

## Message #35 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

### *“Upon This Rock - Part 2”*

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to continue the study from last week with part two of, "Upon This Rock." Last week we read the scripture in Matthew 16:13-19. To start off, let me read these verses again, and then we'll go from there. "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that you are John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. 15 Then he said to them, But who do you say that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you, That you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

In last week's program I talked about how Jesus, as the Word of God, was the Cornerstone of the church, and how the complete structure of the church of God is built up on that rock, not on Peter. In these verses I just read we can see that Jesus Christ included Peter as one of the stones which would make up the foundation of the church. But we can also recognize that if Jesus Christ is called the Cornerstone, then Peter cannot be the cornerstone of the church. If Peter is the rock that the church is built upon, then what good is the Cornerstone? But we know that Peter cannot be the cornerstone, for the Bible clearly shows that Jesus is that Cornerstone. And if Jesus is the Cornerstone then the church cannot be built on Peter. The greatest mistake the

church has made as a whole in its history is look to the authority of an earthly man, rather than to Jesus Christ for the authority in spiritual matters. When man looks to other men for authority in spiritual matters, that automatically circumvents the authority of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Now let's go on to verse 19, where it says, "And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This verse is also greatly misunderstood by many of the church today, for once again they assume that authority is completely dumped into the hands of man, and that by his own determination, he can make decisions that have eternal consequences for the person who is either bound or loosed. When Jesus spoke to Peter and told him that the keys to the kingdom of heaven were given to him, so that whatever he bound would be bound in heaven, and whatever he loosed would be loosed in heaven, most people assume that Jesus Christ was giving man the option of determining who should be held in bondage to Satan, and who should be loosed from that bondage. In one sense, this is correct. We are allowed to bind and loose, but we do not have that ability except within the same scope that Jesus had that ability. I would like to bring your attention to John 20:21-23, which says, "Then Jesus said to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father has sent me, even so I send you. 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit: 23 Whoever's sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whoever's sins you retain, they are retained."

In these three verses we see that Jesus was passing on authority to his followers concerning the ability to forgive sins. Most people in the church today do not believe that a man can forgive another man's sins except for those sins against himself. We certainly realize that we can forgive one another for what they do to us, but most people have a hard time believing that we can forgive the sins of others. We know that in the Catholic Church the priests hear confession and pronounce that the sins are forgiven. I'm not suggesting that this is what Jesus meant. What I am suggesting is that we can forgive the sins of others if we operate within the same principles that Jesus did, and that we do it through the same power that Jesus used. And the power that Jesus used was the power of God which came through the Holy Spirit. In the verses of John 20:21-23 we have an explanation of exactly how the forgiving of sins was to take place. Jesus first said, in verse 21, that he was going to send the apostles in the same way the Father had sent him. Then, the next thing Jesus did was to breathe on them and said, "receive the Holy Spirit." This was the necessary step to completing the requirement for forgiving sin. Without the Holy Spirit there could be no authority to forgive sins. First of all, the power of God comes to mankind through the Holy Spirit. Jesus made it clear in the scriptures that he only worked the works of God by the Holy Spirit. And it is the authority from God that is needed in order to forgive sin. Jesus was not suggesting that he was turning authority over to the apostles to decide just by themselves who would have their sins forgiven and who wouldn't, but was implying when he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit, that when the apostles did receive the Holy Spirit in the upcoming day of Pentecost, then the Holy Spirit would be able to reveal to them the mind of God, and they would be able to pronounce God's will. It was not the will of the apostles that would make the determination of who would be forgiven and who wouldn't be forgiven, but

God's will. The apostles would just be shown God's will by the Holy Spirit, and then they would either loose that person from their bondage of sin, or they would not.

There is much confusion in the church today concerning the scriptures of binding and releasing. Actually, Jesus gave an excellent example for us to follow in Luke 5:18-26, where the man with palsy had been let down through the roof in order to come into the presence of Jesus, and Jesus, because of the faith these men had demonstrated, had compassion on the sick man. But instead of saying, "rise up and walk," Jesus said, "Thy sins be forgiven." Of course, the scribes and Pharisees were incensed that this flesh and blood man had had the audacity to say, "thy sins be forgiven you," when everyone knew quite well that only God could forgive sins. Well, we know the rest of the story, how Jesus proved to the scribes and Pharisees that he did have the authority, the power from God through the Holy Spirit, to forgive sins, by then healing the man. This was proof that he had the authority to forgive sins, for if he did not have the authority to forgive sins, he would not have had the authority to heal. But in a sense, the scribes and Pharisees were right, as least to the extent that only God has the authority to forgive sins. After all, the sins are committed against the righteousness of God, so who else can forgive sins against God, but God himself? But what the Pharisees couldn't understand is that God had given Jesus the power of the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit continually revealed the will of God to Jesus, the Son of God. This they were ignorant of.

And no, God had not given Jesus the right to make independent judgment of who was to be forgiven, any more than he had given him the right to act independently from God in choosing who to heal or not to heal. The proof of this is found in John 14:10, where Jesus tells us plainly that the words he spoke and the works he did were the words and works of the Father, and that he didn't do his own works, but only the Father's works. When we look back at John 20:21-23, again, we see that Jesus was trying to show his disciples that they would be sent, just as he, Jesus, had been sent by the Father. Just as the Father had given the Holy Spirit to Jesus in order to complete the works that the Father wanted done, the disciples were to continue doing the works that Jesus had done on earth after the ascension, and after the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost.

Of course, there are some teachers of scriptures who say that this power and authority was given to the apostles, but was not given to us. But before that statement can be accepted, we should take a look at James 5:14-15. Here we see the order to follow when someone is sick. We are to call for the elders of the church, and the elders are to anoint the person and pray over them. Then, if there is sufficient faith in the prayers, the person will be healed. Well so far, that's pretty well understood. But then look at verse 15. It tells us that if the prayer of faith is present to heal, then in addition to the healing of the person, the person's sins, if there were any, would be forgiven. Notice that any sins would automatically be forgiven when a prayer of faith was offered. In essence, if you can pray the prayer of faith over a sick man, his sins, if he had any, would be forgiven. This is nothing more or nothing less than the prayer of faith causing the forgiveness of sins. But once again, this is not accomplished without faith, and faith is knowing the mind of God. Sure, you can say that it wasn't really you that forgave the sin. But then, even

Jesus made it clear that it wasn't really him that was forgiving the sin either, but was only him operating according to the wishes of God. Jesus was the conduit of God's power, and in this sense he was credited with the ability to forgive sins. But in the same sense, when we speak the words of faith, and someone is healed, we can't take the credit for that either, even though we've been given the authority. It's like a supervisor who gives orders. Yes, he has the authority to give orders, but his orders have to line up with the higher authority, or he won't be a supervisor for long.

It's the same thing for every Christian. No, I'm not suggesting that we should run around saying that someone's sins are forgiven. However, if you do tell someone that their sins are forgiven, you had better be ready, just like Jesus was, to prove you have that authority by healing that person. If someone says, "your sins are forgiven," and they can't heal the person from sickness, nor cast out the evil spirits, then they better stop saying they can forgive sins. We can only forgive sins by faith, and that faith must also be knowledge from God that is great enough to also bring about the deliverance of that person from their bondage.

Now, in returning to our original verse of Matthew 16:19, where Jesus then tells the disciples that they are to be given the authority to bind and release, we see that this power would only be theirs when they received the Holy Spirit, for it was through the Holy Spirit of God that the power would come, for it is only through the Holy Spirit of God that anyone can know the mind of God, therefore knowing the desire of God. When the Catholic priests in a confessional booth pronounce that a man's sins are forgiven, we can rest assured that they are just going through an empty ritual which has no true effect. If there are no signs, no miracles, then there is no power to forgive. Jesus knew this, and even the scribes and Pharisees knew this, for when Jesus told them he would prove to them that he had the power to forgive sins, and then healed the man, the scribes and Pharisees were convinced. If the healing that Jesus then did had not been proof, the scribes and Pharisees would not have been silenced. They would have seen the healing and then said, "So? What's your point, Jesus? We see you can heal, but what's that got to do with forgiveness of sins?" But they didn't do that, and their mouths had been shut, for Jesus had proven to them that he could forgive sins. Even the scribes and Pharisees knew the connection between sin and sickness.

We also, then, have the power to bind or release. No, not to just speak a bunch of empty words, but to actually bind and loose. However, we can't just talk the talk, but we must also be able to walk the walk. Jesus proved that he could not only talk the talk, but he could also walk the walk. There are a lot of church people in leadership positions who claim to have the authority of God for various things. But authority to bind or release must not be just claiming to bind or loose, but actually doing it. Jesus didn't say, "whatever you say you bind, shall be bound," but he said, "whatever you do bind." As the old saying goes, "the proof is in the pudding." You can say anything you want to, but in the end you either have to produce, or shut up. When someone is sick, they are bound by the sickness. It is a bondage, such as the example in Luke 13:10-16. In this Bible story, a woman was said to be bound by a spirit of infirmity, and was bent double and could not straighten up. Jesus spoke to her and said, "Woman, you are loosed from your

infirmity.” And the woman was released from it, and could then stand up straight. Of course, the scribes and Pharisees tried to put in their two cents, and complained that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and that this should not have been done. Jesus replied that this was a good thing, and that good should be done on the Sabbath day. But what he said shows us even more clearly what binding and releasing is all about. He gave an example of how an ox is bound in his stall, but that on the Sabbath the ox is loosed from its stall so that it can be taken to drink water.

Whether the ox is tied to the stall, or held in the stall by a gate, makes no difference. Either way, the ox is bound to the stall. It was the same for the woman. Whether the woman was kept in a doubled up position by evil spirits, or by ropes which bound her, she was still in a position of bondage. She needed to be set free from that which bound her.

Binding and releasing is something that you do in the power of God. As you are empowered by the Holy Spirit, you will either determine to leave the person in their place of bondage, or you will determine by the Holy Spirit that the person should be freed from the bonds that hold them. And once again, I must stress the importance of not just saying the words, but actually being able to free them from their unfortunate situation. No man on earth has the power of themselves to release men from the responsibility of their sins in the sight of God. They may have power, but as it says in Romans 13:1, “There is no power but of God.” Also, we know that God is omnipotent, meaning all powerful, and that he is the Almighty God, and therefore there is no power on earth that is not given by God himself. When God gives power and authority to anyone, he gives them the power through his Holy Spirit. Therefore, if the person tries to act with God's authority outside of the influence of the Holy Spirit, he cannot do it. The power of God only comes through the Holy Spirit, and if you try to use any other means than the Holy Spirit, then it is not God's authority in which you operate.

In summary, we must understand that to bind is to prevent the person from gaining freedom in some way or other. To loose them is to set them free from whatever is holding them from gaining freedom. When we do this, we must do it by the power of God, for it is only God who can give you this authority. If you try to operate in your own knowledge, without the direction from the Holy Spirit, you have separated your actions from God, and he is not with you. You can have no power of your own, but only that power that comes from God, and his power only can be in you as the Holy Spirit is in you and moves you. Therefore, you will either do the will of God in binding or releasing, or you will not bind or loose, no matter what you try to claim by the words of your mouth.

One last thing I would like to mention is the concept of binding or releasing evil spirits. Many people believe they can bind or loose spirits, but this is a confusing issue. Notice that Jesus cast out evil spirits by the power of God through the Holy Spirit. When the woman, who was bent double, was delivered, he loosed her from her bondage, but he cast out the evil spirit to do it. Some people speak words to the effect of “binding” the evil spirits, in the sense that they are telling the evil spirits that they cannot do whatever they have been doing. Although they use the term, “bind,” they actually mean that the evil spirit must cease its action in that particular

situation. I'm not suggesting that someone cannot say, "I bind you, in Jesus name," but rather that this is not actually an accurate statement. It would be better to be more clear as to your intentions, such as by saying, "In Jesus name, you must leave this person alone." This would effectively bring the desired results without inferring that the evil spirit is actually bound up.

You might say, "Randy, aren't you just splitting hairs? Does it make any difference what you say as long as you know what you mean?" My answer to that is that it certainly does make a difference whether you speak explicitly, or obscurely. No, not so much for yourself, for you know what is meant, and the evil spirit will know what you mean, but others who hear you will be confused. And one part of the actions of doing the works of God is the instruction of others in the principles of God. When someone else hears you speak, it is important that they understand what you really are doing, and also understand the underlying principle, for if they don't, they will not be able to understand the word of God. And, if they cannot understand the word of God, how can they have faith that the word of God will bring the desired results in any given situation? In addition to this, just try telling evil spirits to be bound. First of all, if you're just mouthing words and have no real power from God, nothing will happen. There are multitudes of Christians who operate in this manner and then just claim that the evil spirit is gone. But if the evil spirit is gone, there will be a distinctive change when it happens. Besides, when you're confused yourself as to what you're doing, the evil spirit can actually reply with a refusal to obey your words, and then try to twist the words around causing you to have to make it very plain what that spirit must do. If you don't know exactly what you are really able to do and not to do, how can you enforce your commands with explicit truth? Remember, it's not empty words which cause miracles, but it is by faith in the truth, the word of God, that carries the force necessary to complete a spiritual work. If you don't understand the truth, how will you ever stand in the face of Satan who knows how to lie so very well?

The bottom line? You can't do anything without the power of God, and you can't have the power of God without being directed by the Holy Spirit. Don't be one of the many Christians who spout words, but really have no power. It is a very poor witness to non-believers when Christians claim to be doing something miraculous, but nothing is really happening. Faith is what you know in your heart. Unless you speak God's word knowingly, you are only going to be speaking words without the necessary faith to accompany them. And without faith it is impossible to please God.