

Release

by Gareth Evans

The sermon emphasizes the importance of healing soul wounds and understanding our identity in Christ to fulfill God's purpose and maintain unity in the church.

Duration: 43:04

Scripture: Matthew 16:18, Matthew 18:21

Topics: "Release"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the context of Bible verses when teaching doctrine. He shares a personal story of a young man named Norman who was deeply wounded and how it affected his mindset. The speaker then discusses the tactics of Satan and how he uses lies and fiery arrows to rob Christians of their ability to walk in victory. He concludes by highlighting the power of being a new creation in Christ and encourages the audience to truly believe and embrace this truth.

Transcript

Good morning. I am amazed to see how many people came out this morning. There were 120 here for the potluck last night and I saw you eat in and I thought there's no way they're going to be fit to come to church in the morning.

So good to see you. Over the past few weeks I've been trying to encourage you to truly grasp hold of the truth that God has a purpose and a plan for each one of us. Scriptures teach me very clearly the Holy Spirit gives gifts to people to enable them to carry out God's purpose in our lives.

I also taught you a few weeks ago concerning the tactics of Satan to try to rob us of God's purpose in our lives. There's a scripture verse that Paul says this, I'm very quick to forgive when somebody wrongs me because I do not want to give Satan a foothold for I'm not ignorant of his tactics. Paul might not have been ignorant but I think the church of Jesus Christ is greatly ignorant of the tactics of Satan.

And over my first few weeks here with you in this wonderful four months that you've given me with you I taught you some of the tactics of Satan. I talked about the trained monkeys that jump on our shoulders, the offences we allow to tangle the fingers in our hair. The offences that rob us of God's purpose in our lives.

The offences that divide Christians from Christians. The offences that split churches. That cause missionaries not to return to the field after one term.

Offences, not sins. Those things we just don't like about one another. That we cannot really tag as a sin but something with a personality clash or somebody did something not the way we think it should be done and we get so easily offended.

Jesus said offences are going to come. And I taught you how we need to approach those offences to make sure that Satan does not rob us of God's purpose in our lives. On another Sunday I spoke about the lies that we so easily believe.

The arrows, the fiery arrows that Satan fires into our minds and into our thinking. And we allow those arrows to rob us of reality instead of quenching them with the truth of God's word. I taught concerning other tactics of Satan.

I taught of various ways he attacks. But today I want to speak of his most successful weapon that robs Christians of the ability to walk, to run the race, to overcome and conquer in the name of Jesus. There is a verse in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 17 that says this.

If any man or woman be in Christ Jesus he is a new creation. All things have passed away behold all things have become new. Do you believe that? Do you really believe that verse? When I was 17 I knelt by my bed in Wales and I asked Jesus Christ Lord if you're real I want to know you.

Please come into my heart, come into my life, take away my sin. I asked that prayer as a question but I really was not convinced that he could hear me. It was a matter of a few days later when I had that deep assurance in my spirit that he had not only heard me but had cleansed me and made me a child of God.

And I knew that I knew that I knew that I was born again. That's now 50 odd years ago. I was a new creation.

I had turned from darkness to light. I had come from the kingdom of death into the kingdom of life. Heaven above was soft, the blue earth around was sweet and green.

Something lived in every hue that Christless eyes had never seen. Oh this full, this perfect bliss. That was my experience then and has been since then up till today.

It's been growing richer and deeper in my walk with God. I knew that I was a new creation. But that was my spirit.

My spirit had been dead but it became alive that day. But I am more than a spirit, I'm also a body. And my body was not made new that day.

I had a scar on my leg from a time I fell on a glass bottle when I was 8. The scar is still there. I'm not going to show it to you. It's still there.

I had this tooth out when I was 10. The gap was still there. I didn't get new enamels.

My body was not made a new creation. Praise God one day this body, this corruption is going to put on incorruption. This mortality will put on immortality and my body will be transformed.

That's called glorification. That's the future. But I'm more than a spirit and I'm more than a body.

I'm also a soul. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 Paul writes these words. I pray that God will sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul and body.

I had a soul before I became a Christian. Every man and woman in the world has a soul. An eternal soul.

And I brought into my Christian life my soul with all the impact of society upon it from previously. And my soul, like my body, carried wounds. The process today of the Holy Spirit working in my life and in your life, the work of sanctification is to bring healing to the soul wounds and the soul attitude that we bring into our Christian life.

Paul would write these words. Let your mind be transformed. Let your mind be renewed.

Because he knows that we come into our Christian life with a mind that has been conformed to the things of the world. And often times with the wounds of the world. There are many kinds of wounds.

Think of a young man called Norman. Norman came to the Lord when he was 17 and now youth work in Wales. And he fell in love with one of our girls but she rebuffed him.

One evening at my home there was a knock at the door and I answered the door. Norman was there and he burst in and he started beating at me. And the room right by there was the bathroom.

I ended up on the floor in the bathroom with blood everywhere as he really hurt me very badly. Then he left. And I said, what was all that about? And I said, I don't know.

An hour or so later Norman came back and he's crying and he asked my forgiveness. He said that he believed that this girl had rebuffed him because I had told him not to have anything to do with him, which is absolutely untrue. I said, Norman, why should she want to go with you? I said, you're 17, you can't even read or write.

He was illiterate. I said, why can't you read or write? Then he told me the time when he was an infant, his mother and father parted when he was one. His mother married another man who wanted nothing to do with Norman.

He had two children of his own and every time he would come home from work the mother would feed him and his two children and Norman would be locked in his room, a four year old boy. He went to school as a four year old boy and he's sitting in the back of the classroom staring out the window, probably didn't have any breakfast that morning. And the teacher shouts at him and says, Norman, what's the matter with you? You're nothing but a dumbo.

And the little dumbo decided to grow up as a dumbo. He refused to learn from that teacher and every other teacher. That word from that teacher was like a stab wound in the soul.

He carried that into his adult years. There's a wonderful little story. He was very fond of motorbike racing and in the back of the British newspaper was a photograph of the top world champion motorbike and I asked him who it was.

I began to teach him to read and one month later Norman could read every word in that newspaper. He wasn't stupid. But the wound upon his soul created the young man he was.

There are many, many wounds. A child who was sexually assaulted as a youngster grows up suppresses that pain into their subconscious does not remember it later, becomes a Christian becomes married and everybody celebrates the fact that she's now married to somebody, the pastor's son. And in their marriage a few months later they come to the pastor and they're having problems in their marriage.

The pastor says some nice platitudes and never deals with the wound because she can't remember the wound. And a year later they part. Because every time they came together physically she felt something wrong.

This happens constantly. I have people in my office constantly as a pastor that bring up wounds of this nature. And Satan gloats because he is the author of those wounds.

He is the one who creates those wounds because he knows that unless you and I deal with soul wounds we are never going to learn to fly like the eagle. It's his greatest tactic in defeating Christians. And if you don't believe me, sit in the pastor's office for a month and listen to some of the stories that come from people.

I wanted today to present to you what I find is a foundational biblical principle. It is probably my message. I have been here four months and I have spoken from my heart to you.

In four months I can really pour out what I feel. You didn't restrict me by asking me to teach a series on something. You didn't restrict me in any way.

But if I had one message to give to the church, it would be this message today. I'm going to take you into three scriptures. So I hope you've got your Bibles with you.

You do have a space in your bulletins to make notes and I invite you please to make notes. I have written books on this. If you want to see my wife, I do never promote my books.

But if you want to see my wife or you want to borrow one of the books, do so. But I'm going to ask you please to follow me in the scriptures. If you haven't got your Bible with you, shame on you.

My first two scriptures are found in the Gospel of Matthew. The first one is in Matthew chapter 16. And in each case I will give you the context.

I am utterly amazed how many people teach doctrine from the Bible without ever looking at the context of the verses they quote. I was talking to somebody just yesterday. I'm not the man who can quote Bible verses very readily.

Somebody says to me, oh what do you think of Hezekiah, so and so, so and so. I don't even know what it is. There isn't a Hezekiah.

But I do enjoy looking at context. I'm a contextual man. My first reference is found in Matthew 16.

It is verse 19. Let me give you the context before we read the verse. But please note verse 19.

Jesus is on Mount Hermon in the north of the country with His disciples. It's the first time we read that He has got His 12 disciples alone. He's been busy doing miracles.

They've watched Him do the miracles. They've heard Him teach. They've helped Him in collecting the bread or distributing the bread and the fish.

But this is the first time we read that He has His disciples alone. He's taken them a day and a half's journey to the north of the country. And they're on the slopes of Mount Hermon.

He says to them, tell me whom do men say that I am? And they reply, well, some think you're John the Baptist came back to life. Others think you're Isaiah the prophet or Elijah the prophet or one of the great prophets. Then He says, but tell me now, who do you think that I am? And it's Peter, the uneducated fisherman who answers and says, you are the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus says to Peter, Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah. Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven revealed this to you. I say unto you, I'm going to build my church upon men and women who have the same revelation as you.

That's what faith is. And then He says my key verse, verse 8-19. Peter, I'm going to give to you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

There we are. There he goes, Peter. Keys to the kingdom of heaven.

Whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven. The keys are for loosing and binding.

If you want to put a title to my message this morning, it is Release. Loosen. Loosen and bind.

Peter is given the keys to loose and bind. Now for 2000 years the Catholic Church has taught us that the Pope as a descendant of Peter has the keys. And if you ever see a picture of the Pope walking about, you will see a key hanging by his side.

With that key it has been believed, until recently at least, in the Catholic Church, that the Pope has the power as a descendant of Peter to open heaven and close heaven. He can open heaven for kings and nations and individuals by the pain of indulgences, whatever it might be. I've just been reading the life of Martin Luther.

What a brave man. What an incredible story as he opposed that teaching. All with a key can close heaven and can excommunicate kings and kingdoms and nations and people.

That is what they've taught for 2000 years. My second verse is found in two chapters later. If I see a verse like that, I always try to find out what it's saying.

I was doing a pastor's conference in Mexico City some years ago. It was a two day conference. The second day I turned up at the church where it was being held and one of the pastors met me outside.

He said, what are you going to teach us today, Gareth? And I said, I quoted this verse. Those things you loosen in earth are loose in heaven. Those things you bind in earth are bound in heaven.

He said, oh good, wonderful. I said, what's it mean? He said, well it means that we have power to loosen and bind Satan. We can bind him and do victorious and glorious things in the name of Jesus.

I said, I don't see Satan here at all. There's no mention of binding and loosening Satan. It's about opening and shutting heaven.

By the way, how many of you would like to have a key to open and shut heaven? How many of you would like a key that can open heaven for your loved ones? I thought he was going to sleep. I knew something was wrong with all the food you had yesterday. Two chapters later, if I find a verse like this, I always look for other verses that say the same thing so I can see more context about it.

Two chapters later in Matthew chapter 18, verse 18, it's the central verse of the chapter. Truly I say to you, King James says, verily, verily, I say to you. Whenever you see that, Jesus speaking and saying, truly, truly I say to you, you can be sure he's laying down a foundational principle.

This is important stuff. Truly I say to you, men and women of Departure Bay Baptist Church, truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. There is no mention of a key, but it is reasonable to assume that the key is the instrument that looses and binds.

It is not only given to Peter, it is given now to all his disciples. You have been given the key that opens heaven, or closes heaven. But the tragedy is we do not know how to use it.

First principle, if you want to grab something from my message, the first thing I want you to learn is this, you as a Christian have been given the key to the kingdom of heaven. Do you hear that? Now I hope today to try to show you how it is used. Let me look at the context of this chapter.

It begins where the disciples come to Jesus and say, who is the greatest in the kingdom? Jesus said, unless you become like a little child, for such is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Be very, very careful you do not offend one of my children. Be very, very careful, men and women of Departure Bay that you do not allow offence to divide you.

Satan wants offence to divide you. I taught you some months ago what offence did. Because of offence in his hometown Jesus could do few miracles in his hometown.

It hinders miracles. It hinders the supernatural work of God. It robs you of fruit.

It robs you of testimony. It robs you of fellowship. Offences.

And Satan gloats when we are offended. And Jesus weeps as he did when Martha and Mary were offended. Be very careful you do not offend one another.

It is far better for you to cut your foot off or your hand than to cause offence to another. We are not talking about sin. We are talking about offence.

Offence often leads to sin. Cain was offended because God chose able sacrifice. But he had not yet sinned.

God said to Cain, be careful Cain for sin lies at the door waiting. You are offended. Make sure your offence does not turn into sin.

What do you think? A man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray. Does he not leave the ninety and nine and go after the one? A pastor has a hundred members of his congregation. Sheep.

We are talking about sheep. We are not talking about goats. It amazes me how often we hear this message as a gospel message about seeking the lost.

This is about sheep brothers and sisters not goats. Sheep represent the people of God. It is one of the sheep that has gone astray.

He has been offended probably and he has left the parts of a Baptist church. And he is never going to put his foot inside this door anymore. And we say good riddance.

The word of God says which shepherd among you having a sheep who is offended does not go after that one to seek to bring him back and to be reconciled and to restore him to fellowship. That is what a good shepherd does. I was working in the ministry once and there was a young woman there who was being dismissed from that ministry.

The sad story was she was being dismissed because the leadership wanted to believe a lie about her. Oh there are plenty of problems in her life, I knew that. I went to the leader of the ministry to ask about why this young woman was being dismissed.

And I said she is hurting very much because she does not know why she is being dismissed. They would not tell her why. They were just dismissing her.

The world is not even allowed to dismiss people like that but this Christian ministry was doing so. I said to the leader when I hear the sheep bleating because it is caught in a bramble bush my job is to go and to get that sheep out of the bramble bush. And to us has been given the ministry of reconciliation says the word of God.

If it goes back into the bramble bush I go back in and maybe the sheep will bite me and I get scrambled and I put oil upon the wounds and I tend that sheep and I say don't go in that bramble bush. Don't go into that sin. Don't go into that problem.

Some months later I see the sheep caught in the bramble bush again and this time I go in and I get bitten again and I get scrambled again. This is what shepherds are supposed to do. And I get the sheep out and I put oil and wine in the wounds and I put my finger on his nose and say you stupid little sheep don't you do that again.

Pastors have to do that sometimes. And maybe this time I put a halter around his neck so he can't go into the bramble bush anymore. But the great shepherd never gave me permission to stand outside the bush and say stew in your own juice.

And they were just going to dismiss this woman, let her worry about her problems. She had professional counselling after that because of the way they dismissed her. What shepherd having one sheep has gone astray will not leave the 99 and go after that one in order to bring that one back into relationship, into fellowship because the division only glorifies Satan.

It does not glorify God. Let's continue with the context of my verse. If your brother sins, now we've got sin.

If your brother sins against you, this is not an offence. You don't like what he did or you don't like the way he sings or he preaches. I preach too long for some and I preach too short for others.

I preach too loud for some and I preach too quiet for others. I preach too fast for some and I preach too slow and people get offended. Not here of course, never here.

But this is sin. If my brother sins against me what am I to do? I'm to go to my brother and I'm going to say to him, brother I'm going to tell everybody what you've done. You're never going to lead worship in this church again.

Is that what I'm supposed to do? I'm to go to that brother and if he hears me, I've won my brother. I'm to go to him with a purpose of reconciliation. Brother, you know what you said, what you did really has hurt me.

What's the parameter? We need to be reconciled. He won't listen to me so I go and bring somebody else with me. What's the purpose? Reconciliation.

Restoration of fellowship. He still will not hear me so I bring him to the church. What's the purpose? Reconciliation.

Restoration. My brother sins against me. And then Peter thinks he understands what Jesus is talking about.

Sorry, it goes on. Verse 18, truly I say to you my text verse. I'm going to leave it at the next two verses for a moment.

Then Peter said to him, Lord, Peter thinks he understands this. Lord, if my brother sins against me, how many times do I need to forgive him? Seven times? I can almost imagine Peter's chest going up as he says this. Jesus said, no Peter, 70 times.

What have you done? 70 times, 7 times, keep on. It is a constant action, a constant attitude of our hearts to seek reconciliation. It should never ever be a place of allowing division.

How can we obey the commandment of our king who said love one another and we allow division to be among us. And then Jesus tells a story. There was a man who had a servant who owed him a million dollars.

And he forgave him. He put no conditions upon their forgiveness. I'm sure he must have known that this servant had a slave who owed him 10 dollars.

Servant goes to the slave and says, you owe me 10 dollars, where's my money? And the man can't pay it. So the servant throws the slave into prison. The king hears about this and he calls his servant to him.

He said, didn't I forgive you a million dollars? Yes sir, I'm so grateful. Do you know I've been telling everybody about you? In fact he said, we've set up a club on Sunday mornings, we call it church. And at our church I tell everybody how wonderful you are.

Because you've forgiven me a million dollars. And the king said, but you can't forgive your slave 10 dollars? He throws him into prison. The entire context of this chapter is restoration, forgiveness, reconciliation.

The entire context of this chapter. And the central verse says this. Whatever you loose on earth is loose in heaven.

Whatever you bind on earth is bound in heaven. Every one of you has been given a key that opens heaven and it's got something to do with reconciliation, restoration, forgiveness. I want to tell you now, I never teach forgiveness.

I never teach forgiveness because it's a very difficult thing to do. You've been greatly wronged by somebody. How many tell a child who's been sexually assaulted, for example, carrying terrible wounds, they have to forgive the person who did it.

They might choose in their heart to try to, but there remains the pain. There remains the wound. It's very, very difficult to forgive.

I never teach forgiveness for that reason. I teach release, and I'll explain the difference to you. I'm very saddened when I go into Christian bookshops, and I hope the Christian bookshop owner isn't here this morning, which, by the way, is very infrequently, to see how many books are in our Christian bookshelves that are based on a 12-steps program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Alcoholics Anonymous was started, as you know, to help alcoholics have a foundation in their life. Very, very good program. A very, very good secular program.

The 12th step of Alcoholics Anonymous is maintaining your sobriety. I don't know if many of you have ever been in an AA meeting, but if you ever attend an AA meeting, you will sit around at the location, and somebody who is chairman for the evening will say, My name is Gareth Evans. I'm an alcoholic.

My name is so-and-so. I'm an alcoholic. And they go around, and that is how they open up, because they acknowledge there is no healing for their alcoholism.

They are always alcoholics, though they've been dry and sober for 20, 30, 40, 50 years. We have books on our Christian bookshelves called books like this, Children Who Bear Our Pain, We Are Driven, Love Is A Choice. Excellent books written by Christian psychiatrists.

The 12th step is helping you to maintain your Christian walk by giving you a crutch. Alcoholics Anonymous in Step 12 will give you a crutch so that when you feel a temptation, you can telephone somebody, a buddy, a partner, whatever it is, a crutch, something to help you. A very good secular program.

But secular programs have never healed spiritual wounds. I believe in the work of psychiatrists. In the past, I used to refer people to psychiatrists for their psychiatric needs and wounds.

But spiritual wounds can only be healed by spiritual methods. And the 12th step with a crutch is not a spiritual method. I do not believe that Jesus died on a cross to give me a crutch.

I believe Jesus died on a cross to give me healing for my wounds. There is a healing for the wounds that people carry. Let me come and give you my third reference.

My third reference is found in John chapter 20. Jesus has been crucified. It's the first day of the week and the disciples have gathered together in a locked room.

They're afraid that the Pharisees are going to come and take them next. When suddenly Jesus comes and stands in the mist, verse 19. He says to them, Peace, peace, do not be afraid.

It is I. He showed him his hands and his side. And then he breathed upon them. And he said, Receive the Holy Ghost.

The Greek tense there is the Aorist imperative. The word is Labete. It demands in the Greek imperative Greek Aorist imperative, an immediate response.

In the English language I might say, Come and see me. That's called the present imperative in English. It means, Come and see me.

Today, tomorrow, sometimes at your convenience. In the Greek there are two imperatives. One is the present imperative which says, Come and see me.

Anytime. The other is the Aorist imperative which demands, Right now, come and see me. This is the Aorist imperative.

They received the Holy Spirit at that moment. And they were born again. They could not be born again any earlier because the blood had only just been shed for the sacrifice.

The high priest had only just taken it into the presence of God. Praise God, the Father had accepted the blood sacrifice to cover our sins for eternity. The high priest has returned to his people and he finds them in a locked room.

And he breathes upon them. And they receive life. Five weeks, seven weeks later they receive the Holy Spirit for power.

But here they receive life. And then he said these words to them. If you forgive the sins of any, verse 23, John 20.

This is my third verse. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you retain them, they are kept.

How many of you have received the Holy Spirit and have been born again? How many of you have been given the key to the Kingdom of Heaven? How many of you can forgive sins? Who can forgive sins but Jesus only, the scripture says? But my reference verse says this to these newly born again disciples. 120 or so of them. Whoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven.

Words of Jesus. Whoever sins you keep, they are kept. Let me ask you again, how many of you can forgive sins? What sins can you forgive? Sins committed against yourself.

Now in the English again, we have a difficult year with this word forgive. The King James Version, I'm not a big King James man opposed to other versions. The King James Version says whoever sins you remit, they are remitted.

The word remit literally means to move aside. To move aside. Je met ma plume sur la table.

I put my pen upon the table, used from the same Greek word. In French, je remet means to move aside. I believe.

And in the Greek, that is what it implies. None of us can move sins into the depths of the sea. Only Jesus can do that.

Nobody can remove sins as far as the east is from the west. Only Jesus can do that. But you and I have been given a key to heaven whereby we move aside sins.

Okay. I need now to explain this. There's my three verses.

Paul, I'm going to use you as an example. You don't belong to equity or anything like that. Do you act as union? No? Come and join me.

I didn't tell him I was going to do this. Paul, I've sinned against you. I've told some lies about you.

And there are people in this church now not speaking to you. That's why. Oh, I can give you other reasons.

And you've just been dismissed from work because your boss has heard things about you and you don't know what's happening. How do you feel about it? Pretty awful, I would imagine. Hurt.

Disappointed. And you're starting to talk to somebody and then it comes back to you via the grapevine that Gareth said this about you. How do you feel? Angry.

Hurt? Do you feel a knot in your stomach? Have you ever felt that knot in your stomach when you feel wronged? Yeah? That's a wound. Do you feel a knot in your stomach? What happens when you see me? Or when somebody mentions you? It's going worse. Pain? Somebody says to you, I missed you in church last night.

Gareth preached a great sermon. How do you feel? The hypocrite. Come on, come on.

You know the feeling, don't you? But you see, Paul, when I sinned against you, I also sinned against God. It is impossible for me to sin against a brother or sister without sinning against God. Because all sin is ultimately against God.

When I sin against God, Paul, a barrier comes between me and God. And heaven is closed. Have you ever experienced that? Oh, I have.

When I sin, I know I've done something wrong. Suddenly my worship isn't as it was, and my prayer... In fact, I don't feel like praying, I'll be honest with you. Because there's a barrier between me and God.

But I'm a Christian, and so I know the scripture says, if I confess my sins, he is faithful and just to forgive me my sins and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. So in my prayer time, in my devotions that day, I'm praying, and I say, God... And his spirit speaks to my spirit and says, Do you remember what you said about Paul? Do you remember what you said when you were talking to Carson one day and you made some comments about Paul? They were wrong, brother. You sinned, my son.

I said, well, I was in a bad mood, I was trying to joke, and he said, you sinned. And I said, yes, God, I'm sorry, I sinned. Please forgive me.

And God is faithful and just to cleanse me from my sin and to remove my sin. Amen? I've had that happen several times in my life. The bad thing about it is this.

When God removes my sin, he doesn't end it there. I want it to end there, but he doesn't. Then he speaks to me and says, you'd better go to Paul and apologize.

So I'm having God forgive my sin, but I'm not sure I want to go and talk to Paul. So finally I decide to call Paul. Answer your phone, Paul, please.

Paul, it's Gareth here. How do you feel? Tell me your reaction. Is Gareth here, Paul? Ah, that hypocrite.

Listen, I'm coming into town tomorrow. Any chance we have a coffee together? No, I've got something else to do. I've only got a few minutes.

Can we make just a few minutes quick? I really need to see you. So we get together. I say, Paul, the other day I was told in the cast and said some things I shouldn't have.

And I need to ask you forgiveness, brother. Will you forgive me, please? I said things I shouldn't have and I was wrong. I've asked God's forgiveness, but I need to ask you forgiveness.

Will you forgive me? And we are reconciled. Are you with me? No, no, I'm not done. You stay there.

What if I'm not a Christian but I've wounded him and hurt him? I've sinned against him. Or what if I am a Christian but I'm pig-headed and I don't spend time in divorce so I'm not even aware that a barrier is between me and God? He's still hurt. But Paul, he's been given the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

Make sure I get those back. He's been given the keys to the kingdom of heaven and he's now heard my teaching this Sunday morning so he knows what to do with the keys. Go with those keys, he can open heaven or shut heaven.

And so I've got this barrier. And so Paul in his pain cries out to his God and says, God, I'm hurting. I've just lost my job and people in church aren't speaking to me and I feel so hurt by Gareth's lies about me.

But God, you've given me a key that opens heaven for Gareth. And you've told me, Lord Jesus, that I can move aside, I can remit, I can forgive his sin. And so I choose right now, this is you praying, I choose right now to do that and I say, Father, do not lay this sin to Gareth's charge.

Who said that? I'll come back to that. And so God in answer to his prayer because he's got the key, opens heaven. Moves aside the sin, remits the sin.

So now there's an open door between me and heaven. Who opened the door? He did. With the key that he's got that opens things on earth.

Are you with me? His God now says to me, Gareth, what you said about Paul was wrong. Just as you did before. Maybe I'm not a Christian, I don't even hear God's voice but I sure can feel his finger moving in me.

Say, Gareth, you need to go and talk to Paul. I finally... Paul, it's Gareth here. Can we get together? Now this time he doesn't feel the pain.

Why? Because he knows that God is working because he has opened heaven for me. He's initiated the process. And you're expecting the call.

So we get together. Have you noticed what it's like when people don't want to apologise because they know they've got to? Hey, Paul, good to see you, man. How you doing? I was out the other day, I was with Carson.

You know Carson, he's a character. Man, we were talking, we were having some jokes, we each had a few jokes. And I made a comment, and I really wasn't thinking about you, I was thinking about somebody else, but I think your name was in there.

You know the way people apologise? But the bottom line, inside himself, he's chuckling because he knows exactly what is happening. Because he has opened heaven. And his God is bringing about reconciliation.

Will you forgive me, brother? Yeah. Are you getting the picture I'm trying to portray to you? Let me go back. Thank you, Paul.

Let me have a kiss. Let me go back to that middle reference in Matthew chapter 18. The next verse says this.

Verse 19. Verse 18 says, Verse 19 says, For if two of you agree on earth concerning anything, it shall be done for you by my Father which is in heaven. He is not talking about Paul and myself getting together to pray for a new Cadillac car.

He is talking about where two of you agree on earth concerning reconciliation. That is the entire context of the chapter. It shall be done for you.

My Father will bring that healing. And the next verse, which is so often quoted by two or three people gathering together in a prayer meeting, it makes me nauseous because it's got nothing to do with two or three people gathering together in a prayer meeting. If I turn up for a prayer meeting, by myself the Lord is present.

It doesn't need you to be there before the Lord decides to come. Where one person spends time with God is there. The context here is says, for if two or three of you shall agree together, for where two or three of you are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst.

He is saying when two of you or three of you are seeking to be reconciled, I am going to be there. I may have been in Columbia in a great revival, but if I hear that Paul and Gareth again reconciled, man I am going to be there because this is party time. That's what God is saying.

There is nothing that delights the Father's heart more than seeing His children come together in reconciliation and unity and love. I remember Stephen. Stephen has been stoned to death.

That's sin. And Saul is standing there watching Stephen be stoned to death. If I was Stephen and I was being wounded like that, I'd have probably cried Oh God, send a lightning bolt down and kill him.

No, no, I wouldn't have done that. I'm a good Baptist, I wouldn't say that. God, give me grace to bear this pain.

Stephen did not pray that either. What Stephen prayed was this. Father, lay not this sin to Saul's church.

What's he doing? He's opening heaven for Saul. He's remitting the sin. Father, do not let this sin become a barrier between you and Saul.

He's remitting the sin. And a few days later Stephen's God spoke through the open door that Stephen had opened by that prayer and he spoke to Saul upon the Damascus road and Saul became Paul the great

apostle. Would Saul ever have become Paul the great apostle if Stephen had not released him? There is great power when we release those who have wronged us.

For not only are they released, but we are too. It's like having a horse on the end of a rope. Look at my horse, look at my wonderful horse, it's galloping around the circle.

Isn't it a lovely horse? And you can see my horse. But if my horse gets spooked and decides to gallop off through the bramble bushes, what happens to me? That's right, I get dragged through a bramble bush. There's one way to stop that, and that's to let the horse go free.

But if the horse goes free, I'm free. And Paul, that pain that you felt at my sin, is an emotional rope that binds you to me. And every time you want to fly with the Lord, Satan tugs on that rope and pulls you back and you get hurt.

By another pastor, by somebody else down the road, somebody else will do something that hurts you. But the moment you choose to release me, that moment you are released too. And God brings healing.

There are men, probably in Nanaimo today, who probably weep on their knees for their wayward daughters. Maybe the girl came home at 15, told her parents that she was pregnant. And the father, maybe, I'm making all this up, so I'm not looking at any person in particular, I don't know anybody.

Maybe the father is hurt because he's a deacon or an elder in the church, and his daughter is 16, has come home and she's pregnant, and he's angry. And they put her out of the house. She's now on the streets.

And the father weeps every day for his wayward daughter. And he fails to realize that God also weeps for his wayward daughter. And God says, I can do nothing for you, because I gave you the key for the kingdom.

And Father, until you are prepared to release your daughter for the embarrassment and the shame that she brought you, I can do nothing for your daughter. We need to become a people who are so conscious that unto us has been given the word of reconciliation, unto us has been given the ministry of reconciliation. It should be a priority in our life to seek always to keep the account clear before God of those who have sinned against us, so that the wounds caused by those sins do not hinder us becoming the men and women of God we should be.

You may not be able to forgive the person who's wronged you, but you're commanded to love them, and that means you must release them, so that you also will know release. I hope this has been clear to you. It's a message that I say I've spent many, many hours in counseling young people who carry terrible, terrible wounds upon their lives.

I could tell you some glorious stories of people set free. I can tell you glorious stories of young women and young men whose lives have been radically changed the day they came on their knees to release, in most cases, their parents, a father, a mother, who failed to pour love into that child. I've seen it happen.

I know it is a biblical principle. I pray that there may be none in this church carrying wounds that God wants to heal through the shed blood of the cross and gives you the key that opens heaven for him to do that work. Let's pray.

Father, I want to thank you for the work of your Son upon the cross. Thank you for that wonderful work of atonement, whereby we are not only brought from the kingdom of darkness into light, whereby also you grant to us a faith to appropriate the healing work of the cross in our lives to the healing for wounds of the soul, a healing that causes us to know what it is to be set free, to know the liberty of Christ, to know the abundant life that you want us to know. Father, may there be none in this church who are held back because of wounds that they carry from sins committed against them maybe years ago or even recently.

Make us a people quick to exercise the key that you give to us to release those that have wronged us, that we might walk in the liberty of the children of God. So, Father, take these words that I have tried to present clearly this morning and by your Spirit illuminate them in each of our hearts that we might be a people of release, a people of victory, a people of overcoming, that you might have glory in us and through us and in this church. I ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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