

Message #89 of Scripture Beneath The Surface
“Binding And Loosing”

With Randy Smith
(269) 763-2114

Preparation Ministries, Inc

PO BOX 475 OLIVET, MI 49076
preparationministries@gmail.com

(Please feel free to call, write, or send e-mails)

Web Site: <http://www.preparationministries.net>

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about a concept which is quite commonly called, binding and loosing. This is how many of today's Christians refer to the concept, which is found in Matthew, chapters 16 and 18. Binding and loosing, quote, unquote, is easily misunderstood. But, I'd like to try and make it a little more clear if I can. First of all, let's talk about what it means to either bind or loose. To bind something is to tie it to something else. If we're talking about ownership, then to be bound to someone is to be owned by them. If you are the servant of Satan, then you are bound to him. You are in bondage to him, or imprisoned by him. This is what it means to be bound. However, if you are the servant of God, then you are bound to him through the covenant of grace which he has given to you.

So, you see that the concept of binding can be a good thing, or it can be a bad thing. The proper term of binding or loosening can only be properly understood by the context of the situation. Sometimes, especially in some Pentecostal church circles, these terms of binding and loosening are frequently misused. The object therefore to using the terms binding and loosening must be to say specifically what you are trying to express. Let me give you an example here.

If you have someone who is sick, you could describe them as being bound to their bed, or bound by their sickness. What you would want to do in this case is to separate this person from their sickness, or from their sickbed. Now, you could direct your words and actions toward the bed or toward the sickness, in the sense of binding the ability of the bed or the sickness to hold the

person in bondage. However, this is a little bit on shaky ground, theologically. I'm not saying you should or should not attempt to direct your attention to the sickness or to the inanimate object, but my point is that whatever you do and whatever you say, you must keep your focus directed to the task at hand and not start saying something that you really don't mean. As an example, I've heard Christians say something like, "Satan, I loose you from this person." Now, if you happen to be praying for someone who is under attack from Satan, then I think the first thing you would want to realize is that Satan is not in bondage by the person, but actually it is the other way around. It isn't Satan that's in shackles, but the person. If you say that Satan must be loosed from the person, such as in, "Satan, I loose you from this person and cast you into the abyss," then you're trying to do something that may seem right in your eyes, but is actually stated improperly. You can only loose something which is bound, and you can only bind something which is free. You untie someone who is tied up, you don't try to loose the person who is doing the tying.

Now another concept which must be considered when asking God to heal or deliver is the concept of repentance. 1 Corinthians 15:56 tells us that the sting of death is sin. You see, sickness and death are a result of sin, whether you yourself have sinned or you are just a product of being born into sin like everyone else. Sin kills, and Jesus came to deliver us from the destruction of sin. However, deliverance only comes on the condition of both believing in Jesus Christ and repentance from sin. When the scribes and Pharisees rejected Jesus as the Christ, they were sealing their own fate. Their sins could not be forgiven, for they had not repented, and they would not be loosed from their bondage to Satan. Jesus does not forgive all sin, but only forgives those who have a repentant heart. Therefore, the principles of binding and loosening which Jesus applied were dependent on the concept of repentance. To those who repented, there was loosening from the particular bondage that had bound them. And, to those who did not repent, there was no loosening. In these cases, the person was not set free, but remained bound.

To bind and loose is to either 'bind' a person to their 'debt' or to 'loose' them from it. It is the same as to forgive or not to forgive. This is a power which God has entrusted to those who are the sons of God. And, the sons of God include you and me. It is the same power God gave to Jesus. However, this power was only given for the purpose of fulfilling God's will. And, this power is not given without guidance and control, but is only given through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, and in this sense only, you and I do have the power to forgive sins. However, in order to work within the framework of this power to forgive, we must first receive direction from the Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit must move us to the words and actions which coincide with the will of God, and then what takes place will be accomplished. If it isn't the will of God, then we can do nothing. Just as Jesus very plainly said in John 5, verses 19 and 30 that he could do nothing of his own power, neither can we do anything of our own power. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus could do all things, and it was by the Holy Spirit that Jesus knew all things. Also, it was only by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus claimed to do anything. And, it was for this reason that he breathed on his disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." We find this in John 20:21-23. From these verses we see that Jesus had just risen from the grave, and had appeared to his disciples. After breathing on them, thereby indicating

the concept of wind, or the breathing of air, he told them that they should receive the Holy Spirit, then told them that whoever's sins they forgave would be forgiven them, and whoever's sins they retained, those people would have their sins retained.

Now, this is a very interesting concept. At first sight it appears that Jesus is giving mankind the ability to determine another person's fate. In a sense, this is true, but notice that it was only with the receiving of the Holy Spirit that this principle could be applied. Just as Jesus said that he could do nothing of himself, and that the only power he had was through the Holy Spirit, just so was this concept of God's people forgiving the sins of one another. In order for anyone, to forgive sins or retain sins, we must have the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, and we must be directed by that same Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit of God which reveals the mind of God to us, just as it was the Holy Spirit of God that revealed the will of God to Jesus.

It was within this same concept of having the authority to forgive sins or to retain sins that Jesus spoke concerning binding or setting loose. In looking at the concept of binding or loosening as it applies to sin, we know that a man is bound to his sins if he is not forgiven those sins by God. We also know that God forgives our sins when we repent. If we are not forgiven, then we are still in bondage to sin. To be in bondage to sin is to be in danger of hellfire. Eternal damnation comes to those who do not repent and who are not freed from their sins. Of course, we have little trouble in understanding how God forgives sins, or how God retains sins. And, we also recognize the authority of Jesus Christ to forgive sins. However, few Christians realize that they themselves also have authority to forgive sins, or to retain them. Now, hold on a minute. I'm not suggesting that we forgive sins like Catholic priests in confessional booths. What I am suggesting though is that the forgiveness of sins is something that takes place through Christians just as it took place through Christ. Once again, let me attempt to give you an explanation, and maybe an example or two.

First of all, to heal or to forgive sins is the same thing. At least, it brings the same result. Even the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day were knowledgeable enough to recognize this simple principle. Consider the story of the man who was let down through the roof on his sickbed in order to be healed. Jesus, after seeing the faith of the man, said to him, "Man, thy sins be forgiven thee." Now, notice the reaction of the scribes and Pharisees who were present at that time. They were upset because Jesus had just acted as an authority in forgiving a man's sins. They responded by accusing Jesus of blasphemy against God, for they reasoned within themselves that no one but God had the power to forgive sins, and that Jesus was usurping the place of God by saying to the sick man, "thy sins be forgiven thee." Now, on the one hand, the scribes and Pharisees were absolutely correct. No one but God could forgive sins. But on the other hand, there was one specific point that Jesus wanted them to see, and that was that God could also appoint someone else to speak those words of forgiveness. Of course, this meant that the person speaking words of forgiveness were only speaking those words in the name of God, and within the authority structure given by God. It is God that men are indebted to for their sins, and it is only God who can determine who he will or will not forgive. However, here was Jesus saying, "Man, thy sins be forgiven." The first thing we must realize is that in order for Jesus to

have forgiven sins, he would first have to be given that authority by God. The second thing we must realize is that if this authority truly was from God, then we would see some result of these words of forgiveness and not just empty talk.

And, this is where Jesus pinned the scribes and Pharisees down. When the scribes and Pharisees were reasoning, and quite accurately, that only God could forgive sins, Jesus said, “Why do you question this among yourselves?” And then he asked them a very important question. He said, “Which is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven, or, rise up and walk?” Then he turned to the man and said, “Rise up and walk,” and the man did rise up and walk. Now, notice that the scribes and Pharisees had no answer at this time. There was nothing they could say. They had just said among themselves that only God could forgive sins, and then Jesus had demonstrated that he did have the power to forgive sins, for the man had indeed been healed. The scribes and Pharisees recognized the important fact that if the man was healed, then God was no longer holding a curse over the man because of sin. The man's sins were forgiven, for if his sins had not been forgiven, he would not have been healed, and would have remained in bondage. The forgiveness of sins and the healing from sickness, is not something that can be separated.

We see this same principle expressed in James, chapter five. In verse 14, James directs us what to do if anyone is sick. He writes that the sick person should call for the elders of the church who will anoint them with oil and will pray for them. And, it adds that the prayer of faith will bring healing. But, the most important thing I want you to focus on today is that in verse 15 it tells us that if the person is healed, any sins they may have committed will be forgiven them. This is important. Notice that when anyone prays the prayer of faith for healing and the healing is accomplished, that person's sins are automatically forgiven. The scribes and Pharisees recognized this very simple truth, and when Jesus had healed the paralytic man, they had no more argument left. They could then find no fault with Jesus for his statement of forgiving the man's sins, because they recognized that when God heals, the sins are forgiven.

Now, the reason sins are forgiven when healing takes place is that sickness or disease is part of God's curse on the earth because of sin. When sin is removed, there is no reason for a curse. By healing the paralytic man, Jesus perfectly demonstrated that he had indeed been able to free that man from his sins. The scribes and Pharisees were silenced because they had to admit that if the man was healed, then the sin was also forgiven.

We have a further explanation of this same principle in John, chapter five. It speaks of Jesus healing the man at the pool of Bethesda who had spent 38 years trying to get into the waters when the waters were troubled. Jesus healed the man and then said, “Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.” Here was a warning that if the man continued in sin, a worse sickness would follow. This is further Biblical proof that the sin caused the curse of God to come against the man. Clearly, Jesus was warning the man that if he continued to sin, he could also expect more sickness.

It is sin which brings the curse upon the earth, and it is the removing of sin which stops the curse. If the healing takes place, it means that any committed sin are forgiven. And notice this. If you have prayed for the healing of someone, and that healing takes place, then you yourself have been instrumental in eradicating the sin. You have forgiven the sin just as surely as you have healed the person. This means that you have the power, at least in some respect, to forgive sins. However, we must remember that the power to heal comes from God, and that it only comes as it is directed by the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, there would be no healing, for God moves in individuals through his Holy Spirit. This is why Jesus breathed on his disciples and said to them, “receive ye the Holy Spirit.” He wanted us to know that by faith, and through the direction of the Holy Spirit, we could heal, and that this healing would automatically erase the sin which brought the curse of sickness against the person. God promises that we will be cursed if we reside in sin, but he also promises that we will be set free of the curse if we repent. Therefore, if you do repent and God determines to loose you from your debt of sin, then you can indeed be healed from your infirmities, that is, you can be if your faith is consistent with God's purpose. In the final end, we ourselves can forgive sins, and we can heal and deliver, but we can only do this as we are led by the Spirit of God to do it.

Forgiving or retaining sins is an extremely delicate task. Of course, we don't want to judge harshly, for then we would also be judged harshly. On the other hand, we don't want to judge too loosely, for then we would be encouraging people to let their fleshly nature prevail, and this would be against the righteous nature of God. We don't want people to become justified in their sin, but neither do we want them to be condemned beyond reason.

The real key to this puzzle is what Jesus meant when he breathed on his disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. When he said, “whoever's sins you remit, they shall be remitted to them, and whoever's sins you retain, they shall be retained,” he was establishing the principle of a Christian's responsibility for remitting or retaining sin, and also that this is only to be done by the directive of the Holy Spirit. Actually, what really takes place during the process of remitting or retaining sin is that we act as ambassadors of Christ in the same way Jesus did. Because we are part of the body of Christ, then the Holy Spirit of God, indwells us and directs us in the same manner as it did Jesus while he was on this earth. We forgive or retain sins, and we heal and cast out evil spirits, as the Holy Spirit moves us. We have no power in ourselves, but through God's Spirit, we are not only able to do all things, but as Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, we also have the responsibility to act in Christ's stead on the earth by following the leading of God's Holy Spirit.

It is important to know that when sin entered the world the curse of God's eternal damnation followed. However, when sin is remitted, when it is forgiven, then there remains no curse upon man. This, in essence, is why Jesus asked the Pharisees, “Which is easier to say, thy sins be forgiven, or, rise up and walk.” God has called his people to be part of the body of Christ and to accept the responsibility for binding and loosening from the debt of sin and from the curse which followed. Because we are the body of Christ, it is now our responsibility to act in Christ's stead. However, not in our own authority. Our authority on this earth is through the Holy Spirit of God, just as Jesus' authority was through the Holy Spirit. What remains though is for you and me to

allow that Holy Spirit to direct us according to God's will. For if we don't allow the Holy Spirit to guide us, no miracles or healing will be forthcoming. Our power is only from God through his Holy Spirit. If we are to bind men to their debt of sin or set them free, it can only be by the Holy Spirit as we allow him to guide us.

To bind or loose requires the keys that allow you to enter the realm of the kingdom of heaven. If you don't enter into the realm of God's kingdom, you won't be able to operate in that realm either. Entering into that realm is important to having the authority, and the authority is what is meant by having the keys to the kingdom. Because the kingdom of heaven is locked against intruders, only those who have the keys to the kingdom can enter in. It is God himself who gives the keys to us, and it is then, and only then, that we can bind or loose anything. We must keep this perspective foremost among all things, for in earth, there is no will that will be done except the will of God. That is our purpose eternally. Just as Jesus said, "Not my will, but yours be done," we also want nothing more than God's will to be done. To bind or loose on this earth is not our will, but is our responsibility, as we do the work of Christ Jesus through the direction of the Holy Spirit.