glory and presence be in the midst. In Jesus' name I take authority over every power of darkness and every influence of evil and I pray Lord that you will sanctify this place by your own divine presence.

In Jesus' name, Amen. I'd like to speak to you this evening on barriers to blessing, barriers to blessing. I had no idea when I became a Christian over 30 years ago that there were going to be so many obstacles and difficulties to face in the Christian life.

I literally came in and truly as a child I came having that knowledge of sins forgiven knowing that I was a child of God, that I had passed from death unto life and I really felt that I understood everything. But you know the Bible says that when we come to Christ we're babes, as newborn babes we're to desire the sincere milk of the word that we might grow thereby. Now I had many deep-seated problems in my life whenever I came to the Lord.

Although I had come from a good home and there was no abuse, there was nothing that could be regarded as bad, it was a good home. But nevertheless there were many issues in my life that still needed resolved and foolishly I thought when I got saved that you know God forgave our sin but I thought that all the issues would be resolved but they weren't. And there are many obstacles and difficulties that we meet as we progress in the Christian walk.

And Paul here when he was writing to the church at Ephesus he said to them that they were engaging as believers, they were engaging in a battle and he said that the battle was not flesh and blood. Now so often especially when we're young in the faith we feel that people are the problem. And maybe you're a bit like that, you feel that people are my problem and if I could get rid of certain people out of my life that that would you know solve my problems.

But that's not true. Paul says we do not wrestle with flesh and blood, that means other humans. The battle that we have as Christians is not on a level with human beings.

He said we're wrestling against some entities that are superior, that are on a different realm, a different battlefield. He said we wrestle against spiritual beings in the heavenly places. And so it took me a long time as a Christian to really begin to recognize that and to start to realize that I had to deal with that if I was going to progress in my Christian walk.

The devil whenever a person comes to the Lord they are forgiven, they are given eternal life, they become a child of God, God will protect them. But nevertheless the Bible says that we have to work out our salvation. And that means it's like a it's like a mathematical term, working out.

It means to compute, to work out. And the Bible says that we have to work out our own salvation. And what he means is you don't have to be saved, save yourself, but you have to work out God's plan in your life.

You have to work it out with fear and with trembling. And so when we come to the Lord we have problems to be worked out. We have an enemy to face.

We have difficulties within and without that have to be addressed. Now in the Second World War there was a great military strategic leader called Rommel. He was one of Adolf Hitler's best commanders in North Africa.

And he really had advanced rapidly in defeating the English and the Allies till they were almost humiliated. But in the mercy of God there was a man called Montgomery who was raised up. He became the Allied commander and he won the battle.

It was the first battle of the Second World War that the British ever won. And he defeated Rommel at El Alamein. And Rommel we're told was very intelligent, very gifted, and strategic in his method of defeating his enemies.

So for Montgomery to beat him was very unusual. But when asked how he defeated him, obviously the Lord had his part to play in it. But Montgomery said that he spent a lot of his time studying Rommel.

He studied his opponent. And there has been a day in the past whenever the church, the believers, the older saints did have an opinion, and I can understand it, where they said, you know, we shouldn't give any place to the devil. We shouldn't talk about him.

We shouldn't debate about him. We should just talk about the Lord. I think in a past day there was a measure of acceptability with that, but today that would no longer be good advice.

Because we are living now in what is regarded in mainstream society as post-Christian era. We're living in a day whenever the church is being surrounded by militant paganism. We are living in a day when the church is sidelined, isolated, and not regarded by society.

So we don't live in the day that our parents and grandparents lived in. And if you notice, I'm sure you have, you're all relatively young people, you notice on the television, if you have access to it, and I'm sure most of you do, that there's a lot of material now to do with the whole area of the occult, to do with spirits, to do with communication with the dead. All these things are commonplace now on television and media.

And one of the grave problems for Christians is that if they are not aware of the dangers, if they're not aware of the enemy, then they will be deceived by the enemy, and that will further hinder them in proceeding in the Christian walk. Now before I get into some details regarding the devil's activities, I want to speak generally first regarding barriers or obstacles to blessing in our lives. The first one that I want to draw your attention to is that of ignorance.

Ignorance. In the Word of God it says in Hosea chapter 4, my people are destroyed through lack of knowledge. Okay? That's the Lord speaking about his own people, not talking about the unseen, talking about his own people.

He said, my people are destroyed. Now that tells us that if there is a lack of truth and communication of divine knowledge into our lives, then we will be handicapped in that particular area. If we don't recognize what the enemy has ability to do, then as a result we will be ignorant of his devices.

And the Apostle Paul said when writing that he said he was not ignorant of Satan's devices. He understood Satan. He had learned to foresee the activity, deceptions, and lies of the enemy.

Ignorance was the result of the fall. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, they immediately lost the knowledge that they had of God. That practical working knowledge of communion with God was lost, because they had succumbed to sin.

They had ultimately come under then the authority and under the power of death and condemnation. And ever since that, man has been and is a fallen and a falling creature. And one of the areas where Satan has manipulated man most is by the whole area of ignorance.

Ignorance. But down through the years in my Christian walk, I have discovered that God has sometimes thrown me into, literally thrown me into experiences that I didn't have a clue what was going on. And it was quite frightening, some of them, because they were to do with this whole area of the demonic, of the devil.

And I did find it very frightening. But nevertheless, through being thrown in at the deep end, I had a choice. And God, by his grace, given me the ability to swim.

And when you're under pressure, you learn the best. Whenever you have nothing else to think about, only one thing, and you're forced to consider that thing, then you learn best about that thing. And so I have a considerable amount of experience in what I'm sharing with you tonight, this is not theory from books, this is very much practical and real experience.

So ignorance is one that is very much before the people of God. Something that you and I should repent of before the Lord, that we should bring it to him, Lord, I desire to learn, I repent of ignorance. And one of the ways that the enemy works in us, even as Christians, is when we have truth, that he says to us, well now you know everything.

And pride sets in. And it's very easy to become proud. And the problem with becoming proud, even as a Christian, proud of maybe doctrines, or proud of your understanding, proud of your gift or whatever, is that pride then puts a restraint on spiritual growth.

Because God always resists the proud. Even if you're a Christian and have pride in your life, God will resist you. It's a divine law that cannot be violated.

God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. So if I want grace in my life, I must take the attitude and the spirit of the humble. I must acknowledge my ignorance.

I must acknowledge, Lord, despite what I do know, there is so much that I do not know, and I'm in your school, Lord. Now after 30 years of being a Christian, and many unique experiences for which I'm grateful to God, nevertheless I find myself after 30 years and 25 years in ministry, I find myself saying to God, I feel more ignorant now than I did 25 years ago. Because I've come to understand that the spirit world that we fight with, these principalities and powers, that they are very real.

They are very real. And we interact with them every day, every one of us. That's why Paul said, we wrestle.

Now that word wrestle means close combat. It means it's a struggle just beside you. You might not be aware of the reality of that battle that goes on in the sense of the demonic, but what you will be able to

identify with is that there are things come into your mind, there are thoughts, there are experiences that you have had that are very perturbing and troubling.

And you have maybe tried to come to terms with where did that come from, and why is that in my mind? Because the largest aspect of the battle spiritually, certainly in Western Europe at the moment, is the battle of the mind. The mind is the area where Satan attacks. And the mind, when we think of thoughts, there are three sources of thoughts to us.

And I trust this will help you, because I know many people who have struggled immensely regarding their thought life. Your thoughts can be, first of all, your own. Now your own thoughts are the thoughts that you want, those ones that you endorse.

For example, if I get a thought that I have three children, I'm happy about that, for that's true. They're my thoughts. But if I have a thought comes into my mind that I want to, you know, kill somebody, I mean, I, hold on a moment, I want that one.

Where some people make the mistake is they assume no matter what thoughts come into their mind, it's my thought. No, it's not. Thoughts have three sources.

First of all, your own thoughts are the ones that you want. You accept them as your own. The ones that come in and you don't want them, that is an indicator that they're a foreign thought that has been injected.

The devil has amazing capabilities of injecting his thoughts into our mind in such a way that we believe them to be our own. Then there's a third source of thought, and that is God. When God speaks to us through his word or by his spirit.

Three sources of thought, and you have to discern those. And if you discern by God's help those three sources, it helps you immensely regarding certain areas in your life where you are taking the blame for things that you're not responsible for. And the devil is merciless, so he is.

If he has you on a hook, let me tell you, he's not going to let you off. If he sees you feeling condemned for something that he has accused you of, don't be thinking he's sitting back crying. He said, put the pressure on until this mind's broken, until this life's wrecked.

The Bible says the devil comes not for to kill, to steal and destroy. The Bible says he goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in the faith. So there's a whole area of ignorance that's compounded by pride.

Let me give you an illustration. A few years ago I conducted a mission in Abbots Cross Church in Belfast. The first night of the mission was extremely difficult.

As I got up to preach, there's a good crowd in and all, but I just felt, Lord there's something so wrong in this meeting. Just in the atmosphere, nothing to do with the people, just the atmosphere. There was just something not right.

And I tried to preach for a period, and eventually I had to stop. I said, I mean please forgive me, but we're going to stop here. There's something not right in this service, and I would like to pray.

So we prayed and asked the Lord to come and help and to just cleanse the atmosphere of the church from whatever was going on, whatever kind of a battle was going on in the atmosphere of the church, that the

Lord would just cleanse it. And after a little time it began to lift, and the meeting went on fine. The following evening there was a young man who had come to the Lord about maybe three or four years before that, maybe not as long as that.

Fine young Christian, really zealous to follow the Lord. And he really was open to God, and he was seeking God in his own personal life, him and his wife both. And he came into the minister's room the following night, and he said, I need to speak to you.

And so we sat down together, and he said, I want to tell you something. He said, I think you might think I'm mad. He says, I don't know what you think, but he says, I feel a need to tell you.

And I said, well go ahead. He said, you lifted a little book. There's a little tape that a brother, Paul Johnson, sells, a fellow that I know, and he sells tapes, some of you know of them.

And one of them is called The Danger of Freemasonry. It's just a little cassette. And I just happened to get up and say, you know, there's a tape of Freemasonry, The Dangers of Freemasonry, just be careful if you want to have it.

He said, when you got up and mentioned the word Freemasonry, he said, something went mad inside me. And he said, it was terrible. He said, I never experienced anything like it.

And he said, I was shaking, and I was afraid I was going to pass out. And he said, I closed my eyes. And I'm only quoting to you what he said.

He said, when I closed my eyes, I could see two red eyes inside me. And he said, you're going to think I'm mad. I said, no, no, I don't think you're mad at all.

Just go on, just keep talking. And he said, well, he said, it was a real struggle. And he said, I couldn't explain what was going on inside.

But he said, you stopped the meeting. And he said, you prayed. And he said, something happened.

Something happened in me. And he said, when I left the meeting that night, he said, as I was leaving, I was driving, going up the road in the car. And he said, I began to just praise the Lord for who he was.

And somehow God did something in me. I didn't know what, but God done something in me. And he said, I literally felt something leaving me, going right out of me.

And he says, leaving, and leaving the car. I said, have you any idea what it was? He said, yes. He said, it was Freemasonry.

He said, I was a Freemason. He said, not only was I a Freemason, but he said, I had traveled up the ranks of Masonry. And he said, I actually used to help with other Freemason lodges.

And he said, when you mentioned the dangers of Freemasonry, he said, that spirit that I had got, he says, that thing rose up in me. He said, I had no idea. I didn't know anything about these things.

You see, just on that, that's just by way of illustration. He's a lovely fellow. Now he's much, he's, he's advancing much better spiritually now, because he was, I mean, he was going after the Lord, but that was an earlier where he was been held back.

It was a barrier. But the Lord in his mercy, the Lord brought that thing to the surface in that guy's life and took it right out of him and took it away from him. And that fellow is wonderfully serving the Lord today.

He didn't know. He said, I just couldn't believe it. I didn't know.

And that's why I say, we need to be careful that we're not proud, but that we humble ourselves before God and say, God, I mean, there may be something that the enemy is holding me back on. Maybe there's not, but it's always good to be open to God. Now, another area where the enemy seeks and becomes a major barrier to blessing in our lives is that of unbelief.

Unbelief. Now, so often in church today, when people get saved, we say, oh, well, he doesn't drink anymore. He's not a social drinker.

He doesn't drink. He doesn't smoke. He doesn't go to the pubs or clubs anymore.

So he goes to the prayer meeting. And the assumption is that everything's fine. I thank God when somebody gives up the drinking and the smoking, and they go along to the house of God.

I mean, thank God for that. Nobody's as glad as I am. But that doesn't mean that that person is free.

That doesn't mean that there are still areas that don't need broken in their lives, that are hindering them. You see, the children of Israel came to a place called Kadesh Barnea. And the ten spies were sent by Moses.

They went into the land, and they come back, and they said, it's a great land. And they said, if you just enter into it, God will go before us, and God will make it possible for us to take this land that God freely offers. And it's a picture of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

They said, you'll be able to get into that land, and he says, you'll enjoy it. But the Bible says that they couldn't. When they got there, the ten spies said, listen, it's too hard.

There's too many obstacles. There's giants. And so they raised all the difficulties, and the children of Israel said, we can't go in.

Joshua and Caleb came forward and said, of course you can. Get right into it. But they couldn't get in.

Unbelief. And they never got in. And one thing I have learned in the Christian life, and I'm learning, is this.

That the Christian life is a life of faith. The Bible says, that just shall live by faith. It is by daily, constant dependence on the Lord.

Faith. Faith is something that God gives to us. But unbelief is something to be repented of.

Now unbelief is a sin. To have unbelief is a sin. But it can also be a spirit.

Now again, let me give you an illustration. I remember a fine young man came for prayer. And what had happened was, he had a few issues.

Some of them of a sexual nature. And he repented before the Lord over those issues. And God began to really set that young man free.

And it was quite a bizarre, it was a very unusual thing. But nevertheless, it was there. And he knew that it was something that he needed help.

And you see friend, you'll know in yourself if there's things in your life that are not right. You'll know. The Holy Spirit will bring it to your attention.

And he brings it to your attention in order that you deal with it. So that the Lord can set you free. For the Bible says, whom the Son sets free, is free indeed.

And Jesus wants to set you free. Jesus wants every area of your life to be under control. He wants you to know his blessing.

He wants you to know that he loves you. And that his arms are outstretched to you. And he also wants you to know that sin in your life will destroy you.

And so he calls you to repentance and confidence in him. And to learn to trust in him. The Bible says about a man called Stephen that was chosen as the first deacon of the New Testament, that he was a man who was honest.

Now, Leonard Ravenhill said on one occasion that to find an honest Christian was a rare enough thing. Just to find somebody honest. He was an honest man, full of faith and the Holy Ghost.

Faith comes with the Holy Ghost. Unbelief is to be repented of. Let me get back to my friend.

He came for prayer. And while we were praying with him, the Lord wonderfully set him free from various things in his life. And when we felt the time of prayer was over, we said to him, do you sense there's anything else in your life? And immediately, without any assistance from anybody else, he said, yes, unbelief.

He said, the Holy Spirit is showing me in my mind unbelief. Now, this fellow was not from any kind of Elam or any background. In fact, he was a Baptist.

He just happened to be a Baptist. So he wasn't familiar with anything. He just said that in my mind, as you're talking, he said the word unbelief.

It's very clear. And we prayed. And immediately that man experienced freedom from a spirit of unbelief.

He was there. I witnessed it happening. He was held back by unbelief.

Because what unbelief does is unbelief states in the presence of God, I don't believe you. That's what it does. And unbelief will give you difficulties, constantly challenge you concerning areas like the existence of God, challenge you in areas as to maybe evolution is right.

You can actually be experiencing the conflict of a spirit of unbelief. These things are very real, very real. It's something that you need to repent of, unbelief.

You need to repent of. Sometimes I get down before the Lord. I'm in an issue where I have to trust God concerning an area of my life.

And I remember a number of years ago, my wife and I, we were actually living in Lurgan at the time. And the Lord put us through a real severe trial financially. And it was so bad that, you know, we were getting to

the stage where the oil had almost run out.

And there was just enough food for the next day. And the electric bill, it couldn't be paid. And we had barely enough food to get the children driven to school.

And we were just trusting the Lord because he had been faithful to us for many years in meeting all our needs. And you know, during that period, because it occurred over a period where God just let us go into this really deep place of need. My wife and I, we got eventually to our shame, to our shame.

We used to sit down at the table for a meal and we dare not mention God because the two of us would take into him. And we would say, Oh God, this is really hard. This is really tough.

And it was tough. And it was tough. And yet the amazing thing was after the trial, the Lord came.

And in a most amazing way, a man rang me out of the blue that had never known any of my circumstances. And he rang me and he said, one morning, do you need money? And the previous night, my wife had just said to me, well, there's only enough for the children tomorrow morning. That's it.

There's no money to do nothing. And the next morning, this man rang and said, do you need money? And I thought it was nearly a joke because I was, I had got into such unbelief. I just thought the circumstances are so difficult.

God, I've prayed about it till I'm tired praying about it. So obviously you're not going to help me. And I just went into unbelief.

The Lord was still faithful. But the problem with the unbelief was that it separated me from having fellowship with God. I was under immense stress.

I was full of fear. When all the time I could have just trusted God and enjoyed. And sometimes since that, I have been in dire straits.

And you know, I'm learning just to rest in God. Just to rest. Because he owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

And he says the silver and the gold, they belong to me. So unbelief is something the enemy wants to hold you back. It's something to be confessed and repented of.

Another one is unconfessed sin. Unconfessed sin. The Bible says, if I regard iniquity, or in Psalm 66, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

Young people, when there is sin in our lives that we're not repenting of and not dealing with, God won't hear or answer any of our prayers. His word is clear. If I regard or hold to, keep, suppress, hide sin in my life, God will not hear me.

And the word of God says in Proverbs 20 at 13, he or she that covereth or concealeth their sin, God says they'll not prosper. Now you could conceal your sin and still prosper financially, but God's not talking about finances. God's talking about you, yourself.

God says if you cover or conceal sin in your life, he said you're not going to prosper. He said you're going to suffer. He that covereth his sin shall not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall obtain

mercy.

So we have to bring sin to God. And if we have sinned against others, we must bring that to them. If I sin against God, I must repent of it before God, and God will forgive me.

But if I sin against another person, if I steal from them, I not only have to repent before God for stealing, but I have to repent before them and give them back the money. That's the law of righteousness. And that brings us on to the next point.

One of the most powerful tools that Satan uses in order to prevent Christians growing is unforgiveness. Now I couldn't exaggerate or I couldn't lay this heavily enough upon you. If you turn to your newspapers, you'll find that most of the newspaper material or news material is taken up with conflict.

Conflict. Personality conflict. National conflict.

There are powers that are unseen that work to maintain and keep conflict going. They're called the powers of the devil. He comes to kill, to steal, and destroy.

You see, when you're in conflict with another person, that will have an impact into your life. When you have issues of unforgiveness with a person, no matter who they are, even if they're living or dead, it's immaterial. When you have unforgiveness, then you are personally before God and in the spirit realm, you are committing spiritual suicide.

You cannot grow spiritually. Now you can still come to church. You can read the Bible.

You can say your prayers. You can go to meetings. You can do all those things, the means of grace as they are, but you before God will not grow.

You can't. Because the Lord Jesus told an amazing parable story, and what he said was this. There was a great king, and the king was owed by a particular man, let's put it in today's language, a million pounds.

The man couldn't pay it, so he came to the king, and the king was merciful, and he said, listen, you don't owe me anything. Couldn't believe it. A million pound of debt, wiped out like that, just on the grounds of the mercy of the king.

This man who had been forgiven for a million pounds, he was owed some money by another man, but he was owed a pound. Now rather than learning from his master, and learning the generosity that his master had shown, what he decided to do was to forget about that, and he decided, I'm gonna get my pound. And so he went after that man, the man couldn't pay it, so what did he do? He put him in prison.

That's the illustration. And the picture is, the Lord Jesus said, I forgive you for millions of sins, a vast degree of sin. I wiped it out.

But somebody has done something on you, and in comparison to what you did on me, Jesus said, it's nothing. But you're holding it against them. Now then Jesus says something very interesting.

He says, as a result of that, that man who wouldn't forgive the man a pound, he was brought before the king, and the king said, you're a wicked, a wicked servant. And he said, I'm going to send you into a place of imprisonment, and he said, you're going to be handed over to the tormentors. Now when you read that, most commentators agree, and I have no doubt whatever from both personal experience of people that

have carried on forgiveness, because as you carry on forgiveness, it causes a rottenness that goes right into your bones.

It'll affect you physically, mentally, spiritually, psychologically, every way it affects you. Because those tormentors, Jesus said, are spirits, they're demons. And Jesus said, if you do not forgive, he said, what will happen is, he said, because legally you have chosen not to do what I say, for the Lord Jesus said, if ye forgive not your trespasses against others, he said, my father's not going to forgive you.

Jesus said that. So what happens is, when you carry a spirit of unforgiveness to somebody, God takes you, and because of the spirit world being as legal as it is, and it is a legal world, God then knows that you can't be set free, because you won't let go of the unforgiveness. You won't repent of it.

So God says, right, the legal world is, you've got to take the consequences of carrying on forgiveness, and what happens is, tormentors are released on you. They're evil spirits, and they come and do exactly what Jesus said, they'll torment you. I have seen people who carried on forgiveness for years, some of them mental wrecks, some of them physically deformed, because of unforgiveness.

It is spiritual suicide. What do I do with unforgiveness? Well, if somebody has done you something wrong, you have to have the spirit of forgiveness. Now, they might not repent.

You say, well, I have no right, I don't have to forgive them. No, you do. Because that unforgiveness in you, that bitterness and resentment that will build up in you, will become the destruction of your own soul, regardless of them.

What you have to say to God is, God, I forgive them, whether they get right with me or not, or whether they get right with God or not, that's another question. But Lord, as far as I'm concerned, I'm letting go of this unforgiveness, and how you do it is, you bring it to God, and you ask God to forgive you for unforgiveness, and you let that person go into the hands of the Lord. You say, but I did that.

A man told me one time, he says, I prayed about that once last night, and he says, I still feel the same. I said, you might pray it for a month, and you still feel the same. Because you can't help how you feel.

If they've done you wrong, you're still going to feel angry. God doesn't read feelings. Feelings go up and down.

God never reads your emotions. God reads your will. It's the decision you make that God reads.

And if you make the decision before God, no matter how you feel, say, Lord, I forgive this person, God will register that, and God will set you free from tormentors. Unforgiveness. Unforgiveness.

I have known of people who have been held by maybe a father who abused them as a child, done terrible things upon them, and they were crippled, and the father was dead. And now, not, as I say, not that this was, there's any merit in doing it, but some of them actually felt they had to go to the grave of that person who had abused or hurt them. Not that there's anything in the grave, from the grave, from the person, but that was their way of coming to terms with it, and letting it go.

Letting it go, and getting released from it. The enemy will use it. It's another barrier to blessing.

Now the ones that I want to draw your attention to before we come to the conclusion deals more, especially at this time of Halloween, to do with the whole area of occult involvement. As I said earlier on,

many Christians said we shouldn't talk about these things, and perhaps that was right years ago, but we're in a different day. And your contemporaries, the young people that you're meeting today in the street, the ones that my children are meeting in the tech and so on, and in schools, these young people are astute to the area of the occult.

They've been taught by, you know, by internet, by television, by games, by films. They're being slowly but gradually desensitized to the whole area of the occult. All in preparation, no doubt, for the day when Antichrist will come.

And when he does, people will not remotely be able to detect anything bad about him. So there's a gradual desensitizing to these things. And we are, as God's people, are meant to be the children of light.

We are to be children not of darkness, but light. Occult. The occult means hidden.

It's the hidden areas. Now the Bible is very explicit, especially in the Old Testament, in the book of Deuteronomy. God was very explicit, especially in chapter 18 of Deuteronomy.

The children of Israel were told without, I mean, there was no bones about it. God laid down a list of things that they could not do, that they must not do. Now sometimes we can think, even as Christians, we can understand the ungodly thinking like this, but sometimes as Christians we can think, you know, God always says don't do this, don't do that, don't do the other.

And they tend to get an attitude that it's all negative. Well, for me personally, for the last twenty-something years, Christianity has not been like that. I never think like that as a Christian.

You see, how Christianity works is like this. If you get filled with the Holy Spirit, you can do whatever you like. There's no restrictions on you.

If you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you can do whatever you like. If I want, I can go to a pub. If I want, I can go to a nuns' floor.

If I want, I can get drunk. I have the freedom. There's no rules on me at all.

But guess what? I don't want to go to the nuns' floor. I don't want to get drunk. Don't want to smoke.

Don't want to be on drugs. Don't want to do those things. Why? Because the Holy Spirit's in control of my life.

And so if your attitude is, well, God's kind of always on the negative, maybe really you haven't grasped yet what salvation's all about. Maybe you haven't fully entered into all that God has for you. Because if you did, then your attitude would be that, you see, when God says don't do something, it's not because he's a spoilsport.

It's because God says it's going to hurt you. And many years ago, I did a mission and a young lady stayed behind. She had beautiful makeup.

She was really well made up. And after the meeting, she came around. And do you know, she was sitting and she looked dreadful in the little minister's room, dreadful.

Because she had different makeups and all. And they'd all began to run. She was crying.

And she looked dreadful. No offence. Just telling you what it was.

She looked dreadful. And her young friend was with her. She was a young woman in her early twenties.

She sat down and said, dear, what is wrong? What is the problem? And initially she couldn't, she couldn't. And then her friend said, well, she said her husband's leaving her. And after a moment, she composed herself and she said, you know, a year or two years ago, she says, we have been married for whatever, three, four years.

She said, I met another guy. And she said, I had a relationship, just a one-off relationship with him. And my husband has found out.

He was a Christian. And I looked at her. And if I remember rightly, there either was a child or a child on the way.

And I remember looking into that young girl's face that evening. And I thought, how sad. This is, this would break the heart of a stone.

This would pull tears out of a stone. And my mind immediately went to the word of God, where it says, God says, my commands are not grievous. In other words, God says, all the commands I give you, it's not, I'm not a spoiled sport.

I'm thinking of the very best for you. God says, don't commit adultery. And people say, get a good time.

The world says, do whatever you like. God says, don't do it. Why not? Well, if you'd have been with me that night, you would have saw why.

I tell you, it was painful. And sin's painful. You have to pay a price for it.

So God says, when he says, don't do something, he's protecting you. And regarding the whole area of the occult, God says, don't touch these things. Now, we live in a day whenever these things are being bantered about.

And perhaps, perhaps you do dabble in them. Perhaps you have dabbled in them. The whole area of fortune telling, Ouija board.

I remember a young Christian lady. She came along to meetings that I conducted. And that particular night that she desired to come, I wasn't there.

There was a minister had come to take the meeting for me many years ago. And this young girl, young woman, she was perhaps about 20, maybe early 20s. But she had got saved a few years before.

But you know, she could never pray publicly in the pyramid. And she had a real hang up about it. She couldn't pray publicly.

And there were a whole lot of areas where she was handicapped. Now, she was a Christian, and she was a lovely wee girl, but a lot of these issues. And she felt that particular night, she told me this after, that particular night, she told her mother, I have to go to this meeting tonight.

Now, she assumed that I was going to be there, but thank God I wasn't there for I couldn't have helped her. That night I couldn't have helped her. But nevertheless, God knew.

And she came along that night to the meeting. And I think she was initially disappointed that I wasn't there. And this other person was there, but it was God's perfect timing.

And this dear man spoke a little along some of these issues in detail. And when the meeting was over, she came to him at the door and she said, excuse me, sir, if you played with the Ouija board, even before you were Christian, what effect would it have on you? And immediately the Holy Spirit revealed to that man what was going on. And he said to her, dear, you're the one who's done it, aren't you? And he prayed with her, and she said that she passed out.

She couldn't remember what happened, but she passed out. And the Lord wonderfully delivered her from the influence of that Ouija board. The change spiritually was dramatic.

Immediately she began to progress where she was always hindered. She began to pray publicly in the prayer meeting. She had dabbled in the Ouija board, horoscopes, charms.

And you say, well, I've done these things, and I don't think that they're any influence on me. Well, that's absolutely right. I have met many people who have come to the Lord, and they have been set free from things just as they trusted Jesus.

In fact, just last week I was talking to a man who led a young Roman Catholic man to the Lord about a month ago. And this young man had been struggling with real problems. Now he had dabbled in the occult because people are doing that now.

They don't know about God. They don't know about the church, so they listen to TV, little programs, little films, Harry Potter, and it's all a bit of a laugh. Let's do it with no idea of the consequences.

And so this young man had got into different things he shouldn't. He had had a terrible bad stomach, real bad stomach. And so what he did was he was taking tablets, and he had gone for all the medical examinations, CT scans, all that, all clear.

So they were just giving him tablets to try and suppress the pain in the stomach. Now this guy knew nothing, but he went along to the gospel meeting just about a month ago, and the Holy Spirit began to speak to him about his sin. What he said to the friend who told me this just last week, he said what happened was he said the young man began to feel extremely ill as God was speaking to him.

To the extent that he felt he had to get out of the meeting or he would pass out, he just wanted to get out to get as many tablets as he could to get this stomach under control. By the grace of God he hung on. A number of people were invited to come to Christ.

He was one of them along with his wife. And they both trusted the Lord as their Savior. They're both born again.

It was lovely. I was down last week. I thought he was saved about a hundred years, this guy.

He was as bright as a button. Coming from a Roman Catholic home, a lot of things he should. But what he told the evangelist afterwards was very interesting.

He said when I invited Jesus into my life, he said I knew that he had come. But he said I felt something inside me being taken out, and he said I felt it physically leaving me. And he hasn't had a pain in his tummy since.

So there are people who come to the Lord and they are set free at conversion. But there are some who aren't. I remember a dear young lady.

I don't think she'll mind I'll not mention her name or anything. But she happened to go, this is kind of like a Baptist night, she happened to be Baptist as well. And what was happening to her was when she went to the midweek prayer meeting, and she had a lot of issues in her life, but she had come to Jesus and was in full-time Christian work.

And when she went along to her church prayer meeting, she'd have a good pastor and some good folk in the church. And when the pastor would preach, especially when there was a real sense of the Holy Spirit, she would begin to shake uncontrollably and feel as though she was going to pass out and she couldn't stop it. She had almost a personality disorder because those who worked with her used to say to her, you know, sometimes you're normal and sometimes you're anything but normal.

And they said, you need to read your Bible more and you need to pray a wee bit more. And dear helper, she'd tried all that. She'd done all those things.

But that wasn't the problem. That wasn't the problem. See, the people who were ministering to her were ignorant of what her need was.

And she contacted me to see would I pray with her or talk to her about her issue. So she came up, she'd received a tape that had been a help to her, and she began to think, maybe there's something deeper in my life than this that needs help. And she came to my study and we chatted a little while and she began to tell me some of the things that had happened in her life.

And they were very sad. Some of them were very sad, even subsequent to her conversion, some really bad things had happened in her life. And so I said to her, listen, what we're going to do is we're just going to have a wee word of prayer.

We're just going to ask Jesus to come and minister to you and see what Jesus maybe wants to do. And I began to pray very gently for a few moments. And she passed out and she just fell in a heap in my study.

And I knew that there was something that was operating in her that was keeping her back from going on with Jesus. And eventually I got her back up again and I said, listen, you have deep-seated issues here and you're going to need specific prayer for them. And she did go for prayer and I was there and it was wonderful to see Jesus setting her free.

Jesus set her free. Sometimes people open themselves to things that they shouldn't. A number of people I've met on the journey of life have dabbled, and sadly I know Christians who do this, and again it's in ignorance, but they dabble with the martial arts.

The martial arts is not a neutral form of advancement of your physical frame. It is from the East. Its origin is from China and the East.

And all of the, whether it's yoga or other forms of meditation and so on and so forth, and the advancing of the physical frame, it's not purely to do with physical, it was spiritual. For those who are interested in yoga, if you find the origins of yoga, it was to prepare somebody to die. That's what yoga was all about.

Getting you prepared to die. Martial arts. I remember a young man coming for prayer.

And he had come to the Lord when he was young. Whether he was genuinely saved or not, I had no idea. But nevertheless he came along and his wife was ready to throw in the towel with him.

She said, I've had enough of you. And what had happened was he had dabbled in the martial arts. Now he had supernatural strength.

That's what happens. That's why martial arts work, because you get supernatural strength. Strength that's more than physical.

What happens is whenever you enter in and develop down that route, you will get the aid of spirits. The aid of spirits. And this particular young man, he sat and he said, he showed me his knuckles, his knuckles were calloused.

His wife said to me, she says, when he gets under a certain influence of a substance, and this happened to him occasionally, she said, what he does is, she says, he becomes another man. His own wife. And she says, he can throw his fist out and she says, he can put his fist through things that nobody naturally could do.

She says, he has broken things that you couldn't break with a sledgehammer. Just put his fist through it, look at that thing. And he had dabbled in a lot of stuff.

And that night, that young man, we talked to him and said, well, would you not want to come to Jesus? Would you not want to trust the Lord? The Lord can set you free. Jesus can break these powers over your life. And he said, I would.

And he prayed a very simple prayer and we saw him the following week. And his wife said, he's a different man. He's a different man.

It's all gone. It's all gone. Sometimes people can dabble very quickly as we conclude.

I made reference to a fellow who was in Freemasonry. Freemasonry is a false religion. And the Bible says in the book of Exodus chapter 23, that we cannot have false religions.

Now, again, many people say, well, as long as you come to Jesus, that's okay that you can be in other organizations and so on and so forth. It will not have any impact on your life. That is not true.

Exodus chapter 23 and verse 25. Let me get the right verse. Exodus 23 and verse 24, talking about the foreign gods, the demonic gods in Exodus 23, the Lord said, thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works, but thou shalt utterly overthrow them and quite break down their images.

Now, you'll notice in the Old Testament, our time is gone, but I could apply this and spend a long time explaining to you the whole area of idolatry, other gods. There's one thing is very apparent in the Old Testament, and that is God had a great hatred for other gods, idolatry. And you will find that whether it was Gideon or others, not only did they take away, as it were, their own hearts from idolatry, they rejected it, but they also went in and took all the objects associated to idolatry and they destroyed them.

I don't know if you have noticed, but in a lot of little shops now you see little Buddhas. You ever notice those? Little Buddhas, supposedly beautiful. I think they're very ugly and repulsive things, but some people get them and they bring them into their home or their garden.

Well, Buddhism is another religion. Now, I know that people, perhaps, who will listen to this will say, he's office rocker, and they'll say, this guy's away with the fairies. And I accept that.

If you want to say I'm away with the fairies, I don't mind. I have nothing to argue with. I'm not arguing.

All I can say is what I have seen over the last number of years in my own experience, that Christians who have gone into temples in foreign countries, that they have been subsequently oppressed and they've had to be set free. When you go into another dimension, another religion, and you bow to that or you in any way acknowledge that, you will come under that influence. It's a very negative influence.

And I could literally keep you here for quite a while telling you of individuals who have dabbled in areas of idolatry. It was done in ignorance quite often, but the influences still remain. Freemasonry is one of the most common.

Freemasonry, secret of organizations and cults. And finally, the whole area, again, where people today and now are suffering with various illnesses. And I'm sure we all know what that is.

I was talking to a young man who's actually in the process of getting prayer for help in his Christian life. And this young man was saying to me that he goes to what we would term a very strong evangelical, that's what we call a strong evangelical church, fundamentalist. And he said, one of the elders said to him going out, he said, you know what I think you should do? You should go for acupuncture, and the acupuncture will help you.

So we live in a day now where that, again, acupuncture, reflexology, a lot of alternative medicines all come from the east. Their origin is in China. It was all used in relation to forces, energies, powers.

There is no medical explanation to this day as to why it works. They talk about meridian lines. They talk about forces.

They talk about pressure points. These all come from China, from their religious beliefs. And I have seen people who were prayed for, and I have read of people who were prayed for, who did obtain some degree of healing.

And what you must understand as a Christian is that you can use these various forms, whether it's charms, and you will get healing. But I want you to understand a principle as I close. Everything that the devil does for you, you will pay for it.

Everything that Jesus gives you is free. Please always remember that. Because you could get healed, but you will have a blanket, a suppressing negative blanket down over your spirit.

And you may feel physically better, but spiritually you will not be better. Now, as I've said, I could speak all night on this, but I have no intention of doing that, other than to alert you as young Christians of the dangers that are all out there, and to encourage you to be open to God, to stay humble before God, to invite the Lord to come and fill you with his spirit, that you might get a hunger for his word and a hunger for prayer, that you might just walk with Jesus day by day. Remember that you have an enemy, but also remember that Jesus is stronger than Satan and sin, and Satan to Jesus must buy.

Let's buy in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, we have mentioned many subjects tonight, Lord, that is perhaps new to some and maybe familiar to others. I know, Lord, you want us to experience freedom.

You want us to be saved from the deceptions and the lies and the activity and the subtleties of the enemy. I do ask, Lord, your blessing upon your people, and I pray that you would give us, Lord, sensitive spirits to God's word and to God's Holy Spirit, that we might walk in light, and that in a day of immense darkness, where many people, Lord, are succumbing to demonic powers in their lives, that we not only would be lights, but that we would actually be able to help them, to set them free, to see Jesus changing them. Father, we ask this, and we give thanks for the refreshments, and this time together in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.

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