

CHAPTER TEN

THE KEY TO RELEASE

Much of the counselling I do is to help people deal with their offences. How many hours would be saved if they knew their own responsibility and acted according to biblical principles! I am of the opinion that one of the major ploys used by the enemy to hinder us in the battle, is the large number of hours spent by pastors (especially in North America), dealing with counselling matters that believers could handle themselves if they were more active in studying the Word. The role of a pastor should be to do away with most counselling needs of his people, by teaching them biblical principles. It's his role, as a shepherd, to lead them to 'green pastures' where the sheep feed themselves. However, we have come to the place where the sheep continue to need to be bottle fed, counselled, every time there is a 'crisis'! Satan has robbed the church of many of its shepherds by overloading them with counselling 'needs'.

The analogy with the natural is that, if we eat and exercise properly, we will stay in good health. However, one recognises that there will come times, whether through an accident or chronic sickness, that one needs the assistance of another. When there are terrible wounds and the patient is handicapped in some way, the empathy, comfort and help of another is to be appreciated. Similarly with spiritual wounds.

There are many Christian books on the market dealing with 'soul wounds'. They speak of 'healing of the memories', of dysfunctional families and co-dependancy. Many of them are very good and have given a lot of help to people seeking a new perspective of life and of themselves. The 'twelve-step' program of Alcoholics Anonymous has become the basis for much of this teaching, with the goal of bringing the

wounded to 'maintenance'. They are now able to deal with their problem in a practical way, with the use of support groups, ongoing counselling and prescribed plans or 'formulae' of action. Each day, they have a prescription to 'walk out' their healing. I have used these books and continue to do so in part. What bothers me about most of them is that little mention is made of the healing, and releasing effect of *forgiveness*. I do not believe that the Lord's intention is to bring His wounded people to 'maintenance' but that He wishes to *restore their souls*, bringing to them, *healing*. The main purpose in my writing this book is to teach how we can be set free from the bondage of our wounds, so that we can be most effective in the warfare against our enemy, Satan. The key of healing is found in forgiveness.

The keys to the Kingdom (Matt 16:19)

For three years the disciples had walked with the Lord through the regions of Judea, Samaria and Galilee. They had watched Him perform many miracles and had heard Him teaching the multitudes, but He had seldom sat down just to talk with them. Now, after a very busy time, He leads them to the far north of the country, to the regions around Caesarea Philippi, on the lower slopes of Mount Hermon. As they walk, the master turns to His disciples and asks them two questions. The leading question is concerning men's opinions of Jesus. The next is to ask the disciples, "Whom do you think that I am?" (Matthew 15: 16). Had they come to understand yet, that Jesus was more than just a good man, a miracle worker? It is Peter who answers. "You are the Christ - the promised One."

"Blessed are you, Simon ... My Father has revealed this to you. I am going to build My church upon this rock and the gates of Hades shall not overcome it.

I give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

For centuries, the Roman Catholic church has taught that this is the mandate given to all popes, as successors of Peter, the head of the church, to excommunicate kings, countries, peoples, who do not support their edicts, or to grant indulgences, pardon, to those who do.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you had the key to the kingdom for your loved ones? For your spouse? For that unsaved son or daughter? For your parents? If only you could open up the way to eternal life for them! Well, I believe we have that possibility! It is certain that many are being kept away from the joys of seeing, and entering the kingdom by our failure to be the witnesses we ought to be. Much of that failure is in our attitudes of unforgiveness. There are many parents today who pray, with weeping, for their wayward child, not realising that the unforgiveness they bear against that child is the greatest hindrance to God answering the prayer!

What did Jesus mean by the latter part of the verse above? I have been given many explanations, from the popes 'authority' to 'deliverance from the demonic', but I see neither here.

It is good exegesis when considering an obscure verse, to look for a parallel verse, particularly from the same author. We do not have far to go for, just two chapters later, Matthew writes it again.

Matthew 18:18

“Whatever you bind on earth is bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth is loosed in heaven.”

This time the Lord is speaking to all the disciples, not just to Peter. If the keys were given to loose and to bind, (a common use of keys!) then they were given *to all the disciples - including you and me!*

A second principle of good exegesis is to study the context, so we will consider what the Lord was teaching in the rest of chapter 18. We soon see that the entire chapter is dealing with not offending one another, restoration, reconciliation and forgiveness. The small scenarios speak of being like children, having no guile, holding no bitterness. Such believers do not offend or wound, and we should be careful not to cause them offence or wounds. If one is wounded or hurt and, as a result, goes away, a good

shepherd will leave the others to restore that 'sheep' to the fold. Note again, that the story is about 'sheep', not 'goats'. It is about believers, not the 'lost'. How often, when a 'problem person' leaves the church, we wipe our hands with a "good riddance!" God's demand of servant shepherds, and the rest of the sheep, is that we seek their restoration, not their disfellowship. If a brother *sins* against you, you are to go to him, privately at first, with the one purpose of seeking understanding and reconciliation. Note the word *sin*. Too often we go when we are offended, creating an even greater offence. We have no such injunction to go when we are offended - only when we are sinned against. The only exception would be, when the church pastor or elders feel it necessary to approach someone who they believe to consistently be a cause of offence, or who has sinned against others. In the latter case, the purpose in going is always for reconciliation. There follow the three important verses, 18 - 20, following which Peter asks the Lord how many times he should forgive. "Up to seven times?" How good he probably thought such a suggestion to be! The Lord emphasises that forgiveness is to be unlimited. Love demands that we always forgive.

The entire context of chapter 18 is to do with not offending, restoration, reconciliation and forgiveness. ... the theme of this book!

John 20:23

Another parallel verse to the two above, though from a different author, is found in John 20:23. The disciples are all in a locked room because they are afraid that the Jewish leaders would soon come to take them, just as they had taken their Lord. Their emotions are running high! Some there claimed that they had seen the Lord, risen from the dead! The story was going around that Jesus had appeared to Peter and Mary Magdalene as well as two others on the Emmaus Road. Others would not believe unless they also saw the risen Lord.

Suddenly, even though the doors were locked, Jesus stood in their midst! He said, "*Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.*" "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*"

The Greek tense of *receive*, is the aorist imperative which always demands an immediate response. At that moment, the disciples received their new life in the Spirit. Later, on the day of Pentecost, they would receive His fullness to empower them for service. Now they are given a new authority. "*If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you keep the sins of any, they are kept.*" Let me paraphrase: "Those you loose (set free) are loosed; those you bind are bound."

"Who can forgive sins but God alone?" asked the Pharisees. In a sense, they were correct because the Lord's mandate to us does not 'forgive' sins to the same measure as His forgiveness. When He forgives it is "*as far as the east is from the west, to the depths of the sea, never to be remembered any more.*" (*Psalms 103: 12*). You and I cannot do that - for our own sins, leave alone anyone else's. The only sins we can 'forgive' are those committed *against ourselves*. Sins that may well have caused the soul-wounds we bear, by which Satan has hindered us.

Removing the sin barrier

Should I sin against you, I also sin against God. Immediately, a barrier comes between me and my Lord. I find it more difficult to pray. The Word loses its interest. Fellowship is not so sweet. My sin has become a cloud above my head!

There are two ways that 'cloud' can be removed. "If I confess my sin, He is faithful and just to forgive me my sin and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness!" (1 John 1: 9). Hallelujah! I have found that promise to be true.

However, I have also discovered that the Lord has this little ‘habit’ of talking to me about the sin. Having forgiven me, He then whispers to my soul, “Now, go to your brother and ask his forgiveness. I not only desire to cleanse you from the sin, but I want to see you reconciled.” His priority is not forgiveness - it is reconciliation! The confession is not complete unless it brings about reconciliation. That is not His responsibility; it is mine! *“He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”* (2 Corinthians 5: 18, 19).

The second way that my ‘cloud’ can be removed, so that heaven is once more opened to me, is if **you** remove it by your forgiveness. The King James version of the Bible uses a special word in its translation of John 20:23. *“Whosoever’s sins you remit ...”* This word ‘remit’ speaks of ‘setting aside’. You can ‘remit’ my sin, committed against you, and so open heaven up to me. As you ‘set aside’ my sin, move the cloud away, the way is open for the Father to speak to me just as when I sought His forgiveness for myself. He again will move upon my heart, in order to bring about our reconciliation!

You may well choose to forgive me yourself, for you know the Scripture demands that, but it is essential if we are to be reconciled, that you also loose me from God’s judgement upon me, by seeking to set aside that sin-cloud above me. I always speak of “forgiveness & release” - not one without the other. A good example would be Stephen the first martyr. He had just been appointed a leader in the early church when the Jewish leaders took him and stoned him to death. Saul of Tarsus stood by, in hearty agreement with their actions, for he had a great hatred for these followers of Jesus. As he died Stephen cried out in a loud voice, **“Lord, do not lay this sin to their charge”!** (Acts 7: 60). He did not ask for himself, for courage or strength, or even to be released, but **he released them** of their guilt. I wonder, - would Saul have ever become the great apostle Paul, if Stephen had not prayed that prayer? He ‘opened heaven’ for

Saul! Hear Jesus also say, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do!”¹ as He died for you and me.

One wonderful result of releasing others is that ***we are also released!*** It’s like having a horse on the end of a rope. We might say that the horse is bound as it runs around us in the paddock. However, should the horse decide to gallop off across the muddy field, we are going to get dragged along through the mud! ...unless we let go of the rope.

That knot you feel in your stomach after someone has sinned against you, is just like that rope. You are emotionally bound to those who hurt you. That pain is part of the wound they caused. Though you have forgiven them, the knot is there whenever you meet them or hear someone talk about them. You, and they, need to be released!

Jesus in the midst

How often Matt 18:18-20 are quoted out of context. These verses are referring to forgiveness, release and reconciliation. The promises of Jesus given there, are for those who actively seek to be reconciled. *“If you agree on this, it shall be done! Where two or three have gathered together in My name (for the purpose of reconciliation) there I am in their midst.”* The emphasis here is not His presence, for He is always with each of us who are believers, but His blessing, for reconciliation is that which pleases Him most - His priority!

We have been given a key that will open heaven for others and that will set us free from the wounds, the bondages they have caused in our soul! Let us learn how to use that key!

¹ Luke 23:34

