DEEPER HEALING



Diagnosing the deeper issues of the heart…

a series by David Legge

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Deeper Healing - Chapter 1
"'Who Am I?' - Finding True Identity"

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If you were with us this time last year, I did three nights on 'Barriers To Blessing'. We looked at hindrances as to why people don't move on in God, and why they don't mature as they would like, and experience and encounter God as others do and as the Bible teaches us we ought. We looked at 'Sins', 'Wounds', and 'Demons', and we looked at those quite comprehensively each night. Those recordings are available, I think, if you wanted them again we could get those for you all right, although they're not out in the hall. But we've been praying and seeking God as to what to concentrate on this season, and we really came to the conclusion - very much led by the Spirit, we believe - that the Lord wants us to go deeper. I suppose if you were wanting to think of a title, we're 'diagnosing deeper issues of the heart', and we're going to go from one subject to another - but there is a theme, deep areas of the human heart, the soul, or the spirit that need the healing touch of the Lord Jesus. Tonight we're looking at the subject of identity, we're going to look at it very comprehensively and in quite a reasonable depth, although we can't cover everything - it's a huge, vast subject, but we want to do it justice tonight. So I hope you will give me the time to do that, and I believe God is really going to touch people's lives and bring deep healing to many folk in the gathering.

So let's turn in our Bibles to the book of Judges and chapter 6, and when you get there, we will then just take a moment's prayer. Judges chapter 6 - now, if you're familiar with Judges you'll know that, guess what, it's about the judges. It's about these deliverers who God raised up, and there is a cycle in the book - I don't have time to go into it - but there is a cycle whereby God's people start to depart from Him, and then the Lord allows them to be overwhelmed and overcome by an enemy. Then, when they finally wise up and realise that it's their own sins that have brought this judgement against them, they repent and God then raises up a 'judge', or a 'saviour' is a basic way of looking at each judge. We are interjecting in the story of Gideon, who is a mighty judge and saviour of God's people. We're not going to look at the whole story tonight, but there is something I really want us to look at, and that is: how Gideon saw himself, and how God saw him. Alright?

But let's pray just now before we read, and I want you to pray for yourself - OK? I want you to ask the Lord that He might speak to you, would you do that? Would you just say: 'Lord, please come and speak to me, please come and minister to me. Open my eyes, open my ears and minister to my heart'. So let's pray to that end, and you pray for yourself right now: Father, we want to thank You for Your praises tonight, and that You inhabit the praises of Your people. Lord, we believe Your presence is with us, and that You are manifestly felt by some in the gathering. We pray that all of us would be aware of Your very near presence and, Lord, that it would be personal to us and intimate in such a way that we would know that You're touching our hearts, that You're doing divine surgery, that You're reaching into the deep place that we don't even know exists,

perhaps. We thank You that the Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God, and also searches our hearts. So we invite the Holy Spirit, Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to come, to search us, and to minister to us deeply. For the glory of Christ we pray, Amen.

Verse 11 then, we're going to read down to verse 16 - that's Judges 6 verse 11: "Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, 'The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valour!'. Gideon said to Him, 'O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?'. But now the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites'. Then the LORD turned to him and said, 'Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?'. So he said to Him, 'O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house'. And the LORD said to him, 'Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man'".

Now I hope you see it. It's self-explanatory, isn't it? Here is this man, and for fear - you understand that, and if you know the whole story of Gideon you will know that fear was his primary problem, and if you know my story you'll know that's been the case with me as well. Here he is in fear of the Midianites, and he's threshing out wheat behind the winepress, scared, hiding. The Angel of the Lord comes and appears to him, and says: 'You mighty man of valour!'. What would you think? You'd be saying: 'You're having a laugh! Is this the Lord at all? Do you know who You're talking to? I'm Gideon, scaredy-custard, hiding from the enemy'. But God comes to him, and though he pleads that he is the weakest, that his tribe is weak and he's the weakest in his father's house, the Lord is not seeing Gideon the way he sees himself - and maybe not even the way others see Gideon - but the Lord is seeing Gideon through His own eyes, through His own destiny, through His own purposes and His sovereign will and plan.

That's what I want you to understand tonight, because that effectively is the foundation of identity that we find within the Bible. I don't know how you see yourself tonight, but I believe that if you're open to God, that by the power of the Holy Spirit He is going to come and - as He is the Potter - He's going to take your life and your heart and remould it according to His will. I don't know if you're familiar with this sculpture, it's Michelangelo's sculpture of David - some of you may have even seen it, or some replicas of it. This is really understood as one of the greatest works of art that exists. The statue was first commissioned as far back as 1466, and a lot of people don't realise that Michelangelo was not the first artist to work on this statue. There was a marble block that was very highly prized, and there was little progress that was made on it even after the statue had been commissioned. All that had been done was a few markings of legs and feet, but they had never chiselled away at it. The project, after 10 years having been commissioned, was effectively resurrected by another artist - and no real progress was made by him either. So the contract of this statue of David from the Bible was terminated. The marble block lay neglected for 25 years in the courtyard of the cathedral in Florence. It was around the year 1500, Michelangelo was now 26 years of age, and he was getting a reputation as a master of his craft. He was then contracted to sculpt David out of this piece of marble that now, over the years, had become very weathered by exposure to the elements. In fact, it is said that he was not impressed

with the material that he was given, not happy at all, but it was too expensive - this large piece of marble - to dispose of, so he took on the job. I have often heard it said, and maybe you have as well, that when Michelangelo looked at that piece of marble, that block, he didn't see mere misshapen weathered stone - but he actually looked with vision, and he saw the completed statue of David that your eyes looking at on the screen. It was two years later that what he saw in his heart - and no one else saw, for that matter - actually was created: 17 feet of a statue of marble David, which is still the marvel of the world today.

Now, as I was researching the story, I discovered that around 1967 a man by the name of Charles Seymour actually wrote a book - it's said to be a groundbreaking book - on the work of David by Michelangelo. Do you know what the title of the book is? 'Michelangelo's David: The Search for Identity' - isn't that interesting? Maybe you're here tonight, and you think God ought not to be happy with the material that is before Him. Maybe you feel misshapen, weather-beaten by the elements of life - but here's the truth of what God's revelation in the Bible says: you are too expensive to dispose of. God values you! We're not overlooking your sin, we're not ignoring our own fallenness in the holy eyes of the God of heaven, but the fact of the matter is: God values you, even if you don't value yourself! What you may not see in your own personhood, or for that matter what others may not recognise in you, God sees.

I know that all of you, if you're honest, have been on the search for identity. If you could imagine your life as a block of marble, what do you see? What do you see when you look at yourself or consider your own life? Do you see potential or do you see a hopeless project? I think I'm right in saying - it has always been the case, but particularly in our modern era - there is an identity crisis. People are asking: 'Who am I? Why am I here? What is the purpose of my existence?'. Many young people in particular are growing up not knowing who they are, or who they are meant to be. You can Google it if you like, and you'll be even more confused by the end of it - all the answers that illustrate the confusion. This modern generation doesn't understand who they are or who they are meant to be. There are so many conflicting voices telling us who we should be and who we should be like. Take the media for instance, whether it's the advertisements or pop culture, or even religion: we're being told how we ought to conform, how we ought to measure up. That's the reason why there is such a great identity confusion.

So let me ask you again: who do you think you are? Some of you remember, I don't know if it's still going, on BBC1 the programme by that title, 'Who Do You Think You Are?'. It was mainly celebrities who traced their lineage to find out who their ancestors were, and there was often quite a surprise - whether it was horse thieves, or aristocracy, or something like that. But it was interesting that even celebrities, entertainment stars, were searching for understanding and meaning for their present-day existence by looking into the past, to give them more of a sense of meaning to their life. How do you see yourself? I think it's true to say that most of us, if not all of us, have an internal picture of ourselves that dominates every aspect of our lives. Whether it's our personalities, our capabilities, our aspirations and dreams - our self-image, if you like, it affects how we perceive ourselves and therefore how we perceive others see us, and how we begin to relate to others and effectively how they will relate to us. More than that, not only does our self-image affect our own well-being and how other people relate to us, but it affects how we view God - it shapes our understanding of the Almighty, and in fact how He sees us and what we think He feels about us.

So this is a huge subject, so significant - whether you're a Christian or not. You see, your self-image can actually become a stronghold in your mind, a spiritual stronghold that incarcerates your mind and blinds you from the truth and robs you of everything that God intends for your life. Let me ask you this question: not only how do you see yourself, but where do you think your true identity lies? Where? Does it lie with yourself? Does it lie with your own self-image, your perception of who you are? Does it lie with your family, or your friends, your peers? Does your true identity lie with public opinion, what society says or thinks? Does it lie with popular culture, what is in vogue in our modern day? Now we are Christians who believe the Bible, and if you're a Christian you've got to confess - there has been confession, we have alluded to the Apostle's Creed tonight - but we've got to confess that we believe God Almighty is the only One who made us, who formed us, who sculpted us, and He created us in His image, and He has ordained our destiny. He is the only one who has the right to tell us what our identity is - do you believe that?

I want you to see tonight the source of our identity confusion, and indeed the whole confusion that there is in our world. If you were to turn to Genesis chapter 1, you can if you wish, Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26, or you can listen. At the very beginning of the creation story, before man fell into sin, it says: 'God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over all the earth''. Now right away there, God is creating mankind, male and female, in His image; and He creates them in His own identity. Now that means a whole lot of things that I don't have time to go into tonight, but one thing we do know is: God breathed into the clay that He made from the ground, into the body, the physical form of Adam, He breathed into Him His 'ruach', His breath, and Adam became a living soul. So there is a spiritual entity in all of us that connects us to God, it's called a human spirit. It's that part of us that can engage with spiritual reality. So that's how we're different from the beasts of the field, the whole animal kingdom. It means that we as human beings can have a relationship with Almighty God.

But more than being made in God's image, we read in that one verse that we were given dominion over all the earth - that means we've got significance. We have, as humankind, an authority that is God-given, and a responsibility to look after ourselves, look after one another, look after all the animals and all of nature - that's what God has seen in us, the potential that we have. Now, of course, if you know the Genesis story, you will know that there is a serpent that enters the Garden, that is Satan. He effectively is the first identity thief. He tempts Adam and Eve. God said: 'Of all the trees of the Garden you may freely eat, but of the one tree in the Garden you may not eat, for in the day you eat of it you will die' - and it was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This is always the way Satan works, he comes along and he tempts us with knowledge. He says: 'God is not telling you everything. There is hidden knowledge that you need to know'. He tempts us with significance, a significance that he lies to us about, saying that we don't already have it and we need to get it, and God is withholding it from us. He effectively tempts us with knowledge and significance apart from God - that's what the temptation originally was, and still is today.

So Adam and Eve sinned, and sin brought this confusion, this identity confusion, an identity crisis into society. So all the questions that are being asked by you and the rest of humankind today: 'Who am I? What am I worth? What is my purpose? What is my destiny?' - the source of this identity crisis is in our alienation from God, who gave us

our identity in the first place. Satan's objective has always been, and will always be, to distort and to destroy the image of God in us. So very simply: your healing, whatever your issue might be, whatever your hurt in your heart, your healing will come when you realise you were created by divine worth in God's image. Sin, of course, has damaged us, but through Jesus - this is the Gospel message - through the death of Christ upon the cross, through His shed blood and the power of His resurrection, we can be redeemed! We can be restored, and reformed, and regenerated! Some of you here tonight - whatever stage you are on on your spiritual journey, let's put it that way - some of you need to hear this message, and it is that God has not lost sight of who He created you to be. Whatever has happened to you, whatever you've been through, whatever you've become; God has not lost sight of His vision, His dream, His blueprint for your life!

I hope that encourages you. I love Psalm 139, and I want you to listen to a couple of verses from it and apply it to yourself tonight. We are created in God's image: 'For You created', the psalmist says, 'my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are Your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand - when I awake, I am still with You'. Isn't that beautiful?

You are not a mistake. Did you hear that? You are not an accident, you're not a freak nor a misfit - but God made you on purpose. You are His thought, you are His dream. Now, I wonder how many of us can actually read a Psalm like Psalm 139 and these verses, or look at our own conception and life hitherto, and stand back and say: 'Lord, what a good job You did'. I mean, honestly, could you say that? That's effectively what David is saying: 'You made a good job when You made me, Lord'. You think: 'Well, that's very proud or self-assured' - far from it! You see, this is one of the mistakes - particularly that we make, I think, as Irish folk; and I can't speak for the other nationalities here - but we are so down on ourselves at times, and we so often mistaken self-loathing and self-hatred for humility, and it's nothing of the sort! We're not saying that we are great in and of ourselves, but we're looking at God the Creator and saying: 'What a great thing He did when He made me, and He made only one me! There is no one like me!'. If you think it's boasting, you've misunderstood it.

You see, the problem that we have is: we see so many negative things on ourselves, we see things that we can't change about ourselves that we don't like, and so many of us begin to identify ourselves with our failures and our struggles. Do you understand? We integrate our brokenness into our identity, and we can even get to the stage where we explain away these particular negative traits in our personality by saying: 'O, God just made me this way'. How many of us say that? This is what happens - and I know this might be a bit deep and complicated, but you've got to understand this - we begin to integrate our behaviours into our identity, and we say: 'Because I'm doing that, because I'm failing here, this is who I am'.

Do you know what gender identity disorder is? It is when someone effectively rejects the sex that they are, and favours being the opposite sex. I heard of a case recently of a young person with so-called 'gender identity disorder', and the explanation that the

senior gave - I'll not go into the details for obvious reasons - the explanation that the senior gave for this particular condition was: 'O, God just made a wee mistake'. God doesn't make mistakes. We have to deal with all these issues today very sensitively, but we've got to understand that humankind has got an enemy, and Satan wants to create you in his image. He will do that with lies, and if those lies are believed there will be pride, there will be selfishness, resentment, bitterness will grow; there will become rebellion against God and His laws and, effectively, unbelief. The enemy uses this world-system to proliferate his propaganda, to completely confuse us and send us in a spin of crises concerning who we really are and why we are here.

Another example of this is folk who struggle with same-sex attraction. Now, I'm not dealing with this subject tonight, and there are several reasons why people may struggle with same-sex attraction - it's a huge subject, one that needs to be dealt with with great care and compassion. But the world's answer for this is: 'If you, no matter what age you are, have a sense of attraction toward the same sex - you are gay'. Period. That's what's going on. They don't address the truth of how God has created gender to be. It says He created mankind, male and female, in His image - and there wasn't any other alternative other than male and female. But rather than addressing from the creative truth of how we are made in God's image, and starting from there, we start from the confusion and the lies of the enemy. Take a six-year-old boy, and he likes dolls and he likes wearing dresses - rather than affirming his true sexual identity and gender, and teaching him the difference between male and female, the 'experts' are telling this child: 'You be a girl if you want to'. What's going on - and we've got to understand this - is that the world is trying to push us into its mould. It's not just with the issue (though it is a huge one today) of sexuality, but it's in so many other areas - with advertising, as I've said. 'You won't be fulfilled unless you drive this car, unless you eat this ice cream or drink this particular type of cola. You won't be admired unless you wear these jeans or have these designer glasses. Unless you have this or look like this you won't be accepted'.

We have our own particular flavour of this in Ireland, and it's called nationalism. Whether it's unionism or republicanism, it is the concept that we take our identity from our cultures or our political persuasion - and that is another lie. You can have your culture, and you can have your political persuasion - I'm not going to try and take that away from you, I might have my own! But it's not my identity! It's not really who I am. You see, the enemy is engaged in identity theft. He wants to rob us of our true identity, and give us a substitute identity. The voice you listen to, whatever that is that tells you - supposedly - who you are, and how you to view yourself; if you conform to that voice, that is the force that will mould you.

Now, that applies to everybody on the planet, everything I've just said - but most Christians, believe it or not, continue to live their life out of a broken picture of how they see themselves long after their identity has been changed in Jesus Christ. They still live and breathe and exist out of a broken self-image. So I want to ask you tonight, whether you're a Christian or not: what is the mask that you wear? What is the image and the identity that you put on in the morning, that you show to others? Is it the true identity, your true self? Maybe you've got a different face that you put on for different circumstances, depending on the people that you meet in any given day? What if we were to do an exercise tonight, and I was to hand out paper - blank paper - and we were to make masks, and I asked you to make a mask: on the outside of the mask you portray the face that you show to everybody else, but on the inside of the mask you

design what you think about yourself, what you see? For many of us it will be very different - how do you see yourself? Why do you see yourself that way?

Dan Sneed, who has written a marvellous book on 'The Transforming Power of a New Identity' (I highly recommend it), he says there are some contributing factors in all of our lives as to how we view ourselves. I'm going to give you them here. First of all, there is our parental relationship, our parents, Mum and Dad, if we had them or didn't have them, or whatever guardians brought us up. We have touched on this in previous times, but probably our parents - whether they were there are not - have been the greatest influence on our formation as children. What we've got to realise is that a child often discovers what kind of person they are, and how they feel about themselves, from their parents and how their parents react to them. Now, sometimes we can blame everything on our parents, and I think we have to be very careful here. We have to honour our father and mother, as Scripture says, and we can't blame everything on mums and dads. It is true to say that often how we perceive a thing is not actually the truth of the matter, though it is our reality and it needs to be dealt with, we can't always say that it is fact that mums and dads have done what we have perceived them to have done. Nevertheless, whether it's just perception or actual reality, often forgiveness is needed for our mums and dads, and our guardians and the people who have brought us up - because often they have affected us through their behaviours, reactions to us, the things that they have said about us and over us. They have moulded us into a certain image, and that's how we can view ourselves.

Another way that influences our self-image are the experiences of our lives, particularly the repeated experiences, repeated patterns - if you like - of particular circumstances that come into all our lives. Let me give you an example: from childhood we may have experienced rejection. I have said it here before, that the devil, rather than hitting ten nails once, will rather hit one nail ten times. If he can see rejection, or abuse, or some other aspect of brokenness in your life, he will perpetuate that type of behaviour through circumstances to bring continually rejection, control, or humiliation - or whatever else it might be - along your path; so that you will be influenced by it to such an extent that you will view yourself and understand yourself through those lenses of life's experiences that are repeated.

Another influence is unattainable standards - any perfectionists here tonight? Well, all of us, probably, have had unattainable standards to some degree or another - but particularly perfectionists. Those of us who have been brought up, and have had the privilege of being raised in a Christian home, this can be a particular problem for us - we can become introspective, and we're always self-analysing, and trying to achieve a very high standard that, frankly, can't be found. Now what that breeds in any of us who engage in unattainable standards is inferiority, because none of us is perfect. None of us can reach the 100% - maybe you can in an exam, but not where this is concerned. Perfection doesn't exist in humanity! So we get inferior, and feel inferiority, and that then in turn will bring along behind it, inevitably, in a train, it will bring a carriage of shame. So what you've got is an unattainable standard, perfectionism, then you've got inferiority because you're failing, and then shame comes through that failure. Dan Sneed puts it like this, listen carefully: 'Shame is the result of a deep sense of inferiority. It tells me that there is something deeply wrong with me' - anybody feel like that? - 'something deeply wrong with me that cannot be fixed. Shame declares, 'I cannot change, I am hopeless''. Then he goes on to say that what happens then is: constant and repeated failures seem to confirm this conclusion of ourselves, that I'm a

failure and I cannot be fixed. If you start believing that, that's the way you will be. Proverbs 23 verse 7 says: 'As a man', or a woman for that matter, 'thinks in his heart, so is he'. So if you have this standard of ethics, this high bar that you're never going to reach, nobody can reach - maybe it was given to you, maybe it was inherited by parents or from a religious persuasion, or maybe it's your own set of Ten Commandments that you've etched out of stone for yourself - and you're constantly failing; you will have inferiority, you will have shame, and then the cycle of constant repeated failure will cause you to go deeper down until you despair and think: 'There is no hope for me!'.

A fourth way that we are influenced in our self-image is unwise comparisons. Do you ever do that? Do you ever compare yourself with anyone else? We always do! It's not often good, I'm sure. Paul never did that, or at least if he did he caught himself on. In 2 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 12, the NIV put it like this: 'We dare not classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise'. There you go! Paul says it is utter foolishness to compare yourself with another - but how many of us do that, even as Christians? We look at another person in the church, or maybe it's a Christian leader or some hero that we have from Christian biography, and we say to ourselves: 'Wow! I want to be like them!'. Now that's not necessarily a bad thing, Paul said: 'Follow me as I follow Christ'. But what he's saying is that it's utter foolishness to try to mimic another, and try to be like another at the expense of actually allowing Jesus to live His life through you - that's what the Christian life is really all about.

I believe in the spiritual gifts, I believe that we need to be encouraged on to spiritual maturity, I believe that all of these gifts are given to the body of Christ in our modern day and age. But even in circles - or maybe we might say particularly in circles - where there is a belief in those gifts, there can be a great inferiority among people who don't have them, or haven't got there yet. They can be made to be very small, uninitiated, out of the circle. Now that is wrong, and we need to desire earnestly the best gifts, but we ought to never belittle anyone, or never make someone feel that they are out of the club because they don't have the particular abilities that you might have, or I. I wonder is that the way you feel tonight? Well, I want to release you from any of those burdens, because - listen, and you need to hear this from God, this is marvellous. I didn't hear any 'Amens' when I said when God made me He only made one me - you should either be happy for me, or glad for yourself that there is only one of me, it warrants an 'Amen'! But He broke the mould when He made me and when He made you, and listen carefully: the best you you can be is when you are you. Listen: the best you God can make of you is when you are you with the Holy Spirit in and upon you. You will never do great exploits for God if you're trying to mimic another or be like another, even with the Holy Spirit on you - you cannot be like another. Isn't that tremendously freeing and liberating? Isn't it? You know, it allows you to look at other people's gifts and abilities and actually appreciate them, rather than covet them. Do you do that? Do I?

Kurt Cobain - anybody know who Kurt Cobain was? He was the lead singer of 'Nirvana', and we believe he killed himself - shot himself with a revolver. Yet he made this very profound statement: 'Pretending to be someone you're not is a waste of the person you are'. That's amazing, and I just wonder was he searching for who he really was in his life - he certainly hadn't found satisfaction or peace when he took his own life. I think that's amazing, pretending to be someone you're not is a waste of the person you are. God made you you - eh? He knit you together as you are. A lot of folk probably in our

gathering tonight, if you're normal, you will be eaten up with self-hatred - that's normal in a fallen humanity, because we are believing the lies of the enemy about how we ought to see ourselves, rather than what God says about us in His intended creation and in His redemption of us through Jesus on the cross! We're not seeing ourselves the way God says we are! Will you stop trying to be somebody else? Would you make that a resolution tonight at the beginning of our season - I know it's not a New Year, but it might as well be for us - make it a resolution, a 'Stables' resolution: 'I'm not going to try to be like anybody else any more. I will follow people's example, yes, I will be edified by how they follow Christ and live godly lives, but I'm stopping right now pretending to be someone else, I'm going to be who God made me with the Holy Spirit in me'.

Another fifth influence which is a huge one on how we have formed our self-image is self-talk. There are so many bubbles there on the screen of the things that we might call ourselves - negative self-talk: that you're worthless, or ugly, or stupid, or a failure, or you're slow, or a loser, or useless, or pathetic. If we're honest, a lot of us constantly, on a daily basis, are reciting these things. They might be things that were said over us by another, but we have agreed with them and started to say them over ourselves. It is definitely the case that the enemy is saying these things over our lives, and when we say them we enter into agreement with him, and we give him an authority to oppress our minds.

Now I've been using the terms tonight 'self-image' and 'identity' interchangeably. That's a wee bit naughty. It's usually how we see things - your identity is your self-image - but does anybody know the difference between self-image and identity, true identity? Silence. You don't want to feel stupid or a failure, do you! Here it is, OK: self-image is the perception, the way you see yourself, got it? Identity is the way you truly are, if it's true identity it's the way you truly are. Now to give you an example, excuse me ladies, here on the right - this isn't anybody here by the way, this is a computer graphic, it's not a real person - here on the right you've got, what have you got? This is a mirror, by the way: on the right you've got identity, this is who the guy really is; but in the mirror you've got his self-image, the way he sees himself - OK? So one is reality and fact, and the other is perception. Normally it's reversed in the sense that we tend to see ourselves more negatively, but listen: what is more important than how you see yourself - this is vital - is what you think about God, OK? That's much more important than how you see yourself, because what you think about God will determine what you think about how you He thinks about you. Do you understand? The view that you have of the Almighty - and I want to ask you tonight: is there a difference between your perception of how God is with you - and maybe the way you think God is with you is the way that other people have been with you, the way that your friends, your peers, your family have been with you, the way that you've been with yourself, how harsh you are on yourself; and you think that's the way God is. That could be perception, but it's not reality - and therefore, because it's not reality, it's not your true identity.

What is the truth? Well, the truth is, if you're a Christian, you have a reborn identity, you have a new identity - that's a pun on a film just in case you missed it, but there you are. You are a new creation. Now listen, if you're not a Christian here tonight, you need to become one right now, right now - this is the reason why you were born! There is a God-shaped void in your heart. You will never be satisfied, you will never be fulfilled unless you have God in your life through Jesus Christ, His Son. So tonight is the night, you confess your failures, your witnesses, your sins, how you've broken God's laws - and you are damaged piece of marble, we all are, but you've got value; so much value

that the Gospel teaches us that the precious blood of Jesus was shed in order to redeem you and buy you back from the slavery of sin. So if you want to know how much you mean to God, you mean every drop of the blood of His Son! That's how much He loves you, how much He was willing to pay to purchase your salvation! So why would you not come, why would you not enter this adventure of new life in Jesus Christ? You see, this is the message of the good news of Jesus: that you are now a new creation when you trust Jesus Christ. Yet so many Christians are not living out of their reborn identity, they are living out of this broken picture of how they have always seen themselves. Yes they know, maybe, they've trusted Christ as their own and personal Saviour, but they're not living in the reality of 2 Corinthians 5:17, which says: 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new'.

The NIV puts it: 'The new creation has come; the old one has gone, the new is here'. Now that has often been used over the years to infer that once to become a Christian everything changes - haha! If only it did! That does not happen. Some things do change, some things - even if they are small - ought to change to a degree, but not everything changes. That's not what this means, this is talking about your identity - not the actual behaviour in your life. This is vital, because it's understanding your identity that will effectively change your behaviour. Do you remember me saying to you - I don't know when, I've said that many times, it's wonderful - Neil Anderson says: 'How you behave does not determine who you are, who you are determines how you behave'. Right? Think about it. How you behave, the things that you do and say, do not determine who you are. So if you fall, if you sin, if you fail, that does not make you a wicked sinner, a fallen creature, and a failure. If you are in Christ, you need to see yourself in Christ - who you are will determine how you behave. That's why, in the book of Ephesians, Paul takes three chapters to explain who you are, and then he starts saying in chapter 4: 'Now, walk worthy of the calling wherewith you are called. Do not grieve the Spirit, and stand against the wiles of the devil'. The behaviour comes out of the identity.

I want to ask you tonight: do you view yourself as a new creation in Jesus Christ? Is that the vantage point, your new identity? God sees you in Christ, and when He looks at His Son He says: 'You are My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased'. Paul said in Galatians 2:20: 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me'. The old Paul, the old David has died, the old you - if you're a child of God, and you've come to the foot of the cross, repented of your sins, believed the Gospel, the old you has died; so stop breathing new life into it! Stop doing CPR on your old person and reviving it, and reckon it to be dead. Reckon you to be a new creature, alive through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the gift of eternal life - do you believe that? It will affect the way you behave if you do. Colossians 3: 'If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God'. So if you've got a mental stronghold formed by lies, telling you things about yourself image that are coming either from your upbringing, or your peers, or life circumstances, or just the voice of the devil, you will not be living out of your new created image - but you've got to listen to what God says.

Your new creation, that's your reborn identity. The second thing - and I could say a

whole load of things, we don't have time - but you're a child of God now. If you're a true Christian, you're a child of God. John 1 and verse 12 says: 'To as many as received Jesus Christ, to them He gave the authority to become the children of God, even to as many as believed in His name'. Now that's just wonderful! All you have to do is repent and believe, and God gives you the authority to call God your 'Abba Father', and you His child, His son or daughter - that's just incredible! You've come right into God's family. You're not coming by works or merits of your own, or self-achievements or performance, you're coming because you've believed what He said, and you've confessed your sins, and you're just coming to Him in faith - you're a child of God! Is that the way you see yourself? Do you have an intimate relationship with God as your 'Abba Father'?

Thirdly, your reborn identity, your sins are forgiven and you have received eternal life. We take that for granted in evangelical circles, but that is just incredible! Listen to John 5:24: 'Most assuredly', Jesus said, 'he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has', present personal possession, 'everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment' - shall not come into judgement - 'but has passed from death into life'. Hallelujah! You've got forgiveness and eternal life - that's how you ought to view yourself! More than that, you've been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God. Now, you might still be struggling with darkness, that's the whole process of sanctification and deliverance and Christian experience; but your position has changed. The authority has been taken away from the enemy, you're now a new creation - Colossians 1:13-14 says: 'God has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins'. You're in another kingdom, and I don't care tonight how you are struggling with the enemy, it is only his lies that are keeping you bound and those can be dealt with through the power of the name of Christ and the blood of Jesus - because, if you're a true child of God, you're from one kingdom of darkness into another; and if you're not a child of God that's what you need tonight. You need to be transferred from under the enemy's authority into God's, and then we can deal with the stuff.

Isn't it wonderful to have a reborn identity like this? I'll give you a fifth thing, and this is the last - there are so many things we could say - but you are accepted by God. Some of you are struggling with that right away. You are accepted. You've believed a doctrine of demons that you need to be up to a certain standard, or a certain requirement of holiness, in order to be accepted. That's not what the Bible teaches. It tells us in Colossians 1 verses 19 to 22, listen: 'For it pleased the Father that in Jesus all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight'. That's what the Bible says about you if you're a born-again child of God! You are accepted, and you belong to God.

I hope some of you are getting it in your subconsciousness, because it's not showing on some of your faces, that's for sure! I've already mentioned Neil Anderson, and I would highly recommend all of his works, 'Bondage Breaker', 'Victory Over Darkness', and there are whole myriad of other books that he has written since then. But there's a little bookmark, and I have produced it, and Brenda has very kindly run them for all of you tonight - hopefully there are enough of them, if not we can get more - they are just on

the table at the back. It outlines who I am in Christ, and it's just incredible. Some of you may have encountered this before, but if you've got a problem with your identity and you're struggling with self-image, this is amazing because he gives you scriptures and then a confession (we talked about declaring things) about who I am in Christ. There is a section 'I am accepted. I am a child of God, I am Christ's friend. I have been justified, I am united with the Lord, one spirit. I am bought with a price, I belong to God. I'm a member of Christ's body, I am a saint. I have been adopted as God's child. I have access to God through the Holy Spirit. I have been redeemed and forgiven. I am complete in Christ' - that's just the section about being accepted. Then there's one 'I am secure. I am free forever from condemnation. I am assured that all works together for good. I am free from any charge against me. I cannot be separated from the love of God. I am established, anointed, sealed by God. I am hidden with Christ in God. I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected. I am a citizen of heaven. I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind. I can find grace and mercy in time of need. I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me'. 'I am significant', that's the third section, 'I am the salt and light of the earth. I am a branch of the True Vine, a channel of His life. I have been chosen, appointed to bear fruit. I am a personal witness of Christ. I am God's Temple. I am a minister of reconciliation for God. I am God's co-worker. I am seated with Christ in the Heavenly Realm. I am God's workmanship. I may approach God with freedom and confidence. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'. This is only dipping your toe in the edge of the ocean of who we are in Christ. Now, you've got one of those, you can take it home and pray over it, meditate over it, memorise the scriptures. Get it into your heart, renew your mind with the mind of Christ, according to what God says about you and your reborn identity.

Now, this is key: a psychiatrist or self-help book, or some motivational life coach or guru, might be able to make you feel a bit better about yourself - but only Jesus can make you a new creature. Only Jesus Christ can change your identity. Now I want to leave you tonight, practically, with a strategy for how to come into line with your true identity in Jesus, rather than the self-image that you might have. Again, I get this from the very helpful book by Dan Sneed. The first thing he says is that you've got to identify - it would be good to write these four things down - you've got to identify something. You've got to identify the strongholds of the mind that are built of lies that have formed a belief system in your life. Are you with me? So the self-talk for instance, when you say things like: 'I'm a failure' or whatever - that is a lie, and you've got to understand it as a lie according to how God sees you, who you really are in Christ. So you need to identify: what is the lie that I have believed about myself, or about my circumstances or whatever, or about God Himself and how He deals with me as His child? Where is the lie? You identify it, because out of it has come a belief system - do you realise that? Strongholds of the mind built on lies engender belief systems that we actually behave out of, we live out.

Now I want to quickly show you this from Judges 6, if you're still there, in the life of Gideon. This is very interesting, I wish I had the time to deal with Gideon, it's just amazing. He struggled with fear right throughout his early biography here in Scripture. You remember he kept asking God to do things to prove Himself to him. The missing verses that we're not going to read here tonight talk about him putting an offering out, and asking God to send fire down from heaven. God receives the offering, and later on you know the whole fleece thing that he does with God - even though God has spoken to him and given the assurance of His word, he just finds it hard to believe. Isn't it

wonderful that God condescends to a guy like that, and me? He condescends to our weaknesses. Here's what I want you to see: you may not know this, but Gideon's Dad was the priest of the pagan god Baal and Ashtoreth, which is really sex worship in the Canaanite world. Gideon's Dad had a shrine in his backyard to Baal and Ashtoreth, and God commands Gideon - the fearful guy - in verse 25 this is what He tells him to do: 'It came to pass the same night that the LORD said to Gideon, 'Take your father's young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it; and build an altar to the LORD your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down'. This is incredible - you know, 'Go and tear down your Dad's Cathedral in the backyard', OK? God asks us to do strange things at times. He is afraid, he's the last fellow you would expect to do this - and, you know, God is so gracious, and it's even a wee bit humorous: Gideon goes in the dead of night when nobody is watching, hopefully nobody would notice until they got up in the morning. He tears down these big idols and Ashtoreth pole, and he sacrifices these bulls, his father's livestock unto the Living God. But do you know what he's doing? He's tearing down strongholds, do you understand? He's identifying the lies that he has believed, that probably have fed into his fears. He had a view of God that God wasn't going to come through for them; he had a view that the gods of their enemies were maybe greater than the Living God. God hadn't been around for a while, that's what he says: 'If You're with us, where are all the miracles that our fathers told us of? Where are You, Lord, if You're really with us?'.

So what you need to do is identify the strongholds, the lies that have formed a belief system; and the second thing you need to do after identifying them, is confront the strongholds with the truth of God's word in the power of the Spirit. Do you know how to do that? Well, you need a Bible, OK? And to get it into your head you need to read it, and you need to meditate upon it. Now the Holy Spirit can bring out verses that we maybe haven't even learned, but that's very rare thing and I wouldn't be relying on that - it's input/output, it's basic computers, which I know nothing about - but to get output you need input, don't you? You need programming, so program your mind with the word of God and you will find that that will jettison strongholds of the enemy, so that when you identify a lie that pops into your head some day - maybe all day you're receiving these - that you confront it in the power of the Spirit with the truth of the word. So identify the strongholds, the lies; confront it with the power of the word through the Spirit; and thirdly, replace - identify, confront, and replace the lies with the truth.

Now, I want to be really practical so that you can understand this. Here are a few examples, and some of you may have seen this slide - but you say, and God says. You might say: 'I can't figure it out', God says 'I will direct your steps' (Proverbs 3:5-6) - do you see that? So when the lie of the enemy comes in that will bring a stronghold into your mind that, 'I can never figure anything out, I'm so indecisive and I can never make anything of my life', you replace it with the truth. 'I'm too tired', Matthew 11 says 'I will give you rest'. 'It's impossible', Luke 18, 'All things are possible', God says. 'Nobody loves me', 'I love you', God says. 'I can't forgive myself', 'I forgive you', God says. 'It's not worth it', 'It is worth it, for all things work together for good'. 'I'm not smart enough'; God says, 'I'll give you wisdom'. 'I'm not able'; God says, 'I am able'. 'I can't go on', 'My grace is sufficient', says the Lord. 'I can't do it', 'You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you'. 'I can't manage it', 'I will supply all your need'. 'I'm afraid', 'I have not given you fear'. 'I feel alone', 'I will never leave you nor forsake

you'. You see, you identify the stronghold that has been built on the foundation of a lie, you confront it with the truth in the power of the Spirit, and then you replace it with the truth - that's what the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, the rhema word of God in Ephesians chapter 6 is. It's not the whole Bible, it's the word of God that the Spirit gives you in any given moment of temptation and trial to replace the lies of the enemy. That's why, when Jesus was in the temptation in Matthew chapter 4 in the wilderness, three times He said 'It is written, it is written, it is written' to the devil. Now you'd think if you were Jesus you wouldn't need to quote Scripture, would you? But He did, He did, and Deuteronomy is what He quoted - how many of you have memorised Deuteronomy? I haven't either, just in case you think I have - but Deuteronomy, three times! But that was the rhema word that ran the enemy through, and defeated the tempter.

Are you with me? Identify the stronghold that is built on the lie; confront it in the power of the Spirit with the truth; and replace the lies with the word of God. Then the fourth thing is: guard the truth. This is important, because a lot of people go through this process, but they don't guard the truth in their lives, and they expose their mind to all sorts of confusion in this world which we are in. Satan is the prince of the power of the air, and I think a lot of the times he runs the airwaves. We bless the media, and we want to see God's Kingdom influence in it, but we've got to be realistic that the enemy is pulling the strings of a lot of what is being perpetuated right throughout our society, and people are drinking it in. But Christians, you cannot do that! You cannot, with unfiltered minds, just receive things from the world like everybody else does and think you're not going to be affected. So you've got to guard the truth, and that will mean submitting yourself to God, resisting the devil on a regular basis - and eventually he will get the message. But I want to say this, because this is important - we will have prayer ministry tonight, we have seen God do amazing things, and some of you can testify yourselves to the things God has done in your lives at the nights in The Stables, and we give Him glory for that - but listen: healing doesn't usually happen overnight, particularly healing of the heart. There can be a really quick, swift, accelerated moment that happens in prayer ministry, but that often has to be worked out in a process. None of us are fixed overnight, none of us - and if that's what you're looking for, you're looking for the wrong thing. Now there is great healing and great power in prayer ministry through the cross, the resurrection of Jesus, I don't want to underestimate that - but I want you to be realistic: there is a battle on. You can't just get some prayer, and somebody to wave some charismatic magic wand over you, and you go out and you're fixed and you'll never have a problem with the devil, temptation, sin, feeling bad about yourself, a down day again. If that's what you're expecting, forget about it - that's not life, that's not the life we are called to live. We can be victorious over those things, but we've got to guard the truth and fight the good fight.

I want to ask you quickly, before I bring everything to a close - and especially Christians here tonight - where do you get your identity? You might be able to say 'amen' to all of that, but there are some of you here tonight - and this is going to hit hard home - some of you get your identity from what you do, rather than who you are, especially some of you who are in Christian work full-time (whatever that means, I don't like that phrase, but you know what I mean). Turn with me to John 13 quickly, this is a marvellous passage of our Lord just before He goes to the cross on the night in which He was betrayed, and we read in verse 3: 'Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands', now watch that - Jesus at this moment, He always did, but particularly at this moment, He knows that the Father has given everything into His hands - 'and

that He had come from God', He knows His origin. In other words, He knows His identity, that He is God the Son, 'and was going to God'. He has His destiny sorted, He knows where He's going, Yes, He has to go via the cross, and that's not going to be easy - but He knows where He's going. 'He rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded'. He washes the disciples' feet, and He takes the form of a lowly servant - and Peter balks at it: 'You'll never wash my feet!'. But how can He do such a lowly thing? Here's why: because He knew who He was. He was secure in His identity - and listen: that's where service ought to come from, not trying to be somebody, trying to achieve a reputation. Jesus was able to do the small thing, the lowly thing. It says that everybody else walked past the bowl, all the disciples walked up the stairs past the bowl, nobody wanted to wash anybody else's feet. Jesus washed their feet, why? Because He was secure in who He is with God, He had His identity sorted.

Now listen: in the temptation we mentioned already in Matthew chapter 4, what did the devil say to Jesus? 'If You are the Son of God make these stones into bread'. What was the ground of his attack? His identity: 'If You're really the Son of God, do this'. The enemy is always coming to make us doubt our identity. If you identify with what you do, or you identify with your sin and your constant failure, or you identify with the guilt of the past - do you know what you're doing? You're agreeing with how the enemy sees you. You're like Joshua the high priest in Zechariah chapter 3, where he is standing in filthy garments, and it says that Satan came to oppose him: 'And the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?'. Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, 'Take away the filthy garments from him'. And to him He said, 'See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes''. That's the way you need to see yourself tonight, whatever you've done, whatever you've done. Yes, there might be consequences - but some of you are still seeing yourself as 'I'm only a sinner saved by grace'. Nice tune, not great lyrics - because you're not only a sinner saved by grace, you're a child of the living God, you're divine royalty. You're better than that, you're a joint heir, an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus - everything He gets, you get. That's not only a sinner - but if you see yourself as 'only a sinner', what do you think you're going to be? Only a sinner.

How do you see yourself tonight? Michelangelo's David in the hands of the master sculptor, even with a damaged piece of stone, in the master's hands it becomes a masterpiece. Let me ask you again: what do you see? What do you see? What have you seen? What do others see, that maybe has influenced you to see? But you have seen tonight what God sees, how He sees you, how He values you. This is Ephesians 2 verse 10 in the New Living Translation, this is marvellous: 'For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago'. You - believe it or not, it doesn't really matter - you are God's masterpiece.

Let's pray. Now there are some of you here tonight, and God has already done a work - I believe that, I really do. I believe that there have been strongholds shaken in our midst, to the foundation. In faith, while every head is bowed and eye closed, before I pray any prayers or lead you at all, in faith - I would ask you to bow your heads and close your eyes - in faith I would ask you to raise your hand if God has really spoken to you about your identity tonight, and He has touched you. God bless. Just quickly put

your hand up, God bless you. Their hands going up all around, praise God. Isn't that wonderful? God can do all sorts of things here tonight, and we're going to ask Him to do all sorts of things - but we're going to start with the reason why we're here tonight, particularly this identity. I want you, where you're sitting, if you haven't already done it, in the quietness of prayer right now I want you to identify that lie that has given you a wrong self-image - OK? An untrue identity - I want you to identify that lie, and I want you, where you're sitting just right now, from your lips (the person beside you doesn't have to hear), but just take it on your lips. Just say: 'I renounce the lie that...', just say that, 'I renounce the lie that I am... whatever', put it in your own words. That is you confronting that stronghold. Now what I want you to do is, I want you to say: 'And I replace that lie with the truth that...'. Now, I'm not going to give you it, the truth, because the Holy Spirit is going to give you it just now. If you listen to Him, if you listen to Him in the quietness right now, you give Him that lie, and you say: 'Lord, give me the truth, give me that sword of the Spirit to slay this lie'.

Just do it now - wait and I'll ask the Lord: 'Father, we ask You in Jesus' name, through the Holy Spirit, to give people the truth that replaces the lies that have formulated their self-image. Would You give them the truth, put into their hand right now, Holy Spirit, put into their hand right now that dagger for that particular lie, to slay the dragon right now'. I believe He is giving people all over the place the truth. Now you confess that, you now say - you've renounced the lie - you say: 'I confess the truth that I am... whatever He tells you you are'. Now if you need a bit of help with this, we can help you after, but I believe God is moving in our midst. Now ask the Lord, just you say: 'Lord, help me to guard this truth in my life and not give way to the enemy's lies any more'.

Now you might have a lot of lies, work your way through them there, we're not in a hurry. You work your way through them there, whatever those lies are that the Lord has put His finger on tonight. Now while you're praying that through, let me address a couple of other types of people. Is there anyone here, and you've never become a Christian, and your identity is still with the old creation, the kingdom of darkness? You've never become a child of God, and you don't truly know your sins forgiven and God as your Father, and on your way to heaven, and you would like to be reborn tonight into the new creation. Is there anyone, where you are, with heads bowed and eyes closed, you would just raise your hand and say: 'I want to be a Christian tonight' - is there anyone, just where you're sitting? I want to give you an opportunity, is there anyone before we move on? We always want to give an opportunity for people to trust the Lord.

Is there what we would call 'a backslider', someone who has really walked away from the Lord and you're not living out of your new created identity? You've turned your back on it, but you want to step back in now under the authority of the Lord Jesus - God bless you. Is there anyone else? You can put your hand down now. Is there anyone else? You've not been walking with the Lord the way you know you ought. God bless you. Anyone else before we move on? Quickly. OK. If you folk will pray with me now, OK? If there is somebody who wants to be a Christian and you hadn't the courage to put your hand up, that's OK. Just pray with me now, and say: 'O God, I come to You in the name of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ'. Backsliders, you can pray this too. 'I come to You in the name of Your Son, the Lord Jesus. I confess my sin before You, I repent of those sins believing that Jesus died for me. I ask You to cleanse me, save me, forgive me. Make me Your child. I confess You Lord of my life. I renounce Satan and all his works, and I ask the Holy Spirit to come and fill me that I might live a life of glory to

Your name'. God bless you, now tell someone afterwards. If you need a bit of help, seek it out.

Just before we wrap up the meeting tonight: God is a good God, and He wants you to understand His Fatherhood. Maybe you have been living out of a wrong self-image, and that has skewed the way you see God. You need to know tonight that God loves you, and that God wants to bless you. Now like any good parent, He doesn't give us everything we're looking. Sometimes that's what we want, but that's a very foolish father that does that, gives us everything we're looking when we're looking it. Maybe there's something here tonight that is really breaking your heart, something you really need. Listen carefully: it could be financial, it could be spiritual, it could be emotional, it could be mental, it could be physical - OK? That just about covers everything. It could be another person's issues in the family. Would you be willing, with eyes closed and heads bowed, would you be willing to stand to your feet in the presence of God and engage with God just in the quietness from your own heart and say: 'Lord, I'm bringing this to You, knowing that You are a good Father; and I give it to You'. OK? 'I give it to You, knowing that You are a good Father. I ask You, Lord, to...' - and you fill in the gap, OK? 'I ask You, Lord, to...', and ask Him to do whatever you need you need Him to do. If it's a touch of healing, if it's deliverance, if it's an issue in your business or your work or your family or whatever. Right now just say: 'Lord, I'm not treating You in a presumptuous way, but I know that Your heart is for me and my identity is in You. I'm asking You, You know this thing, I'm asking You, Lord, to do...' - and you fill in the gap.

Now Lord, I just pray that You will meet people right now, You will meet people right now. You will touch them in that area where they need answered prayer. Lord, that You will touch minds tonight, and You will break shackles on minds, that You will break down strongholds, that You will demolish them, Lord - that the demons that are hiding behind those lies will not be able to stand, and will run. Lord, I ask that You will come and bring emotional healing deep within the heart, deep in the spirit, right down deep to the deep places we cannot see. Lord, that You will bring real healing, that You will show people - drop down in them a sense of being, worth, and true identity in Christ; that they will know that they are accepted and have a true sense of worth and being in You. Lord, deliver people from performance, deliver them from religion, deliver them from legalism tonight. Lord, I pray that You will bring blessing in abundance to those who are struggling financially tonight; to those who are struggling in their work with stress or some kind of controlling influence - Lord, that You will give them wisdom and release them into freedom there. Lord, I ask You will touch bodies tonight. I ask that You will touch bodies where there is disease, that it will go in the name of Jesus; where there is pain, that pain will go in the name of Jesus; where there is dysfunction that there will be creative order in the name of Jesus; where there is curse that there will be blessing in the name of the Lord Jesus - that You will break every curse, Father, in the name of Christ; whether it's on the spirit, the soul, or the body. By His stripes we were healed, and we know that full healing will be one day, we know that - but, Lord, we want a bit of it now, we want to see the taste of heavenly things now to testify that You are a good, good God, and that Your Gospel is to come and heal the brokenhearted, to mend those who are wounded, to set at liberty the captives, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Lord, would You meet with these folk right now, would You touch them right now; that people would be actually feeling the sense of God on them, and that a work is being done. We thank You, Lord for what You've done, what You are doing, and what You will do the rest of this evening. We pray that throughout the rest of the night, whether we're having a cup of tea or a wee chat, or whether we're deep in prayer with

people, or whether we're just sitting on the chair savouring the presence of God; that we will still be aware that You are with us. Like You said to Gideon - no matter about who you are, where you're from, what your tribe is like, or how weak you might feel: 'I am with you', says the Lord. 'I am with you to deliver you', says the Lord.

Deeper Healing - Chapter 2
"Rescue From Rejection"

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OK, I want you to turn in your Bibles to Isaiah 53, we're not going to read from it just yet, but later on we shall. We're going to pray before I speak. We're going to pray that God would speak to you in your heart, alright? So often in meetings, Christian meetings, we get into a cycle of the way we do things in different places - whatever the right place and the wrong place might be - and usually when the guy up at the front is praying, everybody switches off and thinks: 'It's just a preliminary before we hear the real meaty stuff, the important thing, the sermon'. That is not the case whatsoever, this is the moment where you tune in - you're tuning in to God and what He has to say. So it's vital, as we come to this huge subject - and I believe God is really going to break in and speak to people in a way that is going to transform lives, I believe that, I've been very excited all day and indeed all week, but particularly today about this evening. I hope that you're anticipating meeting with God, and that God would come and touch you and change your life. OK, so let's pray, and I want you to pray now for yourself that God would speak to you - would you do that?

Let's pray: Father, we do come to You, and we have been singing 'Speak, O Lord' - and, Lord, we know that it is Your Holy Spirit who opens our hearts, who focuses our eyes, who tunes our ears to hear You. Lord, we pray now, we welcome the Holy Spirit to come and, Father, make Jesus real to us. May the power of the Name, the Person, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ be dynamic to us in such a way as we will never be the same again tonight. Lord, You know the subject that we are dealing with this evening, and we pray that for those of us who have been rejected and know it, and for those who have been rejected and don't know it, or don't understand where their pain is coming from or why they are how they are, Lord, tonight Lord Jesus Christ, that You will come in all Your meekness, compassion, and tenderness, and You will diagnose that condition and bring the cure that You alone can. We pray that now in Your name, Lord Jesus Christ. We welcome Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, come and meet with us now, and may this be a very special night for many of us. Amen.

OK, tonight's title is 'Rescue from Rejection'. All of us have experienced rejection, whether you realise it or not, you have - one kind of rejection or another. Whether it's failing to pass an exam, or gain an entrance to get a university place, or maybe it's not being chosen for the school football, rugby, or hockey, or netball team. Maybe it's more literally, being made redundant. It could be a boyfriend or a girlfriend splitting up with you and giving little explanation of why. Rejection is a part of life for all of us, but there are certain types of rejection that can be seriously damaging for your health. They can really affect us so deeply, and some have had very deep scars of rejection in their life, right from the point of birth. Through their whole lives there can be a cycle and a repetition of that rejection, and even to the point of death they can feel that they are rejected.

Let me give you a number of examples of how this commonly happens within people's lives. Often what can happen is we can be rejected from our parents, right from the

moment of birth. The most obvious examples of that would be children that are given up for adoption for whatever reason, or even children that are sent away to boarding school - it's not as common today as it used to be, but it still exists. Whether it is the intention of the parent in either of those cases or other cases, often what can be given to the child is an inherent sense that they were rejected in some way. We can also receive rejection from broken marriages, whether it's our parents or our own relationships. Many children received great scars and baggage in their lives because of the desertion of a father or mother, or the divorce of their parents. But maybe if it's you yourself who has experienced a marriage breakup, if there has been unfaithfulness involved, rejection can be further compounded by a sense of betrayal and broken trust. Maybe that is very poignant for some of you in the gathering, most likely, tonight.

Then there are other folk, and they have experienced rejection through prejudice. That can range from racial prejudice, to religious prejudice, or many different types of bigotry or discrimination that is in our world today. Maybe you are in a part of society where you live, or a particular colour or culture, that you feel that keenly and it has brought rejection to you. Another way that many of us were rejected in our childhood - particularly in the playground, but it continues on for some in the workplace and in the community - is through bullying. Of course we have often heard that adage, 'Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me', and it's absolute nonsense! Because many of us are carrying the wounds of having been bullied at some stage in our lives. So there are birth issues and circumstances through life, but rejection can come and visit us right at the very end of the chronological scale. Often the elderly can feel rejected right at the very end of their lives, put on the - as it were - human rubbish tip of life, feeling unimportant or no use at all.

So, the bottom line is: if you've ever felt unaccepted or unwanted, you have been rejected. You have desired, like all of us have, to belong, to fit in; but you have not been received. You have been rejected. Some people never ever face their rejection. For others, it is so deep that they think it's not there - but yet rejection, whether unfaced or ignored, is affecting them every single day of their life. That could be you tonight. Someone wrote a book not that long ago entitled 'Excuse Me, Your Rejection Is Showing'. That might be the case for you, other people might recognise it, but you don't know that's what your problem is. The fact is that rejection is one of the most common roots of many personal problems that folk have. Derek Prince described how, when he first began ministering to people with addiction, that (and I'm quoting him): 'The addictions were merely twigs sprouting from a bigger branch'. I like that: the addictions were merely twigs sprouting from a bigger branch. 'Of course', he goes on, 'a tree must be cut down at the roots. When you work your way down to the roots from the twig, the roots of people's problems, often you find the most common is rejection'.

Is it your problem? Rejection is, in fact, one of the greatest hindrances to people experiencing God's love. That's why we want to spend so much time on it tonight, lay aside a whole evening to concentrate on why this needs to be dealt with, particularly if we are children of God, or if we want to move into relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Rejection can be a barrier to those blessings, it can be an obstacle to breaking through. So it's vital that you are aware, tonight, if this is your problem; and, if it is, that you get the cure. You know that many of us suffer from woundedness. One of the most - I don't like using the word - 'successful' nights (it's not a good term, but I can't think of anything else to say about it), one of the most successful night that we've had here in regards to ministry was the second night of the 'Sins, Wounds and Demons'

series away back last autumn, in fact it was probably the equivalent of this particular night last November when we looked at 'Woundedness'. Of course, we've all got sins in our lives, and we know the devil is at large, but the night that really resonated with people was the brokenness that all of us have to some degree or other, and the power that there is in the Gospel of Jesus to heal that. This is what we are really touching on tonight, we probably mentioned rejection just as a throwaway term, but we're going to home in tonight in-depth to look at this theme.

You've got to understand, if you have suffered rejection in your life, you could have a spiritual woundedness way deep down in your true identity, which is in fact in your spirit. The Bible has a lot to say about that. In Proverbs 18 and verse 14 we read that 'The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit'. In other words, if you're healthy inside, even when you get sick, that will sustain you if you're OK inside - but if you're broken inside, that will affect your whole being, body, soul and spirit. Another insightful verse is also in Proverbs, Proverbs 15:13: 'A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance', it helps your face if your heart is right, 'but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken'. You can have a broken spirit this evening, a crushed, a bruised, damaged spirit because of rejection in your life. The wonderful good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is - and this was the theme of my first ever message here at The Stables, Isaiah 61 verse 1 - Jesus said: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for He has anointed Me to preach good news, glad tidings, to the poor; to heal the brokenhearted'. That was the mandate of Messiah, that was the mission statement of Messiah, God anointed the Christ to come and heal the brokenhearted. This is good news, isn't it? If you are rejected tonight, and have suffered from that, and your spirit is crushed by it, Jesus is able to heal you and set you free. Psalm 147 verse 3: 'He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds'.

Now what I want us to consider tonight, really under three headings, is first of all: the reasons for rejection, the various reasons that rejection can come into our life. Second: the results of that rejection, how that can affect us. And thirdly: the remedy for rejection, how that can be cured through Jesus Christ. So let's deal first of all with the reasons for rejection. I've said I'm sure many times here at The Stables, that the highs and the lows of life revolve around relationships. Of course, if that is the case, that will be the place where we most risk rejection: in our relationships with people. Now some people do have to admit that, apart from any dysfunctional relationships in their life - OK, that would account for a lot of rejection - some people actually say: 'Well, I see what you're saying here with relationships, that's where we get rejected, but I have never felt that I have fitted in!'. Is that you tonight? 'For as long back as I can remember, I've always felt this way, that I didn't belong, that I wasn't accepted'.

Now, I want to deal with that one first of all, because some people actually receive rejection at the moment of conception. Now that might be very far-fetched for some people maybe even here tonight. But here's how this can happen: there are some people who were not fitting in from the very beginning because they were an unwanted pregnancy. There can be various reasons for that, it could be the circumstances of the conception, maybe that was through some form of abuse, rape, a controlling relationship between the man and the woman; it could be a sense of rejection that has come because the conception was outside of wedlock - that wouldn't usually be a problem today, a sense of shame with that, but many years ago that was the case. It could be that financial or time pressures that are brought to bear with the thought of another child coming into the world - maybe there are already four or five or more

children, and the last thing that Mummy wants is another mouth to feed. So there can be passed on to a child in the womb this sense of being unwanted.

Of course, after birth that can be perpetuated if maybe the child is the wrong sex - parents wanted a boy and they got a girl, or vice versa - or maybe there is some form of disability with the child; but there can be things spoken over a child in the womb or after the birth, but even things unspoken, sentiments or attitudes, whether it's resentment, hatred, it could be depression of the mother, it could be chronic fear as she carries the child, but many of these emotions can be communicated through to the child and picked up in their little receiver which is their human spirit. Not being picked up cognitively in their mind, or even emotionally because their emotions are underdeveloped; but they can absorb, like a sponge, these toxic traits that come from one parent or another. Derek Prince discovered in ministering to folk in the United States many years ago that commonly people of a certain age group seem to have a sense, very early in life, of being rejected. When he traced it back he discovered that they had been born during the Great Depression. He began to realise and understand that it was at a time like that that parents and Mums, with many mouths already to feed, couldn't bear the thought of one more child in that gloomy economic climate. So this inner attitude of the parents was wounding the unborn child. I believe this is a reality that we need to be conscious of, and not in denial of - that you can actually feel that you were always rejected, unaccepted, and unwanted; not because, necessarily, of something that happened in your life, but something that could have even happened before you were born.

Another reality that can be a reason for rejection is the parental relationship. Apart from conception and birth and early infanthood, we've got to ask the question - and we honour parents, and we want to bless them, and we want to thank God for them being there, that's a great commandment of God: 'Honour your father and your mother', and that's the one with the blessings in it - but we don't want to be in denial either of what reality was. So we need to ask ourselves: was my Mum and Dad tactile with me, were they loving, were they affectionate, were they affirming? Often the case is - there are certainly no perfect parents, even those of us who are trying our best, we can't be perfect - but so often a lot of us have a really bad deal, and there is maybe an absent parent, whether a father or mother, they are just not there. God intended both to be there. Maybe it is a distant parent, they are there but it's as if they aren't. Maybe it is an abusive parent, that there is attention but it is the wrong kind of attention. I've heard it said more than I care to count by people who have had good parents: 'I know my Dad or my Mum loved me, they always provided for me, put food on the table, clothes on my back, a roof over my head - but I never ever heard them say 'I love you''. Now that was very common of a certain generation, probably your parent's generation, and certainly it has been found that the generation of World War I and World War II may have had an emotional deficiency of a certain kind brought on by the war - i.e. they needed to toughen up because of the circumstances of the day. So emotional expression was very low down the order, in fact it had to be in order to survive. But children could suffer from that, and often did.

So your parental relationship may have been affected, bringing a sense of rejection to you in these areas. But also, as I've cited earlier, your Mum or Dad could have been divorced, or one of your parents could have deserted the home; and that does increase a sense of deprivation and abandonment within a child. Despite what popular culture says, it is a fact: Mum and Dad need to be there, ideally, for the child to develop

correctly, especially in the area of the heart. Please don't misunderstand me, I'm not wanting to heap any condemnation on people who find themselves divorced or separated or anything like that - far from it, we're wanting to bring the healing ministry of the Lord Jesus, we're not wanting in any way for you to feel condemned, but we have to state the ideal facts of Biblical truth, of what God sees as the perfect plan for our lives that He intended from the very beginning, so that we might know where we've gone wrong, so that we can bring His grace to remedy it. Often where there is divorce, desertion, or maybe it's even divorce in your own marriage, that can affect a child or a spouse's capacity to trust other people.

With rejection there often comes another - and this is a very common trait - with rejection often comes fear of rejection. Maybe that's you tonight: you've been rejected so many times, or the rejection has been so deep in your experience, that you fear this constantly. When we are hurt, even in marriage, sometimes what people do is they make a vow, an inner vow: 'I will never open up to anybody again, lest I get hurt again'. Maybe that's an inner vow that you have made?

Another way that we can be affected in the parental home is through sibling rivalry - like that photograph. Blue eyes in the middle, she gets the big slice of cake! I don't know whether you've experienced sibling rivalry and favouritism in the family - but, I mean, the Bible has a lot to say about that. If you look at certain characters, Joseph for instance, and he had the anointing of God, he had the promises, he had the dreams; but you see how Jacob's favouritism of him was ungodly, and the problems that ended up in that family. There are other biblical example showing us the problems that favouritism causes. We saw in the last session that we had here at The Stables on 'Identity', the danger that there is in comparison and competition. You remember Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10 and verse 12 that if we compare ourselves with ourselves, or with one another, we are foolish - we ought not to do that. But maybe this has been a real problem for you, that your brother or your sister was favoured above you? Again, to use an illustration from Derek Prince's ministry, he tells a story of a mother who had several daughters, but she favoured one. One day the mother heard a sound in another room, and thinking it was the daughter she loved most, she called out and said: 'Is that you darling?'. The discouraged voice of the other daughter replied: 'No, it's only me'.

Rejection will bring the fear of rejection, and it will also bring with it self-rejection - usually. Maybe I haven't - and I covered a lot of ground tonight of examples - but maybe I haven't highlighted your personal circumstance of rejection. But listen, if you have experienced rejection of any kind, often the result is that you conclude: 'Oh, because I am rejected, I must be unlovable, I must be worthless'. I know this is a long jump, but often what self-rejection can lead to are eating disorders, self-harm, and effectively what that is is: you start to turn in on yourself. You see, when you are rejected you will have fear of rejection, and that can cause you to reject others before they reject you - but when it goes so deep, this scar of rejection, that there is self-rejection, you start rejecting yourself, you start to turn in on yourself and press the self-destruct button. Now rejection isn't the only reason for eating disorders and self-harm and so on, but it certainly is a major reason for them. Of course the ultimate self-rejection is suicide.

Now these are - and it's certainly not an exhaustive list - the reasons for rejection. But I want us to consider for a moment the results of rejection. I've mentioned some of them, of course, but along with fear of rejection and self-rejection comes the rejection of

others. This is how, way back when I did 'Sins, Wounds and Demons', we talked about how sins can be ungodly coping mechanisms for wounds that are in our lives. Do you know what I mean? So if you repent of a sin, it doesn't always fix it, because there is a wound that is deep down that you're using the sin to medicate, effectively. Sometimes our sins are reactions to the woundedness, not just coping mechanisms, but reactions, ungodly ways of reacting to what has been done to us. So when we are rejected, we can behave in a defensive way. Defence mechanisms, whatever they are, come up - or, as I've already cited, there can be distrust because we've been betrayed by someone, we have vowed never to open up again, and so we don't trust people.

Now, one of the major fruits of rejection is shame. This is a vast subject in and of itself. But particularly if there has been some kind of violation, or if there has been a robbery of your will in some way, something has been done to you against your control, particularly in abuse, there is a humiliation. Rejection and humiliation so often come together. Now, I've covered a vast array of examples there, but here is a chart on the screen - and I want you to look at this, it might be better for some of you if you have smartphones (hopefully they're on silent!), but you could take a photograph of this and you could study it later on. This gives the growth of rejection from the roots, bringing it out to the fruit. Now you will see at the very bottom some things that we have covered and some that we haven't, but the root causes, where the rejection is coming from - it's hard to see with the light on the screen - but there are issues at conception, pre-birth experiences; the birth experience, if you've had a particularly traumatic birth that can affect your own disposition; lack of bonding with Mum, abandonment for whatever reason, whether adoption or something like that; over here, words that are spoken over you; rejection in a generational line, there can be a history of rejection right throughout the ancestry; circumstances - and I've said it many times here, that if there is a particular wound in your life, even in your family, but in your life in particular, what the enemy will do is he will seek to perpetuate that. The way I put it is: the enemy would rather hit one nail ten times, as hit ten nails once. So if he sees rejection in your life at the very beginning, he will want to keep bringing that along your path. Then school is in there because many of the experiences that we have happen in our schooling.

Now, these are root causes - you can't see this very clearly probably, but on the bark of the tree the word 'beliefs' is there. All these root causes contribute to strongholds of our minds, belief systems that we have that cause us to behave in a certain way. Now what comes out of these beliefs, these mindsets, strongholds of the mind, from these root causes is: rebellion and aggressive reactions. Those come to fruition in argumentativeness, harshness, stubbornness, anger - and we're going to take a whole night on anger on its own. But then self-rejection is there as well, not just hitting out towards others, but hitting against ourselves. This comes to fruition in low self-esteem, inferiority, self-condemnation, fear of failure - and over here, anxiety, negativism, pessimism, despair, and the ultimate self-rejection, suicide. Now, of course, up here, as the fruit is the fear of rejection as well: striving, perfectionism, independence, withdrawing, blame-shifting. Now, I know there is a whole ream of stuff there that would take a long time to compute and consider, but it's starting to give you an idea, I hope, of the vast area that rejection really is - in regards to where it comes from at root source and origination, and how it bears fruit, the wrong kind, in all of our lives. I don't know how you fit into that tree diagram.

But the most harmful result of rejection is not the rejection itself, but it's the fact that it becomes an obstacle to love in our lives. Let me repeat that: rejection becomes an

obstacle to love in our lives, it keeps love away, love from others. Incidentally, because of rejection, it prevents us learning to communicate love as well. It's a barrier to us receiving it and to giving it back. Ultimately what our consideration is tonight is: rejection is one of the greatest hindrances to experiencing the fullness of the love of God. There are some of you here tonight, and you're born again Christians, and you may have been for years - but you've never truly experienced the fullness of the love of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit shed abroad in your heart, because of this great wall of rejection that is between you and heaven. It is blackening and blocking out God's light and love. The evidence of that is in many people that I talk to on a regular basis, and they will say to me: 'I know God loves me, I mean I could tell other people how much God loves me and them; but I myself, in my heart, I have never truly felt the love of God to me. I just don't feel it'. Now I have experienced, the little experience that I have ministering to people who do not feel the love of God, often the root cause is rejection in their life. That needs to be dealt with and healed, there can be demons of rejection that need to be expelled in order that that person starts to truly sense the love of God for them in their hearts.

So I want us to look in the time that is left at the remedy for rejection. This is what we're going to spend most of our time on, because ultimately we want to know how we can be free. Ultimately, we want, all of us, don't we, a heart-experience of the love of God - who doesn't want that? Who doesn't want a heart-experience of the love of God? That's what all of us need, and often it is our heads that get in the way of that heart-experience. What I mean by that is: we don't understand truly in our heads what the love of God means, and what Jesus has done for us when He died on the cross. Because we don't understand correctly in our heads, we're not receiving it in our hearts. Now what am I talking about? I want to be as clear as possible: I'm talking about the cross of the Lord Jesus. Now it's vital that we don't isolate the cross of Jesus and make so much of it at the expense of the life of Jesus. The life of Jesus shows us God's heart toward us, that's why He lived on this earth and died - He didn't just come and die. He lived to show us what God's heart toward us is, and it culminated in this great climax of the cross where He died for our sins according to the scriptures. But often we, as Christians, we limit Calvary to what it has done regarding the penalty of sin being paid for, alright? We limit it to that, the idea of justification and pardon, and we don't realise the vast ocean, it is an eternal ocean, of consequence that flows from what Jesus did when He died on the cross and rose again from the grave. Listen, I'm going to make a statement here and I want you really to take this in: there is not a need that cannot be met through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe that with all my heart! Do you? There is not one need - now not all those needs are going to be met in this time-space moment, you do understand that, you're not going to get all your problems solved right now - but ultimately God is going to bring all things to reconciliation and consummation because of what Jesus did at the cross. That's just mighty, it's just about waiting for the time, God's time, whatever that is.

But you see, I think most Christians, they don't think like that. They have a concept - I mean, the first message I ever brought here to The Stables was 'Your Gospel Is Too Small', who can remember that one? Way back in March whatever, and I was talking about how we have limited the Gospel to the concept of our sins being absolved - and praise God for that - and going to heaven and not going to hell, and being forgiven - and that is the core, of course. But the Gospel is so much more than that! The cross of Jesus affects me now. Here's where we are, Isaiah 53, and I want us to look at verses 3, 4 and 5. These are very familiar, but I want you to look at them as if you had never

seen them before. Speaking of Jesus: 'He is despised', now look at this word, 'and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised', or crushed, 'for our iniquities; the chastisement', or the punishment, 'for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed'.

Now, that is such a wonderful passage of Scripture on so many fronts, but so often - particularly those who are rejected - miss this fact: 'He was despised and rejected by men'. When Jesus went to the cross He suffered rejection, and oh what rejection that was! We read in Isaiah 50 and verse 6: 'I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting'. When was the last time you considered the rejection that Jesus suffered at the hands of men, at the hands of His own? It says in John 1 He came to His own, His own things and His own people did not receive Him. To be rejected by His own family, they thought He was mad. To receive rejection from the disciples, in the end it says everyone forsook Him and fled. What was that like? Yet we see, when we look at the cross, that this was a double rejection that Jesus suffered, because it was a rejection of men and, in a sense, a rejection of God. Now we have to be very careful here, because we are on holy ground, and I think sometimes we say things about the cross in relation to God and Jesus that are ill-advised. But the fact is, however we don't understand it, that Jesus cried, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?', 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' - rejected Me! Whatever happened there, as Jesus was bearing the sins of the world - by the way, sin is what will separate us forever from God - yet He took that on Himself, that forsakenness of sin, He was forsaken, He was abandoned so that we would not be. What we often don't consider about the cross is the shame and the humiliation.

Now, I mean crucifixion was utterly humiliating for anyone who was crucified - but this is the crucifixion of the perfect Son of God. This is the crucifixion, the butchering of the incarnate Word of God - now, you think about that please. We are led to believe that - I mean, we've got the pictures and the hymns and so on - that Jesus was crucified on a hillside, and He was; but the idea that is often portrayed is that He was so far above everybody, when what seems to be the case was: people were crucified along the thoroughfare, the road. It probably was on a height, certainly, the Place of the Skull, but it was along a roadside - and the likelihood is that people were crucified at ground level. Do you understand? The cross wasn't way, way high, it was right at ground level so that you would be walking by a person just a little bit higher than you, but you could almost eyeball them. Understand?

Here is the sinless, spotless Son of God, who knew no sin, did no sin, was separate from sinners, was not defiled - and He is stripped stark naked, whipped, spat upon, lacerated, a bloody mess, naked as the hoi-polloi pass Him by. What shame, what humiliation. I want to ask you: have you ever been humiliated. Look at this verse from Hebrews 12 verses 2 and 3: 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame', He hated that, He hated it, He despised the shame but He endured it, 'and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself', such opposition from sinners against Himself, rejection we might say, 'lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls'. Now listen, I haven't a notion what you have went through in your life, particularly if you have gone through

rejection - I don't understand. Even somebody, by the way, who has gone through rejection, they will not understand what your rejection was, because each rejection is unique, and how we receive it and experience it is unique to us as individuals. But I want to tell you here tonight: Jesus knows, Jesus knows. Jesus knows what it is to be exposed, shamed. I mean, this is real, isn't it? I'm not adding to the story, am I? Yet so often in our gospelising, we romanticise the cross to the point where we nearly sanitise it. By doing so, do you know what we do? We remove it from the brokenness of our humanity, which is exactly why it's there in the first place.

I want to say to you tonight, and I believe it's God the Holy Spirit: Jesus knows. You know, more than that, Jesus doesn't just know what it is to be humiliated and rejected, He took your rejection, He took your shame, He took your betrayal - He took it all! That's why He died the death that He died, and He had that double rejection from men and from God, because He was bearing the brokenness of the sins that you have committed yourself and the sins that have been committed against you. Now, because He has carried that away, He can say to those who believe in Him, look at this verse: 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' - what? 'I will never reject you, I will never abandon you', this is how the Amplified renders it, listen to this: 'I will never under any circumstances desert you, nor give you up, nor leave you without support, nor will I in any degree leave you helpless, nor will I forsake or let you down or relax My hold on you - assuredly not!'. In the original Greek language there are three negative that precede the verb there, do you know what that means? 'I will never, never, never' - never, never, never - 'give you up!'. It's not just 'I'll never' - I mean, that's enough, isn't it? That's an absolute statement. But there are three negative's preceding the verb, just so God can get through to us: 'I'm not going to reject you!'. Some of you need to hear that tonight, some of you who have been under certain theologies. I know there are all sorts of debates, and I haven't worked everything out myself I can assure you of that - but I know one thing with absolute certainty, and that is: God is not in the habit of giving up on people! God does not abandon people. You might abandon God, but He will not abandon you. No one will ever be able to turn round and point a finger in the face of God, and say: 'I was following You, and I trusted in You, and I looked to You, and You let me go!'. No one will ever be able to say that. We can have the debates about Arminianism and Calvinism till the cows come home, and I have my thoughts and you have yours, and that's not what I'm entering into when I say that. I'm saying that when God gives His word and His covenant promise, He keeps it. Now, we have responsibilities, yes; but He never reneges on His - never.

Are you getting this? In fact, when we come to faith in Christ and repent of our sins and believe the Gospel, we become part of God's family. We throw these terms off the tongue, don't we, so casually, and don't even think about the depth of them? This is why we can call God 'Our Father'. The word Jesus taught His disciples to use is 'Abba', which was Aramaic baby-speak, the way we say 'Da-da', that's the word. I'm sorry if that offends your sensibilities, but that's the word. Jesus encouraged His disciples to pray 'Abba Father'. Now He wasn't being irreverent, He wasn't treating God like a buddy the way some people do today in an irreverent way - far from it, because it's 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name'. There is the fear of God there, there is holiness. When you realise who your 'Abba' in heaven is, you've got a great respect and reverence for Him. But there is an intimacy there that ought to be there as children with an Abba, a Father. That's why we call Him 'Father', because we are in family; that's why we call one another sometimes 'brothers and sisters'. Now it's not a perfect family, what family is? The family of God is not perfect. He is a perfect Father, but it's not a perfect

family - and you'll find that out very quickly - but you've got to understand (and we're going back really to last time) who your identity is. When you become a child of God, you're a new creation in Christ Jesus - but who your Father is, who your brothers and sisters are, and where you belong in God's family.

Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 1. This is powerful, verses 3 through to 6: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places' - listen, there is nothing that you need that you can't get in Jesus Christ. 'Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world' - isn't that amazing? He picked you out, 'that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will' - do you know what that means? He wanted to do it. Nobody put His arm up His back in choosing you and saving you, He wanted to do it! Verse 6: 'To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved'. I like the New King James rendering there, other versions are different, but it's the best rendering to say: 'Accepted in the Beloved' - that's amazing. Do you know what the cure for rejection is? Acceptance and belonging, that's the cure - and that's what we get in Christ! He chooses us, He saves us, He sets us apart, He places us in the family, He makes God our Father, we become an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ - that means that everything that Jesus gets, being the Only Begotten Son of God, we get, being sons and daughters of God! To as many as received Jesus, to them He gives the authority and the right to become children of God, even to as many as believe on His name. So you're put in the family, and you are made acceptable, you're made to fit in, to belong in the Beloved, in Jesus Christ - that's where we get our identity, we saw that last time: in Christ!

So, welcome to acceptance! Do you have it? Well, you do have it if you're in Christ. As we saw last time, whoever is in Christ is a new creation, old things have passed away, all things become new - but a lot of people don't realise that, and so they're still living in the old existence and not in the new. So this is where the head gets in the way of the heart, are you with me? Because you need to understand what you now are: you are accepted, you are, you belong! You don't have to gain it, you don't have to strive, you don't have to fear rejection, you've got acceptance in Jesus if you're in Him!

This is the cure for rejection, and so I want to - in these moments that remain - I want to give you six practical steps to acceptance if you have suffered from rejection. The first one is to recognise rejection, OK? Don't be in denial! Maybe you have detected in my discourse tonight certain traits, characteristics, temperaments that you have that would indicate maybe as signals that there is some rejection there in your life. You need to 'fess up and be honest about this, and put your hands up if you're suffering from it. Don't be in denial, because that will just perpetuate the problem, it will bury it down deeper and take longer for you to get cured.

Recognise rejection, but the second thing is: forgive, forgive rejection, or forgive the rejecter - the person who has rejected you in whatever way. This is vital, and we see it in the Lord Jesus Christ and His example at the cross, He says: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, they don't know what they're doing'. Now, I don't believe that everybody around the cross got to heaven because they got forgiveness and pardon - that's not what Jesus was doing there at the cross. He was speaking as a man, I believe, and He was unburdening all the potential that there was, because of the wrong that was being done to Him, the potential there was for Him to be wrong in His

reaction to that opposition - so He gives up all the wrong to the Father in heaven who judges righteously, that's what Peter says: 'When He was reviled, He reviled not again'. That's what we've got to do. No matter what has been done to you in your life that has brought rejection, you need to forgive that person. We have talked a lot about forgiveness over the weeks, but that basically means coming as an act of your will - it's not a feeling, it's not letting them off the hook, it's not forgetting the past, but it's saying: 'God, I'm getting out of the way and letting You deal with what that person did. I'm not going to let them be on my back any more, and be tied to them any longer' - because that effectively what is happening if you don't choose to forgive them.

The third thing to do is to repent of any ungodly responses to rejection. We've mentioned some. Of course, rejecting yourself, that's a sin you know - because God made you, God made you, and to reject yourself is sin. To mistrust people, that's an ungodly thing to do, to be defensive. The rationale of a lot of people is: 'I have been rejected and I am hurt, so I will reject you before you reject me', and so they become prickly human beings. We've got to repent - we're not saying 'It's all my fault', rejection isn't your fault, but we've got to repent of the ways we have reacted wrongly, tried to fix it our own way, and tried to protect ourselves.

So recognise rejection, forgive rejection, and repent of ungodly responses. Fourthly: receive forgiveness and acceptance. Embrace acceptance with God. This is vital. Some people can't forgive themselves, and that's where the self-rejection is coming from. You've got to embrace acceptance with God, and here's why, listen: He accepts you wholeheartedly in Jesus. Now I want you to get this, some of you are not getting this! Some of you have got an idea that Father God has some kind of reluctant acceptance, are you with me? Because Jesus did what He did, you know, He sort of has to let you in - you know, 'He's an angry God, and Jesus came in between the angry God and we sinners, and He sorted out that anger, and He turned it all away, and now God sort of has to say, 'Right, OK, they can come into My heaven''. It's not a reluctant acceptance. You know when it's Christmas time and your Aunt Sally buys you socks from Marks & Spencer's for the thousandth time, and what do you do? You reluctantly accept them! That's not the way God accepts you: 'Oh, thank you, thank you very much. Oh! Socks!' - or the children with clothes, they love getting clothes, don't they, at Christmas? It's not a reluctant acceptance, and it's not an unexcited acceptance either, do you know what I mean? Let's take the Christmas analogy again, you know: somebody gets you something, and it's not socks now, but you think to yourself, and you say to the wife when you go home, if you're like me, 'It's alright, like, but I wouldn't have bought it myself! I wouldn't have went out to get it, like!'. Some of us think that's the way God is with us, it's an unexcited acceptance of us. Listen: this is an all-embracing acceptance! Jesus comes from the cross, He is buried and He rises again the third day, and He ascends to heaven, and He gives God the title deed, and He is welcomed - 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates! Be lifted up ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!'. He leads triumph in His train, and God the Father welcomes Him, and He gives the title deeds to planet Earth to Heavenly Father, and your names are written on the palms of His hand, and He presents those to God the Father - and what does God say? 'That's what I've always wanted, just what I always wanted!'.

Do you believe that's the way God receives you? Some of you can't. You need healing, and you need to embrace that acceptance. Maybe that's where you can't embrace the forgiveness, because you can't embrace the acceptance. But listen: you also need to embrace acceptance of yourself as well, embrace yourself. Now please don't

misunderstand me, I'm not saying we embrace the sinful aspects of our lives - but I am saying that we need to embrace ourselves the way God has made us. One of the injunctions in the New Testament is: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. If you haven't got a healthy appreciation of the way God made you, you can't love others. It's all to do with identity. If you can't receive love, and you can't appreciate who God has made you to be, you can't express it. Now a lot of people, some of you here, are struggling with that - and especially in our country, and especially in the North - there is this concept: 'Love yourself? That's pride! Do you not need to hate yourself and flagellate yourself?'. We don't do it literally, but we do it metaphorically. No, no, no, there is a healthy way to view yourself in Christ - but you've got to embrace yourself, and particularly the way God made you.

So receive forgiveness and acceptance, but fifthly: break out of the rejection cycle. This is vitally important to understand. The rejection cycle will cause a stronghold in the mind, OK? We talked about this last time in relation to identity, but I've got on here the rejection cycle, and I want you to follow this very carefully because some of you think in this way in your mind. What will happen is, apologies if you can't read this little thought cloud, but the cycle often begins with 'Others don't seem to include me or make me feel welcome'. Now, that's not always the truth, that's the way you feel - and that's OK. That's not always the truth, but that's the perception that rejection will give to the rejected person, that they are being continually rejected. But that will move on very quickly, 'People don't include me', to 'I feel rejected and unloved'. That thought in the mind affects the emotions, and then you get hurt - you get hurt because somebody that speak to you, somebody didn't sit beside you. That will very swiftly move to 'There must be something wrong with me, no one loves me' - that's the conclusion the rejected person always makes, 'I'm damaged in some way, I'm unattractive, I'm not good to be around'. Then the very final - this is not completely conclusive of course - but this is often the way it is, the final step will be 'To avoid pain I won't let anyone get too close, I will reject them first', and so you shut down. That's the rejection cycle, and some of you can recognise that. Some of you didn't even know you were suffering from rejection until you saw that.

Now the acceptance cycle is this: it begins with 'I am accepted and loved by Jesus' - fact! It's not up for dispute, and it's not determined upon your thoughts or your feelings, this is a fact. This is what God says you are in Jesus Christ. So, coming from that, the cycle will be: 'It doesn't matter what others think of me, it doesn't matter! Because I am accepted in Christ - and, from that, I can reach out to others even if they do hurt me; because my identity, my belonging and acceptance isn't in what people think or how they behave toward me, but it's all in Christ and in God!'. Then finally, the fruit of that will be 'My security is in Jesus. If others hurt me, I can take the pain to Jesus. I can even afford to be hurt, because I know where that pain can go'. A lot of us, it has to be said, in situations where we do need to forgive, it's often a thing that has to keep happening, because the person is still perpetuating the hurts in our lives - and it's the same with rejection. You could be in the situation now, being constantly rejected, and so this has to be a cycle that you practice. As you do this, the strongholds in the mind will crumble, and the mind of Christ will grow within your head.

Can I say that the rejection cycle is a road to no-town, it's a dead end. Has anybody got a dog? Who are the dog lovers here? Any dog lovers? Yes - you can put your hand up for that! It's not the appeal yet! Are you a dog lover? Yes, OK. Well I have got a wee dog, Snowy, he's a Bichon Frise - he's not a poodle, don't ever say he is a poodle or

you're not my friend! They're very prone to skin conditions, and every now and again he will get a little sore on his hip. He will lick that sore, and I will shout at him and grab his attention be doing other things, and he'll keep licking and licking and licking. Do you know something? If you keep licking a sore, it never heals. Some of you are caught in the rejection cycle. I know things may have been done to you, but you've got to get out of the self-pity party. You've got to receive the healing of Jesus.

Then finally: be part of the family. You've got to allow yourself to be part of the family. You are part of the family, but you've got to come to the family table, and you've got to dwell in the family house. So the Bible says that God, at the very beginning of time, not only did He say 'It's not good for man to be alone', and so He made a woman; it says 'He set the solitary', or the lonely, 'in families'. He put people in communities, not only the nuclear family, but society. We are meant to be together, we're not meant to be alone - and so that's why the church exists. That picture is very typical of the eclectic nature of the body of Christ, cultures, colours, creedal backgrounds, castes, strata - and we're all meant to be one in Jesus, because we are accepted in the Beloved.

I want to ask you here tonight: have you found your place in the family? Because maybe your healing from rejection is being stunted and delayed because you haven't got together with God's family. Maybe it's because of the mistrust, or the vow that you've made never to open up to other people or whatever. Listen: don't be ignorant of Satan's devices. He wants to isolate you, and here's why: because it is in relationship that God's healing is found, it's always in relationship. Right at the very beginning of time, when Adam and Eve first sinned and took of the fruit that God told them not to, Adam goes and hides, and God is calling: 'Adam, where are you?'. What is Adam doing? He's hiding from God. Why? Because of shame, and He's actually hiding from the One who can fix him. He's being estranged from relationship through the serpent, the devil - and that's what God wants to heal us through, relationship with Him and relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ; while what the devil wants to do is cause us to say, 'Oh, I'm too ashamed! I've dug too deep a pit! I've made too many mistakes, I've burned my bridges, and I would be too big of a hypocrite to come to God now after what I have done' - that's what the devil wants, because that's the answer in relationship to God. He wants you to think: 'Oh, I'm too ashamed to go to church this morning after what I did last night, or where I was, or blah, blah, blah'. The devil knows what he's at, he wants to isolate you because healing is found in relationship and in community.

Listen to what Paul says: 'We love because He first loved us'. You see? You gain a capacity to love one another in community when you really understand the acceptance and belonging that you have in Jesus Christ. So, when we think about Jesus on the cross, we have the healing that we need for rejection, we have the place of acceptance and belonging, and it frees us - the cross frees us to be vulnerable again, because we can open up to One who will never ever hurt us, who will never ever let us down, who will never betray us, who will never double-cross us.

Friends tonight, there is a prayer that you should have gotten on your seat, and I want you now to turn to it. You may have already read it, that's OK. Now I want to read this over with you for the purpose of the recording and for your own understanding. We're going to say this together in a few moments. This is a prayer that really encompasses everything that we have said. It goes like this: 'Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that You are the Son of God and the only way to God. You died on the cross for my sins, and You

rose again from the dead. I repent of all my sins, and I forgive every other person, as I would have God forgive me'. Now let me just say, if you're not a Christian, you have never taken the step of faith into a personal relationship with Jesus, you've never been born again and become a Christian, converted, whatever label you want to put on it - you could pray this, and if you mean it from your heart, that would be the step that you would be taking. If there is rejection in your life, well, keep praying then; but by doing this, this would be enough, if it's from your heart, you are repentant of your sin and you're believing in Jesus, that would be enough. You do that. But Christian, also notice that if you want to be forgiven, you need to forgive - that's what the Bible says. I don't understand everything that that means, but that's what the Bible says, that's what Jesus taught. You can't hold bitterness in your heart and expect God to forgive you if you're not willing to offer that to other people.

Then it goes on specifically to rejection: 'I forgive all those who have rejected me and hurt me or failed to show me love, Lord - and I trust You to forgive me. I believe, Lord, that You do accept me. Right now, because of what You did for me on the cross, I am accepted; I am highly favoured; I am the object of Your special care; You really love me; You want me. Your Father is my Father; Heaven is my home; I am a member of the family of God, the best family in the universe. I am accepted, thank You, thank You. One more thing, Lord. I accept myself the way You made me'. Now we're not talking about sin here, but the way God has made you. 'I am Your workmanship, and I thank You for what You have done. I believe that You have begun a good work in me and You will carry it on to completion until my life ends. And now, Lord, I proclaim my release from any dark, evil spirit that has taken advantage of the wounds in my life. I release my spirit to rejoice in You. In Your precious name, Amen'.

Derek Prince put that prayer together. Do you understand it? We're going to pray it together, and I want to encourage you to pray this from your heart. We will pause at the point where we are forgiving people for rejection in our lives, and I will give you a little bit of instruction there as well, where you can be a little bit more specific, OK? So let's pray together: 'Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that You are the Son of God and the only way to God. You died on the cross for my sins, and You rose again from the dead. I repent of all my sins, and I forgive every other person, as I would have God forgive me. I forgive all those who have rejected me and hurt me or failed to show me love, Lord - and I trust You to forgive me'. Now, let us pause. Just where you are before God, staying in the attitude of prayer, I want you to name the person that you're forgiving, or persons, who have rejected you, or for that matter done anything to you. You could do something like this, just take it upon your lips, not audibly in the sense of the person near you hearing, but just whispering it to God, mouthing it to God. 'I choose to forgive', x, y and z, 'for', a, b and c - whatever they did, and how it made you feel. Tell God how it made you feel. Now if that touches the emotional core, well, you let that emotion rise because that's the way Jesus heals, and sometimes we push that stuff down and we're saying, 'Lord, You're not getting at that'. If you want Him to heal you, you've got to release it, so let it go. Tell the Lord who you're forgiving, and it's not a feeling - you don't have to feel like forgiving them, you don't even have to feel that you like them, you just have to choose to forgive them. Say: 'I release all bitterness and resentment to You, Lord. I ask You to heal my damaged emotions'. If you can bring yourself to the point of asking the Lord to bless that person - that may not be possible just at this moment - but if you can bring yourself to the point of doing that, that would be good. I'll give you a moment to do that.

OK, let's continue: 'I believe, Lord, that You do accept me'. Now, I think we need to repeat that: 'I believe, Lord, that You do accept me. Right now, because of what You did for me on the cross, I am accepted; I am highly favoured; I am the object of Your special care; You really love me; You want me. Your Father is my Father; Heaven is my home; I am a member of the family of God, the best family in the universe. I am accepted, thank You, thank You. One more thing, Lord. I accept myself the way You made me'. Let's repeat that: 'I accept myself the way You made me. I am Your workmanship, and I thank You for what You have done. I believe that You have begun a good work in me and You will carry it on to completion until my life ends. And now, Lord, I proclaim my release from any dark, evil spirit that has taken advantage of the wounds in my life. I release my spirit to rejoice in You. In Your precious name, Amen'.

Now let's stay in the attitude of prayer, because I'm going to pray for you right now, OK? I'm going to pray that God will come behind everything that you have said, according to the truth of the Word. Father, I want to thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to thank You for Your Gospel, and the great power that there is through the blood of Jesus. Lord, we invoke the name, the authority of Jesus Christ now. Lord, we ask all heaven to come behind what these dear people have prayed in Your presence. Lord, we know that You have heard those who have honestly and genuinely from their hearts cried to You. Now Lord, in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus, I ask You to heal the deep brokenness that there is in people's lives. Lord Jesus Christ, Alpha and Omega, I ask You to take people right now by the hand, some of them right to that moment of conception where there was immediate rejection or harm or hurt in those moments. Lord, I ask You to go right back with them to the time that Mum discovered she was pregnant, and the horror, or the fear, or the sense of 'I don't want this baby', or 'This is not happening, this can't be happening'. I ask You to go right back to where people, maybe there were attempted abortions, Lord, maybe there was violence toward Mum, or Mum incubated in fear. Lord, whatever it is, I pray that You will, and release those people from those moments, that You will break the power of those subconscious memories in their spirit, and that You will take from them right now anything that has absorbed them even in the womb, or after. Whether there were words spoken over Mum by herself or others when she was pregnant in the gestation period, or whether when the infant came out of the womb if there were words said over that child, or whatever spoken words right throughout infancy - all those rejections, all those accusations, all those humiliations in childhood, whether it was from parents, whether it was from siblings, whether it was from friends, whether it was from bullies, whether it was from schoolteachers, whether it was from church leaders or youth organisation leaders. Lord, whoever it was, whether it was from abusers, we ask You now, Lord Jesus, that You would untie those people, their spirits, from those moments, those dramatic experiences. Any of those individuals that still have a hold over them, those that they have forgiven right now; Lord, I ask that You would break the tie with them, that You would separate them completely - spirit, soul, and body - from those individuals, and You will set their spirits free. Those places that they are still tied to that event, or that individual, that You will break that now in the mighty name of Jesus. I ask You, Lord, to put Your cross between these children of Yours and those other people and events. Cleanse them from all defilement and all consequence of the enemy's attacks upon their lives.

Lord, I ask for those who have been rejected through marriage, that You will break the power, the hold that people have had over them - their spouse maybe, or a divorced husband or wife, or a deserting husband or wife - Lord, that You will break the power and the hold, the spell that is over them from that person, Lord. If there are soul-ties that need to be cut that, Lord, You will cut them right now in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, I ask You to heal the deep wounds that are there.

I ask that You would heal the wounds of legalism and condemnation among those who feel that You have rejected them, that You don't want them, that they have done something that is

unforgivable. Lord, would You lavish upon them now Your unconditional acceptance and love. Lord, let Your grace flow from heaven now to break the bondages of the enemy, to break those lies - may they melt away, Lord, in the heat of Your holy love. Lord, may they know that they are in Christ, and Christ is in God. Lord, continue that healing work deep down, heal people's broken spirits. Would You restore crushed, bruised, broken spirits? Restore them now, Lord, reach in with Your hand, Your nail-pierced Lord Jesus, and bring the healing balm of Gilead, that healing ointment from Calvary that streams to this very day. Bring healing to broken spirits, broken souls, minds, emotions, and will. We ask that You break the power of the enemy off the soul, and even off the body - people whose bodies have been afflicted because of wounds in their heart, that You will release them right now in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus. In the name and authority of Christ and His kingdom, I come against the enemy and I command you now to leave the children of God - now, in Jesus' name. I bring the blood of the Lamb against you, the word of our testimony against you, and I come against the spirit of rejection, and I command you to leave right now. Spirit of rejection, go in Jesus' name, go out in Jesus' name - right out! Right out of people's lives! Spirit of rejection, out of those wounds, right now. Jesus is healing those wounds. Spirit of rejection, go; fear of rejection, go; spirit of the fear of rejection, go; spirit of self-rejection, go - leave! You three spirits, rejection, fear of rejection, and self-rejection - leave the temples of the Holy Spirit now in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. I command the orphan spirit to leave, Jesus has not left us orphans, He has sent the Holy Spirit - orphan spirit, you go. Every orphan spirit leave, every victim spirit leave, every spirit of abandonment go, every waif spirit go in Jesus' name. Every spirit of low self-esteem, leave in Jesus' name; every spirit of low self-esteem and every spirit of inferiority, self-hatred, self-harm, every spirit of suicide and death - go in Jesus' name. Jesus has the keys of death and Hades, and He is Lord of all. I command every enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ, every spirit that has not confessed Jesus Christ is Lord that has entered in through rejection: you must go now, go now in the mighty name of Jesus.

Lord, I thank You that we read tonight that 'By His stripes we were healed', we were healed. We know, Lord, that ultimate healing for this whole creation will not happen until Jesus comes again, but we know there is a little bit now, there is a little deposit that He gives as a whetting of the appetite for His kingdom. We would ask for that now in this place. We believe Your kingdom is coming to The Stables, and we pray for a little bit more. Lord, we pray for physical healing now tonight, we believe that You are Jehovah-Rapha, we believe that You are Jesus Christ, the Great Physician. We ask You now, Lord, to touch lives and meet Your people just where they are coming to You in faith - simple childlike faith. Touch bodies, touch heads, touch hearts, touch eyes, touch ears, touch limbs, touch organs, touch muscles, touch sinews, touch bones - rid disease, Lord, drive out. I command every spirit of infirmity to leave, every illness that has come from a spirit of infirmity, go in Jesus' name. You're not part of the kingdom of God, go in Jesus' name. Lord, I pray that Your healing balm will come, I pray that Your holy, healing ointment will come to minds, hearts, bodies, souls, and spirits.

Deeper Healing - Chapter 3
"Freedom From Fear"

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I want you to turn with me in your Bibles to Luke chapter 12. Let's pray before we come to this subject. I don't know how this subject relates to you, it certainly relates to me a great deal - has done throughout my whole life. I'm sure that, if you're honest, most of us here have been touched at some time or other with fear. If you haven't, you will be. So it's very important - there are a lot of subjects we might deal with in these evenings that may not be pertinent to you, but I imagine this is probably going to be the one that is most general to the folk that are coming. So let's pray, and if you really want God to speak to you tonight and touch your heart, implore Him now - will you do that? Will you rise up in your spirit? Do you know how to do that? Just, whatever you've got in there, get hold of God with it and say: 'Lord, please tonight, would You break through and would You speak to me, and touch my life. Rid me of fear, deliver me from the bondage that I'm in tonight'. Would you do that? OK, let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ - that though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor; that we, through His poverty, might be made rich. Lord, we will never get over the riches that our Lord Jesus left in heaven, and what it meant for Him to become a man in human flesh that we might be raised to the heights of heaven and enter into the fellowship of the Godhead. Lord, it's just amazing to us. Lord, we know in our heads that there is no place for fear in that relationship. We pray tonight that we would come into an experience of deliverance from fear, the bondage of every type of anxiety and intimidation that would come from the enemy. Lord, we pray tonight that You would break, through the power of the blood of Calvary and the resurrection, that You will break the bondage of fear in people's lives tonight. We want to declare tonight that we fear the Living God and Him alone, we reverence You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we stand in awe of You, we give You Your rightful place. We pray for more grace that we might be enabled to obey You tonight, and that we will hear the word of truth, but be doers of the same also. So come, Holy Spirit, we pray, and minister to us in a mighty way, for Christ's sake we ask it, Amen.

OK, let's read one verse of Scripture as we look at this subject of 'Freedom from Fear'. Verse 32 of Luke chapter 12, it's the Lord Jesus speaking and He says: *"Fear not",* or *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"*. I just love that verse: 'Fear not, little flock' - and remember there are twelve of them, OK, there are an awful lot more today in His little flock. It might still be little, but nevertheless it's not twelve - and the whole world was against this motley crew of disciples that Jesus was still working with. Judaism was opposing them, the Roman Empire was going to try and crush them out; and Jesus comes and says: 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom'. Now we could talk about that all evening - as you know I can talk about most things all evening! But what I want to leave with you regarding this verse is: there is no place for fear in the kingdom of God. That's what Jesus is saying: 'It's My Father's pleasure that you should have the kingdom, do not fear'.

Fear ought not to be in our lives or in our experience. Now, we know it is, and we will touch on that a little bit later - but I want to ask you what your particular fear is. Do you know what it is to be gripped by fear? I looked up on the Internet this week 'phobialist.com', and it lists around - believe it or not - 530 phobias. There may be a phobia for everything. It's estimated that in the United Kingdom 10 million people have a phobia, one phobia or another. Now that's staggering when you consider that the population of the UK is around 64 million, and 10 million claim to have a particular phobia. Some of these phobias you may be familiar with. The top ten phobias in the nation - and I'm not asking for any hands or an acknowledgement if you've got any of these - arachnophobia is fear of spiders, it's number one; social phobia, number two, a fear of social or public situations; aerophobia, fear of flying, some of you may have that; agoraphobia, fear of open spaces, public spaces; claustrophobia, fear of enclosed spaces; emetophobia, fear of vomiting; acrophobia or vertigo, fear of heights; cancerophobia, fear of developing cancer; brontophobia, fear of thunderstorms; and necrophobia, fear of death, your own death or another's death.

Now I really don't want to be facetious with a subject as serious as fear, OK? I can do it a wee bit, because it has been my problem over the years - but there are some really strange phobias! I want to share some of them with you tonight. Now this is one I had: dentophobia - anybody got this one? Now, I mean I'm laughing about it now because I've been cured - and the cure was a good dentist! I was just sharing with my own children - we were in Belfast last night, and we were passing by the dentist I used to go to. I was telling them that - I only found out later - apparently my dentist was an alcoholic! It gives you an idea of the problems! I could have done with a bit of the hard stuff when he was dealing with me, because I do fear that he didn't give me anaesthetic - and certainly if he did, he didn't give me enough anaesthetic as a child! All joking aside, my bus route from school used to go past my dentist, and I would have closed my eyes every time I went past my dentist. In fact, there was one occasion when I burned the appointment card when I got home before my mother. It worked one six-monthly appointment, I got to twelve months without her realising - but it was the only time it ever worked. But I had a real fear of the dentist - why? Because of something traumatic that happened at the dentist.

Some other ones: nomophobia - anybody got that? The fear of not having your mobile phone with you. I fear that my teenage daughter probably suffers from that one! Coulrophobia - have a guess what that is. Fear of what? Not babies, who said fear of babies? No! Fear of clowns. It would surprise you the amount of people who have a fear of clowns! Geniophobia is a fear of chins. I haven't done enough research on this to know whether it means fear of multiplying your chins or not, but it's certainly a fear of chins. Another: pogonophobia, fear of beards - now maybe if you had one like that you would be afraid of it. These are actual phobias, believe it or not. Xanthophobia, fear of the colour yellow - that doesn't look like yellow, sure it doesn't - or the word 'yellow'. Sorry if you've got that fear, you've probably fallen off the seat just now. Xanthophobia, Homilophobia - the fear of sermons! Now I hope you don't have that one, you ought not to be here! This is true: Anatidaephobia - the fear that somewhere, somehow, a duck is watching you. Now, research that yourself, and it is actually true. Now try this one: 'Hippopotomonstrosesquipedaliophobia' - it's the fear of long words! That's true!

But I want to ask you tonight: what is your fear? We do joke about it, and I can joke about it, but we tend to joke about the things, such as death, that we find most difficult. So what is your fear tonight? All of us have a fear of some kind or another - what is

yours? When we talk about fear, what are we talking about? Let me just clear up any misunderstandings about what we're talking about. Fear of God is right throughout the Scripture, there are at least 300 verses about the fear of God in both Old and New Testament - and it's vital. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and so we have got to cultivate the fear of God in our lives - but it's more like a reverence or an awe, rather than a 'shaking in your boots' fear. I preached on that subject recently in Brookeborough Elim. It's important to cultivate the fear of God in our lives, but that's not what we're talking about when we talk about freedom from fear. There is the fear of man, Proverbs 29 verse 25, 'The fear of man brings a snare', and we will be including that in what we're talking about tonight - being free from fear. But there is a natural fear, and I want you to understand that natural fear is actually a gift from God. Here there is a misunderstanding that is often common: God has given us fear in order to protect us. If you want evidence of that, you've got a nervous system in your body, and there is the 'fight or flight' reaction to fearful consequences. So, in order to not get run over, we look both ways in caution when crossing the road. I often say when you're putting a log on the fire, you're careful in case you get your hand burnt - and so fear is within us all, God has given it to us to protect us for our own good. The problem comes when natural fear ceases from being our servant and becomes our master, when it actually is in control of our lives.

Now, you understand that natural fear is a gift from God, and it's a bit like sexuality. God has invented it, it's given to us to enjoy; but the enemy knows how powerful sex is, how powerful fear is, and so he uses the potency of those two gifts to overcome us and overwhelm us in a sinful way. So what God has given to us for safety, fear, can even turn to a chemical addiction in our lives. Now you might find this very hard to believe, but there are people who have a love-hate relationship with fear. They can't live without it, and they can't live with it. They want to be free from it, but immediately there is the contemplation of being released from fear, they start to panic in and of themselves. I was one of those people: if I was not worried about something, I would be worried. It becomes a kind of security blanket, like a child with a dummy, something that makes them feel secure.

We will be looking next month, in January, at 'Escaping Control', and there is an element of control here when it comes to fear. Believe it or not, though you are afraid of things being out of control, there is a sense in which you want to be in the driving seat and - can any of you identify with this? - you see slightly irresponsible if you're not worrying about something. You might put the term on it: you feel 'careless' - but that, in fact, is a lie of the enemy. So natural fear, you can see how it gets out of control, it gets unbalanced, and then what happens is there can enter on the scene a tormenting or a demonic fear - and that's primarily what we're going to look at tonight. Second Timothy 1 and verse 7 says: 'God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind'. The word for 'fear' there is 'dalio', and it literally means 'timidity'. God has not given us a spirit of timidity - but the inference is that this is a spirit that can be in our human spirits, a characteristic trait; but I think definitely Scripture would indicate that there is an actual demonic entity called 'a spirit of fear', and he wants to lead us into a place of dread and terror - an actual demon called 'fear'.

So tonight we're going to look at many things. We're going to look first of all of the effects of fear. Whatever fear you have - and there could be loads - you could have a fear of sickness; a fear of death, that's a very common one; your fear might be one of failure, maybe you're smitten by perfectionism or introspection and you don't want to

fail; or maybe it's the fear of rejection, because there has been rejection many times in your life. Well, whatever that there might be that you have, it will eventually affect all parts of your being. So if we are made up of spirit, soul, and body, eventually fear will infiltrate all of those areas. Emotionally, fear can make you tired, it can cause you to shut down. In fact, let me give you a couple of examples of this - 1 Kings 19, you don't need to turn to it unless you want to. Elijah has just performed a mighty victory over the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel - and now, having slain the prophets of Baal, Jezebel is after him. She says: 'I'm going to kill you, Elijah!', and so Elijah runs. He does a supernatural marathon, and he's exhausted from it, and then he begins to hide out of fear. It says in 1 Kings 19:3-4: 'And when he saw that', what Jezebel was going to do, 'he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree', he's exhausted. 'And he prayed that he might die, and said, 'It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!''. You see how fear of this woman, after he had defeated these warriors of Baal, how fear of this woman caused him to be actually drained physically and emotionally.

We see it also in the book of Daniel, Daniel 5 verse 6. Belshazzar the King, remember at the great feast where he was using sacred instruments in his debauchery and revelry, 'His countenance', it says, 'changed' - that was from fear of seeing the finger of God writing on the wall - 'and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other'. Have you ever experienced that? Well, that's a physical reaction to fear. So there can be an emotional reaction that actually grips us when we face a range of emotions: panic, terror, anxiety. We can actually get to the state where - and this is an expression that we use - we can be paralysed by fear. In fact, we tend to use an expression: 'we are petrified'. Do you know what 'petrified' literally means? It means 'to become stone', that's literally what 'petrified' means. There is a paralysing element to fear. So, you see what's happening here: fear might come into our mind, then it affects our emotions, and it affects our will to the extent that we can actually become frozen - our volition can be made impotent. When fear responses build up within our system, we can actually get into a chronic fearful state - and I have known what this is - where you become so wind up in a frenzy that it is almost impossible to come down from it. We might describe it as being 'jumpy', but our body can then react, and eventually over a period of time you might contract stomach ulcers or other physical disorders. So what we're saying is: this is the effect of fear. This is not some kind of irrelevant mental daydreaming activity that you have, this fear is dangerous to you, to the extent that it will affect your health.

Now let me explain to you how fear works. First of all, what I want us to do is look at the origin of fear, and to do that we need to turn in our Bibles to Genesis chapter 3 - go with me there, right to the very beginning, Genesis chapter 3. Now the context here is now after the fall, Adam and Eve have disobeyed God and taken of the forbidden fruit, and here you have in verse 8 of Genesis 3 - God is calling out now for Adam and Eve. Verse 8 says: 'And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?''. Now watch this: 'So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid''. Now this is remarkable, these are the first words that came out of man's mouth after the fall: 'I was afraid'. It's interesting that it was a fear of God, but it wasn't a healthy fear of God - it definitely wasn't a healthy fear of God. 'I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself'. Now there is so much we could say about that

tonight, but right at the very beginning of our whole history, in the book of origins, we see that fear entered into humankind because of a separation from God. Through separating from God through sin, there was no longer security that man had as a created being made in the image of God, it was completely gone. So primal fear entered the world through the fall into sin.

Now this is a principle that I want you to understand tonight, and it's vital: when man lost his relationship with God, he lost his covering. Now, will you remember that? When man lost his relationship with God, he lost his covering, his spiritual covering. Man is separated through sin, he has done it himself, and fear now enters because all security, all covering has gone. Now, you know who brought the temptation in the beginning, don't you? Satan, and Satan still lies in order to separate us from God - isn't that the case? In fact, Jesus said in John 8 and 44 to the Pharisees: 'You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it'. He was a liar from the beginning.

So you see how fear works, OK? Ultimately fear comes when we believe the lie of the devil, OK? So God's covering is not on us for whatever reason, we're not spiritually safe, protected, or secure; and the enemy comes along and plants a lie, and we believe it! When we believe the enemy's lies, the fact of the matter is: we contract with Satan. If you can imagine Satan handing you a legal contract and he says: 'Sign on the dotted line'; when we believe his lies, we contract with Satan and he gains a certain power over us. So any time you believe the lie, you empower the liar - do you understand? Whenever you believe the lie, you empower the liar. At the root of every controlling fear, there is a lie. Here's something that Adolf Hitler said in World War II: 'Make the lie big, make it simple, keep saying it, and eventually they will believe it' - he understood that, hence his propaganda machine. The world is still doing that today. But, you see, this was first thought up by the evil one - and so you've got to understand how fear works. Ultimately the foundation of every fear is a lie.

I want to ask you right now to be open before God in your mind and heart, and even ask Him - pray right now one of those little arrow prayers up to God - and say: 'What is the lie that I have believed that is the foundation of the fear in my life?'. What is the lie? You see, what happens is the enemy plants the lie in your mind, and then that lie will drop from your mind into your emotions, and this is what happens: it feels true. Are you with me? Something even absolutely nonsensical and ridiculous is in your mind, but if you meditate on it and mull over it, chew the cud of that thought, analyse it, dissect it - the way I used to do so often - eventually it will ferment and it will start to assimilate down into your emotions, and you will start to feel that way. 'As a man thinks in his heart, so is he', and then your will will be affected. So eventually this fear, believe it or not, the lie that brings the fear, can actually go into your spirit - that deeper inner part of you - and that lie can become part of your identity. We looked at identity in September, we haven't got time to recap on that, but that's very significant. Look at how many people in our world are believing lies about biology, believing lies about society, sexuality, we could go on and on and on - and it has become a part of their identity, why? Because they have received it right into their spirit, the lie becomes part of us. In fact, a phobia is actually a distortion of the inner spirit - that's what a phobia is, a distortion of the inner spirit.

So, what lie have you believed? Through believing the enemy's lies we become - remember - spiritually uncovered, that's important; and then we give a place to fear; and then spirits of fear, actual demonic entities, can attach to us and bring us into deep bondage. It is vital to understand God's covering over us, God's covering is key to understanding how fear affects us. I'm sure there are many of you who love Psalm 91, turn with me to it for just a moment. If you have a problem with fear, I would encourage you to read, meditate, and even memorise if you can, Psalm 91. I love it. Verse 1 says: 'He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty' - that's covering, that's spiritual covering. But read on: 'I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust'. Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid' - I have that circled - 'You shall not be afraid', of what? 'Of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you'. I'd love to read it all, but we will leave it there, you read it at home.

Do you know something? You've got to, look at verse 1: 'dwell in the secret place of the Most High', and 'abide under the shadow of the Almighty'. You've got to choose to be underneath Godly covering. This is a truth that you don't hear an awful lot about, it's greatly neglected. We will not fear when we are under God's covering or, as David puts it, when we are under His wing, the shadow of His wing - then we are covered, then we are protected from all fear and from the enemy. But - and a lot of Christians really don't know this - if we choose to come out from underneath that covering... how do you choose to come out from under it? You choose that by sin, did you know that? We hear so many times in the church that our sins are all forgiven through Jesus, that we don't realise that there are still consequences of walking in sin as children of God. If you choose to come under the covering and security of a life of obedience to the Lord, and sin, you will be unprotected from the enemy. Unbelief is another way to come out from the covering, and doubt. But, whatever it might be, when we come out from underneath the covering of God's protection we give rights to the enemy, particularly to spirits of fear.

This is a huge subject - covering. For instance, Christ is the covering over the church. So when leaders in the church come out from under the covering of the headship of Christ, there are consequences for individual churches. I haven't got time to go into that, but that really is worthy of your consideration. In marriage, a husband is a covering over his wife - now not the ultimate covering, because Christ is his Head, Christ is the covering over the couple, but the husband has headship in the home. I know that's not PC, but it's Bible, OK? We've got to respect that, wives: you've got to respect that. Now that doesn't mean - submission has been used for years to pummel wives into an ungodly submission and to control, and we will look at that next month - that's not what we're talking about. Men, you've got to stop invoking these verses to get your way over your wife, OK? But headship exists - yes, avoid the false and the perverse, but we need to submit to the true. Husbands are coverings for their wives, but when husbands don't lay their lives down as Christ laid His life down for the church, that's when wives are exposed to spiritual danger. When wives do not submit to their husbands, the marriage can be attacked. Parents and children, parents are a covering for their children - so when parents are irresponsible or engage in ungodly behaviour (and we could cite a ream of examples of this) there will be effects on the children.

So what you need to do tonight is to ask God: 'Where did my life get out from under Your covering? Where did I become exposed?'. There can be other areas, because some folk might be looking at their lives now and saying: 'Well, I don't know, as far back as I can remember I have been a fearful person and an anxious person' - if that is the case, it's very possible that it's not in your life that the covering was taken over, it may be in the life of your parents, but it may be a generational thing. I do firmly believe - and I think it was the case in my personal experience - that there are generational spirits of fear that go down generational lines, both father and mother's generational lines, and I think I got it from both! Alright? But it can be generations long, where these spirits are in families. Or the source of the lack of covering can be in pregnancy, it can be in the gestation period, nine months - how many mothers have been nervous wrecks during their pregnancy? I'm not saying every time that happens that that is communicated to a child in the womb, but I believe that can certainly be the case. Maybe a traumatic pregnancy, or for that matter a traumatic birth - and I had those as well. So you can see how someone might say: 'Well, I can't think of one particular incident that happened in my own life experience, but as far back as I can remember I have been a fearful person' - because maybe it hasn't been something that has happened to you, but it's something that happened to someone who was your covering, and it exposed due to fear, or it communicated or transferred fear to you. Of course there can be life trauma in your own personal experience, and there are so many areas that we haven't got time to highlight those - but you know yours: things that happened to you that created a gateway for fear to come in. It could even be abuse.

Then of course there is the occult, and this is a huge area on its own of course. But, you see if you dabble in the occult - and it seems staggering that Christians could dabble in the occult, but they do - but even if you dabbled in the occult before you were converted, there is a possibility that you have been affected by it. Not always, but there is a possibility. But when you dabble in the unseen realm that God has forbidden, you inevitably come out from under God's covering and you are exposed to the enemy. I was just reminded on the way down as I was meditating on these things in the car: I happened a few months ago to be involved in deliverance with a lady who had been a witch. She had got converted, and there were a lot of things still going on in her life and that she needed to be set free from. She used to go to sleep - because there were things happening, that's all I'll say, there were things happening around the house - but she would go to sleep with Psalm 91 open beside her bed. She knew the importance of spiritual covering, but there were still inroads of the enemy in her life. One night she woke up with the sound of scraping, and when she woke up one of her cats was clawing down the page of Psalm 91. I don't know if it was a black cat or not, but it doesn't really matter. The enemy wants us to be exposed, he detests spiritual covering so he will do all that he can in society - that's what's happening with government now, government is a form of covering as well - he will do everything in society to compromise our covering so that we are more exposed to his devices; and all of these can give footholds to fear. Fear may have entered even through a belief that you have learned in your life, maybe inherited from Mum and Dad, or observing them. Fear can enter through a tragic experience, when you have felt vulnerable or felt unprotected - that's often what happens with trauma, or with an accident perhaps. You felt in that moment that you weren't safe, the world wasn't safe, and maybe even as a Christian you asked: 'Where was God in that moment?'.

Maybe you wouldn't describe your problem as fear, but worry - well, that's OK then. No,

it's not OK! It's not OK. Let me explain: a bit like fear being a gift from God, we use the term 'worry' for 'carefulness' at times, don't we? 'Ach, you worry about your children, don't you? I mean, who doesn't worry about their children' - what that should mean is that we are careful about our children. The fact of the matter is, you ought to care for things and people that you value, isn't that right? So it's a good thing to be concerned, it motivates us to look after those things that are valuable. It's natural to be a little bit nervous about certain experiences, whether it's an examination or going to the doctor for an appointment. The problem is when concern over the future - in other words, things that we don't know the outcome of - prevents us functioning today. That's the kind of worry that Jesus says we ought not to have, the 'What if?'. Worry robs us of today by stressing about tomorrow, that's why Jesus commands three times in Matthew chapter 6 alone in the Sermon on the Mount: 'Don't worry! Don't worry! Don't be anxious for anything'. In fact, He said: 'Sufficient for the day is its own trouble'. Now that is a command of Jesus. Are you a Christian? You've got to obey that command! Stop expending your energies on tomorrow when you don't know what tomorrow is going to bring. Corrie Ten Boom, in the last few years of her life, said: 'Worry does not empty tomorrow of sorrows, it empties today of strength'.

Here's the main reason why - other than that it is a command of Jesus - why you should quit worrying: it doesn't work! Is that news to anybody here tonight? It doesn't work! First of all, because it is based on assumption rather than facts - you do know that, don't you? Let me share an acrostic with you, have you ever seen that one, an acrostic of fear? 'FEAR' is 'False Evidence Appearing Real' - isn't that what the enemy does? He tells us the lie, he tells us why we ought to believe that lie - and there might be some circumstantial evidence, but it is false evidence that does not necessarily come to that particular conclusion. False Evidence Appearing as Real - and what happens is, we believe it. Here's a chart I found called 'The Worry Chart' - by the way this is secular, this is a secular collection of statistics: 40% of all things we worry about never happen; 30% have already happened, so you could add that to the 40%, and we can't do anything about them anyway; 12% are needless worries about health, in other words we shouldn't be worrying about them; and 10% are petty, miscellaneous issues, things not to be worried about at all; 8% are real worries, or we might say 'genuine concerns' - and half of those 8%, 4%, we can do little about, and the other half we can. So the half we can do something about - what do you think we ought to do? Do something about it! The other half that we can't, what are we to do? Do nothing and bring it to God and not worry. Do you see how worry - because it's fuelled by the lies of the devil (and I'm not sure how accurate those statistics are, but they certainly seem accurate to me) - how it can fuel fear within us? Now the lie is not always obvious. You may have prayed already to the Lord: 'What is the lie that I have believed that is underlying fear or underlying anxiety?'. It could be a subconscious lie that God has to bring to the surface and reveal to you.

Fear doesn't work because it is based on assumptions rather than facts; but secondly: it has a lie in itself that things are out of control. Isn't that why we worry? We feel that the world is not safe, I am exposed, I am not protected, and ultimately God is not in control - that's really what we're saying in code language: 'I am not protected by God'. I want to encourage you right now again before we go any further to ask God to reveal the lie that you have believed - would you do that? Just now, in a moment's silence, just ask God: 'Lord, show me the lie that I have believed that underlies my fear' - do that now, just do it in prayer before the Lord. If you hear the answer, great; if you don't, wait and the Lord may show it to you through the rest of the evening. I want you to

pray another prayer right after that, and that is: 'Lord, show me the corresponding truth from Your word that cancels out the lie' - that's what's called 'the sword of the Spirit' in the armour of God, the spoken word of God that will replace that lie, with which you will slay the lie. 'Lord, show me the corresponding truth to that lie'.

Just out of interest - and I don't want to know what it is - but did God tell anybody what the lie was? Put your hand up if you received what the lie was, don't be afraid - anybody? Come on! There's a couple there, I think there's more - yes? God has been speaking. Now, you listen in, listen in, because He will continue to speak to some of you throughout the rest of this message and maybe just after. I want to spend the rest of our time looking at how to conquer fear. OK, we know what fear is, we know the effects of it, and we know how it works to a certain extent - but this is the important stuff: how do we get freedom from fear?

Well, first of all we need to receive God's covering - that's elementary, my dear Watson. Receive God's covering. Now listen: if you're not a born-again Christian, you don't have assurance of personal salvation, this is where you need to start. You will never conquer fear, or it will be a counterfeit remedy, unless you come to faith in Jesus Christ. That means you confess your sins, you repent, do an about turn from your selfish ways, and turn to Jesus Christ who died on the cross for you, took the penalty and punishment for your sins when He died there from God, bore your hell and your shame, and rose again from the grave that you would have eternal life. He asks you to believe in Him alone, not through good works, not through anything you are or religion, but purely through what He did for you - you ask Him to cleanse you, forgive you, and submit to Him as Lord; and you will take His covering over your life.

Maybe you are a Christian, but the Lordship of Christ is a problem - or, to put it another way, control is a problem. You find it difficult to relinquish control of your life and give it over to Jesus. Now there can be issues of healing that need to happen there, because maybe your free will was taken away from you by someone who did control you or abused you - we will look at that later on - so you find it difficult to surrender. But listen: God is not that person! God is not the abuser! God is not the person who violated your free will! God is the good, good Father, your Abba in heaven - He will never do anything to hurt you or harm you, you can trust in Him! So maybe you need to relinquish control and surrender to the Lord Jesus, but ultimately you need to know this - and this is one of my favourite verses in the Bible - 1 John 4:18: 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love drives out fear, for fear has to do with judgement. Whoever fears has not been made perfect in love'. Isn't that wonderful verse? 'Perfect love drives out' - casts out - 'all fear'.

So when you understand the perfect love of God, what Jesus did for you on the cross, you submit to that and you allow it to become a part of your life - what does that look like? You bow to the Lordship of Jesus in every area of your existence, every area! There can be no no-go areas! Now I understand, I'm still struggling in certain areas - we all do - but I hope that I've given all the keys of every room of my life over to Jesus, and I have given Him permission to step into any of those areas and deal with them. I'm still talking to Him about some of them, and struggling at times - but the Lordship of Jesus is being willing to be made willing, OK? But also, perfect love is understanding the Father heart of God, as I've already alluded to - that you are accepted in Jesus, that you don't have to strive, you don't have to perform, but this grace that Trevor was talking about: you've got if you're in Christ, it's yours! You're in the Beloved! Also you

need to receive Holy Spirit's infilling in order to empower your life to receive more of His love - really the baptism and the filling of the Holy Spirit is immersion in the love of God. So this is part of receiving God's covering - it's really the Gospel, isn't it? A relationship with Christ, and the Father through Him, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Do you know what the antidote to fear is? 1 Corinthians 13, that purple passage on love - at the end of it, what does it say? 'Then remains faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love'. What is faith? Hebrews 11 and verse 1 says, one translation puts it: 'Faith is the evidence of things not seen, but it is the handle on the unseen' - I think it's the Amplified renders it like that - 'Faith is the handle on the unseen'. What was fear? False evidence appearing as real. So the enemy can orchestrate certain circumstances to make something look real, and in fact maybe things do look pretty real, and the fears that you have are founded to a certain extent - but listen: faith is the evidence of things not seen. 'That's ridiculous!', you say. Well, it's faith-sense not common-sense, it's faith-sense - but this is what God says will deliver you from the power of fear. Faith is the handle on the unseen, the Amplified Version also says it's our title deed for things we have not yet received. So, in other words, it's the document tells us: 'I'm going to get this, what God has promised me, even if it doesn't look like it and I can't see it right at the moment. I'm not going to believe the enemy's lies, I'm not going to believe circumstantial appearances around me, I'm going to look at the title deed of God's word, what He has promised me - and I'm going to put my faith and trust in that'.

Faith and hope - what's hope? Well, hope is the certainty that does not disappoint. Hope is an emotional reaction, really, to faith; where we start to feel that this is really going to happen: 'I'm going to be free!'. Are you saying that tonight? Freedom from fear? And what is love? Well, it's security, it's effectively that covering that is over you, security. Regarding the fruit of the Spirit, The Message translation says: 'Go after love as if your life depended on it'. Seek spiritual gifts, yes, but go after love as if your life depended on it. 'The greatest of these is love', that's why 2 Timothy 1 and verse 7 says: 'God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind'. Power to overcome our weakness in fear, love which is our security, and a sound mind - and that's the entrance point of fear, isn't it? A spirit of fear is a spirit that will lead us into a place of dread and fear, and God says: 'I haven't given you that'.

Now people say to me, and I could identify with this: 'Oh, my Mummy was a worrier, my Granny was a worrier, and it's just been in our family - and I'm a wee worrier too'. Have you ever said that? 'I'm a wee worrier, that's just the way I am' - that's a lie from the devil. God has not given you a spirit of fear. Christian, do you want something that God hasn't given you? Ask the question: 'If God hasn't given me this, who has given me it?'. The enemy has given it to you, do you want something that he gives to you? The Amplified Version says: 'He has not given us a spirit of fear, but power, love, and a calm and well-balanced mind, and discipline and self-control' - that's what God gives us! Listen to Romans 8 and verse 15: 'For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father''. What's that? Covering! That's the secret to freedom from fear: receive God's covering, perfect love that casts out all fear.

Here's a second way to conquer fear, and each is important: identify and confess the fear and the underlying lie. Where did the fear come from? I don't know if you're here the first week of this season in September when we looked at 'Identity', but we talked about strongholds of the mind, strongholds of the mind that are built upon lies. If

you've got a stronghold of fear, it is built on the foundation of lies - but you need to, when God shows you the lie, you need to identify it, renounce it, and replace it with the truth. It's essential, therefore, that you recognise that this fear and this lie is sin - alright? If you don't recognise it as a big problem, you're never going to overcome it, you're never going to deal with it seriously. It's not excusable! John Wesley said: 'I would no more worry than I would curse or swear'. You see, any sin - we saw at the very beginning - separates us from God; but it robs us of our peace with God, and there is probably nothing that robs us more of the peace of God than worry and fear - isn't that true? It's sin! Will you name it tonight as sin? Will you not excuse it any longer? Will you, by identifying and confessing the fear and the underlying lie, will you rob the enemy of the authority that he has gained in bringing it into your life? That just looks like repenting of having believed his lie, and renouncing the lie that you have believed, and renouncing fear - and you might even need to renounce a generational fear as well, as it has been passed on to you and predisposed you in it. What you're doing is, you're dismantling strongholds of the mind and heart - in fact, you could be dismantling, tearing down strongholds that have lasted for generations! Isn't it wonderful, what we could do this evening? These strongholds can be at the root of your fear.

So receive God's covering, and secondly identify and confess the fear and the underlying lie. A third thing you need to do is: forgive, break soul-ties, and receive healing. What does that mean? What that means simply is: if there are people that compromised your covering - OK, so it could be generational, ancestors in the past, and you need to forgive them. It could be your own parents; it could be your mother when she was carrying you, it could be how she taught you to fear through her reactions throughout life; it could be someone who harmed you, who hurt you, and through what they did they caused you fear. It might be an inadvertent thing, you might have been in an accident but somebody else was driving - you might need to forgive them. They mightn't have intended doing what they did, but you might need to forgive them. Forgiveness could be necessary. Breaking soul-ties with people who taught us to fear, or caused us to fear, or harmed us and made us afraid - that's important, and we will do that later on. We may need, and most do, to receive inner healing - what is that? Well, the hurts of the heart, the emotions that have been damaged, maybe the memories that we have that are triggered and flash back upon us and cause fear - we need to invite the Lord Jesus, who is the Alpha and Omega and who is not bound to time, He is the Eternal One, to step in (and He can do this, I have seen Him do it many times) step into that particular harmful memory, and break its power and set us free, and redeem that memory. That will bring inner healing, when Jesus does that. Basically we're asking Him to heal all the damage that fear has done in our lives, even to our body - even to our body and the nervous system. It might take time to come down from its heightened state, but that can happen.

So forgive, break soul-ties, and receive healing. Fourthly: command spirits of fear and trauma to go in Jesus' name. I want you to turn with me quickly to Philippians chapter 1, Philippians chapter 1. I was listening to a preacher the other day, a sermon that was recommended to me on fear and love, and he made this comment and it was astounding. I'm just going to quote it to you, but he was reading Philippians chapter 1 verses 27-28 - rather obscure verses, you might think, concerning fear, but read them with me and listen to his comment. Philippians 1:27-28: 'Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ', your behaviour ought to be fitting of the Gospel, 'so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel' - now look

at verse 28 - 'and not in any way terrified', or afraid, fearful, 'of your adversaries' - look at that! 'Not in anyway' - and, by the way, these were Christians who were being persecuted - 'Not in anyway terrified by your adversaries', watch this, 'which is to them a proof of perdition', judgement, hell, 'but to you of salvation, and that from God'. Now listen to what this preacher said on this particular verse, verse 28, 'Not in anyway terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God'. He said: 'Every time we are victorious over a fear issue' - whatever particular issue that is in our lives - 'what is broadcast over the PA system of hell', the kingdom of darkness, 'is that impending doom is upon them', isn't that amazing? Every time you conquer a fear, it is announced to the powers of darkness: pending doom - and so they try to get you to fear, so that they don't have to think about what is coming to them. Isn't that incredible? They get you terrified, because they are terrified. If they can get you terrified, they will not be as terrified - but when you are victorious over fear, this is what happens: 'No wonder', he says, 'the powers of darkness work so hard to get us to fear, because they know they are going to hell'. So they want to make our lives a hell on earth through fear, and if you've ever known debilitating fear, you will know that that is exactly what it's like.

So what you need to do is command spirits of fear and trauma to go in Jesus' name. Do you know what that actually is? Declaring boldly the victory of the cross of Jesus! Fear was put to death when Jesus died, fear was buried in the tomb when Jesus was in the grave - and when He rose again, He didn't resurrect fear! He left it behind Him! So why should we live in fear's shadow, when Jesus has conquered fear.

Fifthly: we need to choose to walk in faith, not fear. I haven't got the word 'choose' up there, but that is a very important word - it's a choice that we make. A lot of people make this mistake, and I have to say to you: I have seen people reasonably regularly delivered from fear in personal prayer, but I have to say to you tonight that often folk are not - do you know why? Because they encounter the power of God, or not, in a personal prayer moment, but they don't choose thereafter to walk in faith. The greatest deliverances from fear are those who learn to walk in the truth of God's word, and those who have a renewing of the mind. So you might have a mighty deliverance tonight through the prayer ministry that goes on - but I want to encourage you: your deliverance will not be sustained and maintained unless you walk by faith, fear will get back in again. So you need to choose to walk by faith, and not fear - and that means obeying what God says.

Do you know what the most frequent command in the Bible is? Have a guess! Shout it out, come on: 'Fear not!'. You know how many there are in the Bible, don't you? 365 - that's one for every day of the year, OK? It's easy saying that, 'Fear not', but how? I mean, I know we're not meant to laugh at the Bible - but sometimes it is funny when you see an angel or something doing something amazing, and somebody falls down on their face - and they say: 'Fear not!'. I mean, that's a normal human reaction, but God wants us to know that we don't need to be afraid of Him though we need to fear Him and hold Him in awe. But how do we obey this command? Well, one of my favourite stories - and I have to say, one of the stories of has spoken to me most as a rhema word from God when I had big decisions to make in my life, I'll not go into all that - was this story of Jesus appearing to the disciples walking on the water. You remember they thought that He was a ghost. Sometimes we don't see God instrumental in our lives, we can even think He's the enemy when God is doing something - but anyway, that's another story. He almost bypassed them, the inference is, He almost bypassed them

because of their fear that had overtaken them - but then He spoke to them, and He said: 'Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid'. 'Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid!'.

Now listen, Jesus tells you not to be afraid - so why be afraid? I mean, I know it's very simplistic, but you've got to face this: why will you not obey the command of the Lord Jesus? Oh yes, there are underlying issues, there are wounds need to be healed; but will you on naked, raw will, decide tonight: 'I'm going to choose to walk in faith and not fear'? Do you know something? If you, like me, have been a very fearful person in your life, you've got a head start - did you know that? You really have! You've been in a trainee school for faith, and you didn't even know it! Did you know how similar fear and faith are, did you? I mean, it's incredible: both fear and faith believe in something that doesn't appear to have happened yet. Isn't that right? I'm not saying it hasn't happened, but it doesn't appear to have happened yet. In fact, Philippians chapter 4 and verse 8 tells us - I love this verse - 'Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy; meditate on these things'. Do you know what worry is? It is meditation on lies - that's what worry is! So what do you do? You meditate. You don't go 'Hmmmm' and sit in the lotus position, but you might as well do because it's doing as much harm as if you did do that, because you're taking the lies that the devil plant in your head and you are ruminating over them. If you're like the way I was, I would take them, dissect them, analyse them, turn them upside down, inside out - and say: 'Is this true, is this not true, is this me, is this not me?'; until it actually took over my emotions, and eventually affected my behaviour. But that's meditation, and you're meant to do that with those things in Philippians 4 verse 8. Do you see if you can shift your meditation from the lies of the enemy over to the truth of what God says is reality, you will be delivered very quickly from fear, and you will walk in faith and not fear the rest of your days!

Isn't that amazing? So, if you're a worrier you've got a head start - but you need to ask yourself tonight: 'What environment am I creating in my mind? Am I creating a breeding ground for fear or faith? What atmosphere am I creating in my home? What are the words that are spoken?'. 'Oh, be careful, oh don't do that, oh you never know where that might lead to! Somebody will lose an eye!' - did you ever hear that one? 'Somebody will lose an eye! Oh, there will be crying before it all ends!' - I used all those things as well, but do you understand? What is the atmosphere that we create in our homes? What are the words that fill the atmosphere? Are they words of hope, are they words of life, are they words of faith, assurance, affirmation? Are there unhealthy practices that are in your life that are feeding fear? It's staggering that some Christians today are into horror fiction, and don't think anything of watching a horror movie - 'It's all fantasy', is it? Or the literature that you read - and especially teenagers at the moment are reading a lot of horror romance. I mean, years ago it would have been ridiculous to put those two things together, but now it's in vogue - vampire novels and so on. What is the music that you're listening to? Is it feeding your fear? A lot of kids are playing certain videogames that can feed fear. Wait till I tell you, I mean: watching the news almost today could fill you with fear! We're living in the first generation that has ever had 24-7 news on so many different channels from so many different points of view. You could have a diet of constant bad news - is it any wonder that Jesus said that when the end comes men's hearts will fail them for fear!

So, what tap are you turning on as an inlet into your life? What are you flooding your

life with? Are you flooding your life with fear or faith? Now, even if you have a spirit of fear, an actual demon of fear - and some of you might have tonight, and I hope and pray that before we even finish the service you will be delivered, that's what I'm banking on - but even after that you need to have a practical plan of action, don't you? Because, let me tell you, as someone who knows - and I didn't have anybody really to pray with me the way you might get prayer tonight; I had to, through books and various things, the Lord was gracious in leading me over years to get free - I would describe my condition now as: fear is no longer on the inside, but guess where it is, it's on the outside. It knocks my door every now and again to get back in. Alright? So I'm not fear-free in the sense that I'll never have a fear again, or have to face fear - I do - but I hopefully know how to face it now, and stop it from getting a foothold in my life.

So, how do you do that then? Well, one of the best illustrations that I use regularly with people is this one, OK? Your life, imagine it as the front door here in this illustration. Every day of your life there are two postmen that come to you. There is God's postman, and there is the devil's postman. God's postman has the truth of the scriptures, the word of God; and Satan's postman has a lie of course. Really it's all down to which of these parcels or letters you take and read, or open and analyse that will determine what part fear or faith will have in your life. I know that might sound very simple, but really it's as simple as that. Every day of your life who are you going to believe? Who are you going to listen to? Who are you going to give entrance to? If you do look at your own experience, if you've struggled with fear, you know that you have answered the wrong doorbell ring, the wrong door knock from Satan. If you look at your life on a moment by moment basis, you will know that it's his voice that you're listening to, isn't that right? You're obeying his voice.

The question begs: why is it that we will believe everyone but God? I know we're cynical and sceptical about a lot of things, but for most of us: if BBC News said a thing - I mean, this week for instance Lenny Henry got an award, didn't he, at the Palace or something? But ITV put on Ainsley Harriott, footage of Ainsley Harriott, and it wasn't him got it at all - and I'm sure there were people who believed, because the BBC or ITV said it. Now we don't really in our hearts believe that they can never get anything wrong, we believe they get a lot wrong - but we can almost sit, because of our media mindset today, and drink in. Often what the newspaper says, we believe, and at times it's far from the truth. Yet we will believe almost everybody and anybody, but God, and He's the most believable of them all! So what we are really asking you to do tonight, God is asking you, is to renounce and reject the lies that you have believed and agree with God. Come into line with the plumbline of truth which is His Holy Word. That is really the fear of God - and what happens is this: the fear of God abolishes every other fear. Faith is what overcomes fear!

I used to believe that fear and faith were mutually exclusive - do you know what that means? That if you had faith, you wouldn't have fear. I don't really believe that now, I believe - from my own experience now - that you can be absolutely almost completely overwhelmed and absorbed by fear, but you can step out in faith, I believe that. You see, I believe that when Peter was stepping out of the boat, he was fearful. I mean, was he a mug? Was he stupid? Of course he wasn't, who wouldn't have been fearful doing that? But what did he do? He disregarded his fear, and he stepped out in faith - and that's what cancels out the fear, when you step out in faith. Someone said: 'Courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it'. Yes? It's not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. So don't be sitting waiting until you have no fear to step out in faith

- no! In the midst of your fear, take the courage and step out - trust God.

I have a question for you: what would you do if you had no fear? Think about that for a moment: what would you do if you had no fear? What is your fear holding you back from doing, maybe for God? I have to ask that of myself - if you knew the battles that I had, honestly! It's just that the enemy is trying to intimidate us and prevent us living our potential for the Lord. Fear kills more dreams than failure ever will. In the church in particular, we emphasise so much repentance and holiness, and that's very very important of course - but we often ignore how fear will kill more dreams than failure ever will. That's why the most frequent command in the Bible is 'Fear not!', because the Lord knows the potential for that to jettison the dreams and the destiny that God has and His purposes for our lives.

Can you say: 'I will fear no evil, for You are with me'? Now we are so familiar with that verse and that Psalm, that we have lost the real import of it all, haven't we? 'I will fear no evil' - why? Covering! 'For You are with me' - that's it! That's the secret! God is with you! God is with you! What are you going to do tonight? Are you going to take the leap of faith? Faith is a leap not in the dark, faith is a leap in the light - but it's a leap nevertheless. It's a leap because you're relinquishing control over your own life and trusting God. So, will you? I'm going to tell you something: if you do leap - unlike this guy on the screen - you will fly. You will! I want to say to you tonight: if you will step out tonight and renounce the lie, and declare in Jesus' name that you are free through the blood of the cross, and command the enemy to leave you: you will fly tonight. If you walk in faith and not fear, you will fly for the rest of your days - and you can't even imagine or dream what God is going to do with you if you will deal with fear tonight in Jesus' name.

So will you do it? We're going to pray as we always do - and I'm going to go through this prayer with you now so that you understand everything that is there. 'Father, I renounce all ungodly control over my life, and I submit to You and receive Your covering of love and protection'. I think I've described enough what that means. You really do need to relinquish control - and, by the way, one of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. So God is not asking us to be completely irresponsible couch potatoes, or to become completely passive and expect God to move us like puppets - that's not what He is asking. He is asking us to relinquish all ungodly, selfish, fleshly control of our self, our circumstances, or anybody else; and allow Him to cultivate His fruit of self-control in us - but we take covering, that's the important thing, we become our own covering when we try to control our own lives, do you understand? That's when we become exposed. We bring over us - if you're not a Christian, become one at this point - we bring over us God's protection.

'Lord Jesus, in Your name, I confess and renounce all fear, anxiety, doubt, and unbelief. Forgive me for believing the lies of Satan that...' - now at that point I want you, if God has already revealed the lie, specifically that you articulate that. Now, as I say often, the person beside you doesn't need to hear, but it would be good if you took that and just whispered it to God on your lips. It could be a number of lies that you have believed, maybe you have been told them, maybe they have been spoken over your life: 'You're no good, you're a failure, etc etc' - well, renounce those. 'I reject these and choose to believe the truth that' - now God may have already revealed to you the corresponding truth, that sword of the Spirit, maybe not, but maybe He will even in the moments when you're praying here. It's not rocket science, it's obvious, it's the

opposite of what the devil said really. Think of the opposite of what the devil has been saying, and you're probably not far off the corresponding truth of God's word! 'I freely choose to forgive', so and so, or people, 'for how they made me afraid'. So if there is someone who brought fear into your life, whether it's an ancestor, you suspect, or it's your Mum or Dad, or it's a perpetrator of a harmful act upon you, or it's an accident or something like that - but there is some person connected with that, you do need to forgive them so the enemy does not get any hold over you through bitterness or resentment. 'I freely choose to forgive so and so for how they made me afraid; and I ask You, Lord, to break all ungodly soul-ties' - that's a heart-tie that comes through ungodly relationships, or through a dominant controlling relationship - 'I ask You to break ungodly soul-ties with...', the person. Some people are fearful because of intimidating relationships that they are in.

'Lord, I ask You to heal my emotions, my memories, and all damage that fear has done in my life'. Now at this point I want you to be open to Jesus stepping into your memories and into your heart, and even look for Him - that doesn't work for everybody for various reasons, but it can work for anybody. Look for Him and watch Him even in those memories, watch for Him stepping in. 'From this moment I choose to listen to Your voice alone, and meditate on the truth of the good things in Your word'. Then finally: 'Now in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command all demonic spirits of fear, worry, trauma, unbelief and doubt to leave me now' - now, if you have to add any other ones in there, fire away! 'I speak directly to all demonic spirits who have had any influence over me, in Jesus' name I expel you' - and expect something! 'I ask You, Lord Jesus, to now fill me with Your Holy Spirit, and all His good fruit - especially His love, joy, peace, and faith. Thank You, Lord. Amen'.

OK, are you ready for this? Let's say it together, OK. 'Father, I renounce all ungodly control over my life, and I submit to You and receive Your covering of love and protection'. Now just pause there are a moment, and just take that covering by faith over you now, take that covering of Abba Father - a good, good Father, a loving Father. Let Him cover you now and protect you, He can be trusted you know. He will never harm you. Let's continue: 'Lord Jesus, in Your name, I confess and renounce all fear, anxiety, doubt, and unbelief. Forgive me for believing the lies of Satan that...', now you fill it in now, before God whisper those lies. It might be that He is not trustworthy, or that the world is unsafe, or that you're not protected, or that you're this, that or the other. All those lies that you're no good, that you'll never amount to anything, that you're damaged, that you'll never be any different - speak them out. OK, ready? 'I reject these and choose to believe the truth that...', OK, replace it with the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the truth. It may just be the opposite of the lie, speak it out, take it into your spirit, receive it, receive the truth. Ready: 'I freely choose to forgive', now name those people or a person who hurt you or wronged you, and caused you to fear. 'I forgive them' - ready - 'for how they made me afraid. I ask You, Lord, to break all ungodly soul-ties with', and name that person again.

Now we're going to continue, but at this point now I want you really to have a heart open to the Holy Spirit, what He's going to do, and have your mind open to watch for Him to see what He will do - alright? Just watch for Him in your memories. Some of you have probably become present to those traumatic situations, because naming the people and events is bringing it up to the surface - but now you're looking for Jesus. Don't stay there, we're not interested in bringing trauma back up apart from a look for Jesus. Alright, ready? 'Lord, I ask You to heal my emotions, my memories, and all

damage that fear has done in my life'. Now stop there, you watch for Him.

Lord Jesus, I ask You now, for those who are ready, and those whose hearts and emotions are not bound - right now I pray that You will loosen emotions and hearts to enable people to see, but I pray that You will step right in now, step right into some of these scenes - traumatic scenes - some of these memories that have power over people. Step right in and show them where You are at, show them what You're doing, maybe speak to them, Lord Jesus - just come to them, thank You, Jesus. Lord, I believe You're coming to people right now, thank You Jesus. Blessed Jesus, show them that You were there, show them that You are there, show them that You have never left them. Thank You, Jesus.

Praise God, I believe the Lord has shown Himself to some of you there right now. Ready for the next part: 'From this moment I choose to listen to Your voice alone, and meditate on the truth of the good things in Your word'. OK: 'Now in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command all demonic spirits of fear, worry, trauma, unbelief and doubt to leave me now. I speak directly to all demonic spirits who have had any influence over me, and in Jesus' name I expel you'.

Now I'm just going to pray at this moment. Enemy, you heard, and your authority has been taken away. You have no authority to inflict fear upon the children of the Living God in this place who have engaged with God by faith. So I'm going to command you: leave now - leave now! Out of every life here! Fear, trauma, doubt, unbelief, all spirits of anxiety, every spirit working under fear, every spirit in the family of fear - strong man of fear, I bind you, and I bind to you every spirit working under you. I drive you out, we drive you out in the mighty name of Jesus. You will go now, Jesus is healing the wounds. You have no place to hold on, Jesus is healing the wounds. Every spirit of fear, leave now in Jesus' name. Thank You, Jesus! Thank You, Jesus!

Now, we don't want any empty houses, do we? So you need the filling of the Holy Spirit, and that's what we're going to ask - and ask by faith now, ask the Lord Jesus. Are you ready? 'I ask You, Lord Jesus, to now fill me with Your Holy Spirit, and all His good fruit - especially His love, joy, peace, and faith. Thank You, Lord. Amen'.

Lord, I thank You for how folk in this place tonight, how they have truly engaged with You by faith. I now pray that there will be no empty vessels here for the enemy to come back with seven more spirits, and that fear - when he comes knocking on any of our doors - will find us full of the Spirit, that there is no room in this inn because Jesus is there and fear has no place. I pray that people tonight will receive a healing from bodily ailments, from psychosomatic conditions, from mind and heart that have root fear at their cause and origination. Lord, would You pour out Your healing in this place tonight, and do a wonderful work - by the stripes of Jesus we believe we are healed. We know we will not achieve it all until we get to glory one day, and we are in resurrected bodies - but Lord, a wee bit more now would be great, and we believe that that's possible - to see Your kingdom come, Lord, and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Touch lives, touch minds, Lord, touch hearts, touch emotions, touch wills, volitions, touch body, soul and spirit - in Jesus' name, Amen. Hallelujah! God is doing things tonight!

Deeper Healing - Chapter 4
"Escaping Control"

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Evening everyone. I want you to turn with me in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 2. Now, a wee tester: what did we do in September, if you were here, what did we do in September? If you've got a bookmark, you're not allowed to cheat, OK! Anybody remember? I'm just trying to remember here myself. What? 'Rejection', was it? 'Identity', it was 'Identity', well done! It was 'Who Am I? Finding True Identity', and then the next month was 'Rejection', and last time, December, was 'Freedom from Fear'. Tonight we're looking at 'Escaping Control'. We're going to just read one verse of Scripture - we're going to be looking at several verses of Scripture tonight, but we're going to read one. Let's just pray for a moment, I know Harry has just prayed, but I want you to pray now for yourself. I want you to ask God to really come and speak to you tonight. I believe God is going to do mighty things here this evening, I really do believe that. We really have been seeking and imploring God in a special way today, and we believe, we have faith and expectancy to see great things done. I want you to know that: know that there have been people laying hold of God on your behalf. So if you have come tonight with a bondage on your life, or some kind of control, come in faith now - believing that God will touch you and speak to you. So will you ask Him now: 'Lord, speak to me'?

Father, we come to You as the Almighty God. We want to say that You are the all-sovereign, the omnipotent El-Shaddai. We declare in this place tonight that there is nothing too hard for our God: 'Am not I the God of all flesh, is anything too hard for Me?'. So, Lord, we just want to proclaim Your greatness, Your omnipotence - that the Lord God omnipotent reigns. We want to say, Lord, that You reign in our lives, You reign on this land, You reign in this building, You reign in this atmosphere. We desire, Lord, that You would reign completely, totally and utterly in every area of our lives - that there would be no 'no-go' areas for You, Lord; that every key to every room of our lives would be surrendered to You. We desire that You would pinpoint this evening, Lord, any areas that there is another ruling power of control - whether it's a human being, a spirit, an influence, a habit, whatever it might be - that, Lord, You would break those yolks of bondage that we might go free. It is for freedom that we have been made free, let us stand in that freedom tonight and be no more enslaved in a yoke of bondage. We declare that over ourselves tonight; that that will be the fruition of this message: freedom! So come, Lord Jesus, we pray; we put everything beneath the heel of the Lord Jesus Christ - all foreign powers, we take authority over you in Jesus' name, we nullify every Satanic influence in this place, and we say: 'Lord Jesus, be Lord of all'. Amen.

OK, Revelation chapter 2 verse 20 - alright? Now we're cutting right in here, these are the seven letters to the churches in Asia minor, and Jesus is speaking messages through the Apostle John that are written in a letter. This is coming now to the church at Thyatira, and we're cutting right into the middle, and Jesus says in verse 20: *"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols".* We will just stop there for the benefit of our considerations tonight.

'Escaping Control' - initially that title might seem a bit nebulous to some, and you're left wondering 'What are we talking about here tonight?'. What does control look like? Well, the best way of defining control is how both Scripture and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself defined it. They did that by using a biblical character who effectively personifies the whole concept of control, and her name is 'Jezebel'. Now I'm sure you've heard that name mentioned - hopefully you've never been called it! When it is mentioned, most people immediately associate that name with seductiveness, lust, and sexual looseness. Now, there is no doubt about it, as we will see tonight, that is part of her character. Indeed - I didn't know this until researching - there is even a modern magazine, I think it's a fashion magazine, a pop culture magazine, called 'Jezebel'. So people even who have no biblical knowledge, totally biblically illiterate, still have a concept of what 'Jezebel' means.

But another significant aspect to the characteristic of Jezebel in the Bible was witchcraft. Again, when you say the word 'witchcraft', people immediately imagine potions and spells - and, yes, those are tools of the trade in witchcraft, but not all witchcraft is occult. Now just store that one in your head for a moment: not all witchcraft is occult. Here's the reason why: essentially witchcraft is ungodly attempts to control another. So whatever that is by - and we will see that illustrated in many ways tonight - it is an unauthorised, ungodly attempt to use power over and above someone's free will to get your way. So it's very much more subtle, and it can often masquerade as love and authority - it's often nothing to do with the occult. We've really got to understand this - and I'm going to go a step further and say, it might even disguise itself as Christianity. Shocking, isn't it?

The controlling behaviour of Jezebel is so extreme and wicked that the Holy Spirit took her name to use as a label for a particular spiritual power. The power worked in Ahab's Royal Court in ancient Israel through his Queen, Jezebel. But it was also, as we look through the Old Testament, it was also the ruling power of ancient Babylon, that great godless empire. In Isaiah 47 we read of a proud Queen, a sensual one, a woman of many sorceries and false prophecies. In fact, we read in the book of Revelation that Jezebel, this spiritual power, will make a big reappearance in the end times. I'm not going to go into that in any detail, but nevertheless we see that here is a spiritual ruling dominion power that has straddled throughout all time, almost. Yet, as we have looked tonight in Revelation 2:20, we see that this Jezebel power was still at work in the first century church, seeking to undermine godly order and authority. Surprise, surprise - guess what? Jezebel is still working in the church today, she's still trying to rule the world and control our lives. You may have been unaware of it until now, but I believe God is going to give you a revelation. Let me say before I go on any further that this power is not female, OK? The personality in the Bible that is used to illustrate this spiritual power is female, but 'Jezebel' can rear its ugly head in male and female, very often male, in male human beings.

Now, I want you to turn to 1 Kings chapter 16, and we're going to be looking at a couple of passages as we consider Jezebel, OK? First Kings 16 verse 31, now I'm going to read this verse in the NIV, it says: 'He', that is, Ahab, 'not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him'. So we see control - Jezebel seeks authority in people's lives in order to exercise control. We've got to understand this right away: she wants to exercise power, so she seeks authority. This

basically, if you think about it, is the difference between an armed policeman and a criminal, OK? So here you've got an armed policeman and a criminal, and the difference between the two is - well, they've both got guns, that is the same; but the policeman on the left is authorised to use that weapon, whereas the criminal on the right is using the same weapon but in an unauthorised criminal matter. So the police man is rightly authorised to carry the power, that is, the gun; but the criminal is not.

You see, all power belongs to God - you do know that? He created all power, Lucifer's power was originally created by God, demonic power was created by God, the powers that be, principalities and powers, even powers in government are created and ordained by God. But when they are unauthorised, in other words when they are not under the covering of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and God's will, those powers are used in an ungodly way. Jezebel loves that. Just to illustrate it a wee bit more, because this is important for your own understanding: say the policeman was to take his authorised firearm and go out on Saturday to shoot geese with it, right? That is an unauthorised use of his power, he's going out of the remit of what he's authorised to do - do you understand? This whole idea of authority and power is very central to the Kingdom in the New Testament, the word in Greek for 'authority', 'exousia', and the word for 'power', 'dunamis'. We've got to make sure that we've got rightful authority to do things in the power of God. When you think of an illustration in our modern world, and right throughout human history there are dictators, political and military dictators, and of course they are in power - but they're using power in an ungodly way. Jezebel is a bit like that: if there is the correct authority and covering over us, over churches, over countries, Jezebel cannot operate.

Do you remember last time I talked, when we were studying 'Fear', of the real importance of covering, spiritual covering and protection, for authority. So the Lordship of Jesus is so important, that everything in our lives, everything in our churches, and essentially we want to get to the place where things in our community, are surrendered to Jesus Christ - including our relationships. Here we see how wrong spiritual authority opened the door for Jezebel's ungodly control - that verse we read in 1 Kings 16:31. Ahab was not only partaking in Jeroboam's sins (he was a predecessor, one of his forefathers), but we see he married Jezebel. He was marrying a Princess of the Sidonians, so he was outside the nation. She was a Baal-worshipping Sidonian Princess, and she was the daughter of a King called Ethbaal. Do you know what 'Ethbaal' means? 'Towards the idol' - that was his father-in-law! We also read how this spelt great demise in Ahab's life, he also erected an altar to Baal in Samaria - and so opening these doors of disobedience, in other words exposing himself from a godly covering to an ungodly lack of covering, he opened these doors and give way to the authority, the ungodly spirit of control, Jezebel. Jezebel becomes the instrument of the enemy in his life and in the kingdom.

Now listen, I hope you're getting this: where there is not rightful authority in our lives, in our churches, and our nation, a vacuum is created - and Jezebel will gladly step in, OK? Now let me give you some teaching on some things Jezebel's spirit will do when given authority. If you turn to chapter 18 of 1 Kings verse 4, you will see: 'For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water' - but it says that Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD. She killed the Lord's prophets, but she also had her own prophets - we read that she had 450 prophets of Baal, and 400 prophets of Asherah (which was the female corresponding

deity of Baal) - we read that in verse 19. So here's something that Jezebel's spirit always wants to do: it wants to gain ungodly authority to get power and control to silence the true voice of God. She or he - the spirit - wants to mislead and misguide God's people, and often it's done through false ministry, false teaching, or false prophecy.

So the Jezebel spirit, whether it's in the nation where there is a dictator, whether it's in ungodly leadership in a church, or in a marriage or relationship; Jezebel wants to bring deception, lies, and propaganda. We read in 2 Timothy 4 that this will be a mark of the last days, verses 3 and 4: 'For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine, instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear; they will turn their ears away from the truth, and turn aside to myths'. This is what Jezebel wants to do, through an ungodly authority to get power in order to silence the true voice of God and spread lies. Now I believe in the gift of prophecy - we haven't got time to define that and talk about how it ought to operate - it's a biblical New Testament gift, but prophecy in charismatic and pentecostal circles has often been abused, sometimes at the behest of a Jezebel spirit: where folk who are operating in some form of prophecy are gaining control over another, trying to strip them of their free will and get them to do something. Never submit to any 'prophetic', so-called, ministry that takes your free will away and demands that you do something - that is control.

Something else I want you to see about the Jezebel spirit, this character, is that there is always intimidation and fear - these are primary ways that Jezebel gains and maintains control. Look at 1 Kings 19 - I know we're dipping in and out of this biography of Jezebel, but we haven't time to do anything else tonight. Look at verse 2: 'Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time'. And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there'. Now what you've just missed in verse 18 is the great gauntlet that has been thrown down by the prophet Elijah for the prophets of Baal to call upon their god that he might bring fire from heaven - and of course it doesn't happen. But he calls on the Lord, who is God, and God answers by fire and the fire comes from heaven and consumes not just the sacrifice, but the altar and all the water around it in a trough. The prophets of Baal and Asherah are slain, and Jezebel is wanting to take revenge upon Elijah - and she says: 'I'm going to do that to you, I'm going to kill you', and he runs from her! Jezebel is quite explosive, and that spirit will often make us afraid of confronting it. You know the expression that we 'walk on eggshells' around certain people, yes? Or you might hear someone say 'Anything for a quiet life!' - and that often displays that there is a controlling power at work. Jezebel, through intimidation and fear, often causes us to appease her or him because of fear of the consequences. 'It's not worth the hassle!', so we submit. Now that is how not only Jezebel gains control, but maintains control - because we fear, through intimidation, challenging. That's often how dictators gain control: they get the support of an army, and whenever that happens it's all over - isn't that right?

Now, don't misunderstand me, Jezebel can appear very helpful. I'm led to believe that Hitler is said to have been incredibly charming on a personal level - it didn't stop him slaughtering 6 million Jews. Jezebel will often make herself, as a spirit, indispensable. People operating in control and manipulation will be helpful people to a degree, often gifted people, but they will make us feel that we cannot do without them - and therefore

we fail to challenge their manipulation. You know, if they are a person that gets the job done - everybody likes that type of person to a degree, and can I say that that is often how people get into leadership in churches. They are gifted in certain areas, maybe they are businessmen, or they are skilled in some way, they have good jobs - so they get position, but they may not have spiritual character.

Look at chapter 21 of 1 Kings, we see that Jezebel would get the job done, wouldn't she? Verse 5: 'Jezebel his wife', Ahab's wife, 'came to him, and said to him, 'Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?'. He said to her, 'Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it'. And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard''. Then Jezebel his wife said to him, 'You now exercise authority'' - see that? - ''over Israel!''. Oh, she was in the position: 'Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite'. She had got the position of authority with him, now she was going to wield her power - she would get the job done. She's going to exploit weak points in the leadership of Ahab in order to gain influence. Now please listen to what I'm saying: if you are in church leadership at all, or involved in the work of the Lord, waken up! Jezebel spirit will seek weak points in leadership to get control. Be under no illusion - we're not just dealing with a personality, we do not wrestle with flesh and blood, we're dealing with demonic forces behind these individuals - there is a spirit that operates just like Jezebel, that was operating in her. If you want Scripture for that, look at chapter 9 of 2 Kings verse 22 - you don't really need to know the background here: 'Now it happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, 'Is it peace, Jehu?'' - 'Is there peace?', in other words. 'So he answered, 'What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?''. OK, is that explicit enough for you? 'The harlotries and witchcraft of your mother'!

So Jezebel, the Queen, used witchcraft and sorcery to gain control - and that is the essence of witchcraft today: getting what you want, and getting your way. It would amaze you to realise, explicitly in an occult manner - whether it's voodoo, whether it's some kind of spells or potions - there are portions for almost anything, seriously, and spells to get your way, to get somebody to fall in love with you, to get a promotion, to do this that and the other. But do you know the most common way witchcraft is practised today? It's none of those things, it is ungodly control of another's will - we might call it 'manipulation' - and all ages are at it. You do know this, don't you? Now we could talk for ages about this, whether it's using emotional blackmail, or mind control, or guilt trips on people - all of that is witchcraft. Now some of you here tonight have never heard the like of that, you probably think I'm really going off the deep end tonight, but trust me I'm not: it can be the same spirit behind it, an attempt to control others by ungodly means against their will.

Something else about Jezebel: Jezebel can be extremely seductive, not just to gain control but to keep it. Especially - now please note this, and I believe this is a word from God to some of you people tonight - when Jezebel, when that controlling, manipulating influence is challenged, that's when she will become seductive. Look at 2 Kings 9 with me, verse 30, a bit further down: 'Now when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she put paint on her eyes' - eye make-up on - 'and adorned her head' - arranged her hair - 'and looked through a window' - or sat at the window. In other words, what you're seeing here is: she dolled herself up, and she sat in the window as if it was a picture frame. She's just about to be challenged, but now she uses her seductive

powers. Now listen: sex, sexuality has always been used as a powerful weapon of control. In fact, we read did we not, tonight, from Revelation 2:20 that this Jezebel power that was in the church was causing people to fall into sexual immorality. It is often through sexual soul-ties that people become controlled, and that's why the occult uses sexuality so much. Now I don't want to go into any depth regarding this, but there is ritualistic sexual activity in the occult - and it's not just for the thrill of it, it's because they know, and the enemy knows, the inherent power that there is of control, and the spiritual dimensions of soul-ties that there are in sexual activity.

But it's not just sex, it can be charm as well, Jezebel can be very charming - especially when challenged. By the way, you know where 'charming' comes from, don't you? The whole concept of a charm derived from magic charms! So Jezebel will use seduction and charm to gain and maintain influence. So let's just recap - this is what the Bible and Jesus used as a personification of control and manipulation: a proud, arrogant, rebellious, judgemental, seductive, but destructive power that exploits the absence of godly authority in order to control. You find it in marriages, you find it in families, you find it in churches, business, workplace, government, and whole nations.

So let's get personal tonight: have you experienced control? Maybe you have suffered control? Most people have at some time or another. Or perhaps you have sought control? Ironically, it's often those who have been controlled who, in order to attempt to escape control, actually take control of their own lives lest they ever be controlled again. So if you are a person who has suffered control, it is very likely that because of that wounding you have taken control to yourself. You see, there are many ungodly ways of reacting to control that actually will give in to Jezebel. I find that when I'm ministering to folk, it's often people who have come under a yoke of control that actually are prey to this spirit also. We will see the right way to react to control later on, but let's list some of the common ways, but subtle means of control, that Jezebel has - and we will be as practical as possible.

There are mothers who are smotherers. Maybe you had a mother who was a megalomaniac, she was power hungry. Now listen carefully to what I'm saying here tonight: the commandment is clear to honour your father and your mother, but the problem comes when they treat you as a child when you're 45. I'm going to have this ahead of me too, this is a challenge for all parents - but maybe that's been your source of control, a controlling mother who smothered you. Of course, this can become exacerbated when you get married - whether it is a son who is still on his mother's apron strings or not, or the other way around. The biblical injunction that was also seconded by Jesus was: 'A man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife' - and some mothers need to really memorise that verse and meditate on it for a while! But this is a real strong source of control and manipulation - we want to bless our parents, but we've got to be real as well.

Of course, parents can be a problem with their children in another way. It expressly tells us in Scripture, we're commanded - fathers and parents - 'Do not provoke your children to anger'. Yes, there has got to be godly submission by children and obedience, Scripture says 'Obey your parents', but this is to be done 'in the Lord'. Whenever this becomes out-of-control, it becomes an opening for the enemy to work. It's the same, whether in the home or a church or in government, when people pull rank - 'You'll do this because I say so', or 'because I'm your father', or 'because I'm your mother' - and I know we've all said that, but there's got to be more to it than that. Whenever we pull

rank, we are often invoking this ungodly power.

There is also, of course, in the home, husband's headship, and Christ has a lot to say about that in the New Testament too. But we are to love, husbands, we are to love our wives as Christ loved the church and give Himself for it. In fact, the verses before that in Ephesians chapter 5 say: 'We are to submit to one another in the fear of the Lord'. So there is to be no abusive relationship of control of a husband to a wife, and you certainly are not to sanction it by using Scripture - and that has been done throughout the years to our great shame. Abusive dictators are not godly examples of headship and husbands in the home. Equally so, henpecked husbands, where there have been controlling wives, this is the spirit of Jezebel, this is control and manipulation.

But it can also be bullying in school, it's the same controlling power. Or it can be in the workplace, an aggressive boss. Another way that we often miss this spirit is through passive aggression - do you understand? Where people are actually against you, but they're smiling at you and they appear to be for you in charm. But passive aggression and passive control is when maybe people are doing nothing, but it is actually by doing nothing that they are controlling you. So they could be withholding benefits, they could be withholding money, affection, approval, or help when you need it. Passive control.

Leaders need to be given their place, we are very clear on that: 'Servants obey masters'. We are meant to respect leaders in the church and honour them, but Scripture is also very clear of elders: you're not to lord it over the brothers and sisters, you're not to throw your weight around. How many times have people been hurt in church scenarios through ungodly control through leadership? I saw this one, it was a good one: 'When I say 'jump', you ask 'How high?', Pastor' - that's often the way churches are run, through control! Yet what Scripture sets out for us is a servant-leadership model that we see exemplified in our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, He also castigated the Pharisees in Matthew 23 verse 4, He said: 'They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads, put them on other people's shoulders; but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them' - that is a sign of ungodly authority and power in leadership, when people have burdens put on them and they are crushed. That can often come in religious circles, but indeed in any sphere, through fear of disapproval - where you fear letting someone down, that's control. I don't have time to expand on this, but the sheep need to know what true submission is and what spiritual abuse is - and there is an awful lot of spiritual abuse going on in all our churches. I could take a series on this subject alone, it's massive.

We need to consider tonight, and we want to be as practical as possible in the time that remains, how to escape control. The sad thing is: some people who have been controlled - often it's them - spend all of their day trying to control circumstances and people, and they are absolutely exhausted. 'Control freaks' we might call them. Fleshly control is the exact opposite of Galatians 5:23, one of the fruit of the spirit which is 'self-control'. Fleshly control is the opposite! Religion is the epitome of fleshly self-control. Let me explain what I mean: religion is an attempt to control your bad side. Remember we saw this with Jacob last year? We try to do good things, but in the flesh. We are conditioned by this even as children, you know: 'Be a good little boy, be a good little girl' - and often we grow up and get religious, and this becomes a counterfeit holiness where, by the power of the flesh, we seek to better ourselves, to suppress and put down the flesh, the ungodly nature, and try to be better and pull our socks up; when really that is the antithesis of the Gospel message. The Gospel message is the

cross of Jesus, that David Legge died on the cross in Jesus, the good and the bad of David Legge was put to death on the cross so that, through the resurrection of Christ, I can actually have the life of Jesus in me, living out of me by His Spirit - that is the Gospel that you need to believe in! What have you got? A lot of professing Christians here in our land have got the religion, whether it's Protestant or Catholic makes no difference, it's all the same flavour. We fight over which side it is, it's so stupid! It's all the same! All the same! In fact, all the religions of the world - they have different gods, they have different philosophies of how to be saved, and how to get near God, and what we are to do and all the rest - but essentially they're all the same, they are all fleshly ways of dealing with the bad self and trying to get better yourself. That is not the fruit of self-control.

Isaiah 58 verses 5 and 6, Isaiah 58 is a wonderful passage of Scripture - but listen to what is God's chosen fast, the fast that He wants - 'Is this not the fast which I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?'. This is what comes through the power of the cross of Jesus: that yokes should be broken, that any bondage that we are in of any ungodly control - whether it's sinful habits or religious behaviour or pressure - they ought to be broken at the foot of the cross. I pray that you will come to the foot of the cross tonight, because that's where shackles come off, that's where bondages are set free.

I want to give you, and I'll be as brief as I can, eight ways to escape ungodly control. The first is obvious, and this is a prayer that we do almost every night that we are here at some stage in the meeting: we need to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus. That's obvious, isn't it? We need to relinquish control ourselves. Now please understand: a lot of people who have been controlled in the past through whatever means find this step very difficult, because any time that they have released control to another they have been abused or misused - and so they have protected themselves, and there are issues of mistrust. But you've got to understand, and listen carefully to what I'm going to say: this is a safe surrender, there is nothing dangerous about this. You've got to understand who you're surrendering to: it's your Abba Father, it's your True God Father in heaven. He's not going to harm you, He's not going to misuse your trust.

I remember talking to a lady a number of years ago - and you've heard me say, I'm sure, that sometimes people can't get through to Father God because they had bad earthly fathers, and that image of a bad earthly father has been superimposed on God and so they need a lot of healing for that, they need to forgive their earthly father, but they need to learn what Father God is really like. But I met a woman who, she really was afraid of the Holy Spirit - now she's not uncommon there - a Christian lady; but the reason why she was afraid of the Holy Spirit was: when preachers were talking about the Holy Spirit, they often said 'You need to come under the control of the Holy Spirit'. She had had a very controlling mother - her problem wasn't with her father, but a controlling mother - and she had within her this attitude, and it was unconscious: 'I will not allow myself ever again to be controlled by another', and that actually hindered her surrendering to the Holy Spirit's power, because she thought the Holy Spirit - like many people do - He's going to take you over and you become like a robot, and you will be going places that you don't want to go, and stepping on planes and going to far-flung corners of the earth as missionaries, and you'll have no control. That's not the control, Galatians 5, the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. This is what God does: when we surrender to Him, He makes everything new, and He gives us back into our lap correct

godly self-control, so that we correctly make volitional decisions in line with the plumbline of His truth. He frees us up in order to make the right decisions, but for ourselves.

From that, I learned that I should clarify when I talk about the Holy Spirit controlling you - and it's probably better for people like that to talk about 'the Holy Spirit's influence'. Maybe you're that person, and you need to be set free and understand that there is nothing to be afraid of in surrendering to God, and you certainly don't need to be afraid of the Holy Spirit. But you do need to surrender to the Lord, if you want healing and you want release from the power of control, you need to relinquish your own self - ungodly self-control - and you need to surrender to the only authorised power that there is in the whole universe, Jesus Christ.

The second thing you need to do is repent of wrong responses to others' control of you. Wrong responses - we could go on forever - wrong responses could be you trying to control others as a result of their control over you; or indeed it could also be trying to control your circumstances. Often with eating disorders, such as bulimia and anorexia, people are trying to control something - their diet, their looks - because there have been areas of their life that have been out of their control, so 'At least this is something I can have my say in'. There are various other applications of that as well, but we need to repent - even if someone did something to us to control us or manipulate us, it may not be all our fault by any means - but ways we have reacted that are not godly, wrong responses to that control.

Thirdly, we need to confess submitting to ungodly control - that's important, because even the things that aren't our fault essentially, the ways others have tried to manipulate us, there is a sense in which maybe we didn't have much choice, but when we have had a choice and have submitted to that control we need to repent. It can be people, but it may not be people, it may be substances: alcohol, drugs, or it may be some other ungodly habit like pornography or sexual promiscuity or something else. We need to confess how we have submitted to this ungodly control, whatever it might be.

Fourthly, we need to forgive controlling people, controllers. Now please don't misunderstand what I'm saying tonight: it doesn't mean that you allow them to continue their behaviour in your life - far from it! We will see this in a moment or two. But you do need to forgive them, release them to God. You know, you've been here before, you know what forgiveness is - it's not forgetting, it's not your emotions, you don't have to feel like forgiving them, it's an act of your will. If you waited until you felt like it, you would never do it. It's not saying what they did is admissible or OK. It's taking them off your hook, where you want your pound of flesh, and it's putting them on God's hook. It's getting out of the way and letting God be God, and releasing to God all resentment and bitterness that might be in your heart, and asking Him to heal your damaged emotions. That is forgiveness, it's more for you, essentially, that it is for them - but you need to forgive for the controlling behaviour. Even if it's continuing, you need to keep on forgiving. 'How many times do you forgive?', Peter asked Jesus, 'Seven times?'; Jesus said 'Seven times seventy' - what's that? 490 - in other words, Peter, stop counting and keep on forgiving. It insinuates to me, at least, that there was a situation in Peter's life where he was continually being offended. You need to keep on forgiving.

Fifthly, we need to ask God to break the yoke, the yoke of control and bondage - whatever it might be. Now that yoke, if it was a sexual relationship, will be a soul-tie,

and that needs to be broken in the spiritual. Even if the relationship is over, there needs to be a breaking of the power of that control over you. But that yoke may not necessarily be sexual, it could be a friendship, it could be a domination by a bully, it could be a controlling boss or church leader, it could be all sorts of different scenarios - but essentially you've got an unequal yoke. Second Corinthians 6 and verse 14 is clear about this: 'Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?'. You know what this yoke is - two animals - and you will have a hard time with an unequal yoke, there will be spiritual oppression and attack that will come to you, and that yoke needs to be broken.

Sixth: you need to renounce the Jezebel spirit, and indeed you need to renounce all associated spirits with the Jezebel spirit. There are other spirits that work with Jezebel. Jezebel is essentially control, but it can be ungodly self-control, it can be manipulation, witchcraft; often working along with Jezebel is fear, intimidation - that's how she maintains her power. There can be also guilt or rebellion, because you could rebel against that control, and so rebellion is there is well. There can be a whole myriad of possible spiritual powers that can come and afflict you when you are affected by this - renounce the Jezebel spirit.

Seventh, and this is vital and would be easily overlooked: you need to ask for healing, complete and deep healing of spirit, soul and body. Now listen: if you're a person who seeks control - and hopefully, by the Holy Spirit's illumination tonight, you have been open and honest enough to admit that and see it in yourself - but if you are seeking control, it's a sign of a deep inner wounding, a lack of a sense of being. That's why many people are attracted into witchcraft, because they have felt powerless in their life. Now I haven't read any of the Harry Potter novels, but I'm led to believe that apparently it's the story of this boy who escapes his world of insignificance through magic powers by which he is able to control others and his circumstances. That's just typical of why people go into the occult - but it's also the same reason why some people go into the ministry! People desire significance, and when it's not born of the Spirit, it will be in the flesh. A lot of people, whether it's in the Sunday School, the choir, or the pulpit, are seeking a power-base.

Eighth, we need to create healthy boundaries. I hinted at this in relation to forgiving controllers - it doesn't mean that you become vulnerable to them, far from it. Creating a boundary is simply this: you need to know when your responsibility ends and when another's responsibility begins. There are some people, and they've got a saviour complex - they think they are the Salvation Army! All the burdens of the world come on their shoulders, because they see a need - they are need-driven. Now, we ought to be compassionate and responsive to the needs of others - but you cannot fix all the needs of all the people in all the world. So we've got to understand what our remits are, and our godly responsibilities, and when my responsibility ends and someone else's begins. You need to create healthy boundaries in your life, especially when it comes to controlling people. You need to put boundaries in! You need to put boundaries in! For some of you, that means you need to learn to say 'No'. Do you know that 'No' is a complete sentence? It does not require justification or explanation. Are you like me? Whenever somebody rings me and says: 'Can you do a meeting on such and such a night in such and such a week?', and I look at the diary and I'm free that night, but I'm not free any other night, and that's the only night I'm free that week or something like that. I feel I have to say to them: 'No, I can't do that meeting because... x-y-x... and I

need to spend time with my family, and I need some rest, and blah blah blah' - and I should just say 'No, I can't do that meeting, I'm sorry' - end-of. Why do you have to explain? Why do you have to justify yourself? Because of control, that's often the thing.

Josh Billings, who was an American humourist, said: 'Half of the troubles of this life can be traced to saying 'Yes' too quickly and not saying 'No' soon enough'. There is no doubt about that, some of us need to learn to say 'No' to the pastor! This is going to go down well, by the way, if any pastors hear about this tomorrow at church, you know, because they need the Sunday School filled, they need somebody to put the chairs out - but if everyone was in their God-given, Spirit-directed calling, we wouldn't have these problems. I had to talk to a mechanic this week - and he is a believer - and he was working on my car. He was telling me how overwhelmed he was with jobs and so on, and I was telling about Jesus when He said in Matthew 11: 'My yoke is easy, and my burden is light'. I have learned this over the years - I'm not saying I've perfected it - but I have learned that whenever I am crushed under a yoke, it didn't come from God: I have taken something on me that He didn't ask me. Listen, here is a tip: chuck it all out, everything that He didn't ask you to take on, no matter who else asked you to take it on - bin it! Only take what He asks you. I'm not saying everything is always easy, and hard work needs to be done - we're not to be lazy, and sometimes we will be tired - but we're never ever to be crushed under yokes and burdens that God never asked us to take upon ourselves.

So you see this - let me go over it again for you in case you missed anything: surrender to the Lordship of Jesus; repent of wrong responses; confess submitting to ungodly control; forgive controllers; ask God to break the yoke, the tie; renounce Jezebel spirit and all other spirits; ask for healing of your spirit, your soul, and your body from the effects upon you of that control; and create healthy boundaries. So what do you do? How do you escape control? Two ways really: neither appease it, nor allow it to operate through you.

Now I hope you know from tonight, from this teaching, the danger of wrong control and the benefits of right control. Let me illustrate it to you finally: there is a pilot in the cockpit, OK, he is authorised to fly this plane, and you trust him to fly the plane, don't you? He is an authorised pilot with power and ability to do it, and you will benefit from it. But here is unauthorised, wrongful control - a hijacker, and he is now controlling, and the crew and passengers are all in danger. Now I want to ask you tonight: have you got a hijacker on board? Have you got a person, have you got a place, have you got a practice, have you got a habit, have you got a religious tie, a relationship, have you got a lack of boundaries or an attitude of messiah-complex where control is gripping your life and taking you off the divine trajectory of the destiny that God has for your life?

John 8:36: 'So if the Son set you free, you will be free indeed'. As I quoted in my prayer at the very beginning: it is for freedom that Christ has set you free, therefore stand fast in that freedom and do not be ever again enslaved in a yoke of bondage. Do you know what control is? You do now. You know how it affects you, and you know how to escape it. The question is: are you going to draw a line tonight, and are you going to say 'Thus far and no farther. There is only going to be one ruling power in my life, there is only one Lord, there is only one faith, there is only one voice I'm going to listen to'? Once and for all tonight will you come to the foot of the cross, and will you submit to His divine Lordship, and will you renounce all other control?

Now, I'm going to put prayers up on the screen tonight, and I'm going to lead you - as I have done on previous nights. Now you don't have to pray this, no obligation, but I hope you can all see this. I want to explain it, and go through it first, and then we will pray it together, and I believe God is going to do divine surgery in this place. I believe He is going to break yokes, cut ties, and free people in our midst - OK? So get however comfortable you need to be to focus on this spiritually, and whatever God has put His finger on tonight you bring that up to the Lord.

The first aspect of the prayer is a prayer of surrender: 'Lord Jesus, I surrender completely to You, spirit, soul, and body - all that I am and have. I relinquish all ungodly personal control that I have taken away from You, Lord'. So whether that is that you have sought to control others, or you have sought in response to the control of others to control yourself, or out of fear and intimidation or whatever - you need to relinquish control. 'I confess and repent of any sinful responses to others attempts to control me, such as: submitting to a wrong authority or controlling habit; obeying fear and intimidation; rebellion; self-protection; attempting to control others or circumstances. I freely choose to forgive all who have ever tried to control or manipulate me by whatever ungodly means, specifically I forgive...' - and you name the people there who are the controlling influences in your life. 'Lord please break the yoke and ungodly tie between', so and so, that person or persons, 'and I' - but it could be an organisation. Can I just say there are Orders in our land, and organisations like the Freemasons, and there is an ungodly control in those organisations, ungodly control. If you have ever submitted to any of the ritual you need to renounce that, because it's not godly, it's not a godly authority. It could be a religious organisation, it could be a so-called 'Christian group', but you have submitted to an ungodly authority, and you have come under its control with cultlike attitudes and movement. It could be a thing, it could be an object - I've known people tied idolatrously to an object. Whatever it is bringing control, ask the Lord to break the yoke between you and it. 'Separate me, spirit, soul, and body, from the effects of this ungodly tie. I renounce the spirit of Jezebel, witchcraft, control, fear, rebellion', and there are several other things that hopefully I will remember as we get through.

The final aspect of the prayer: 'Lord Jesus, I ask You to please heal me from all the effects of control, but also of any brokenness causing me to seek control. Fill the emptiness of my heart with Your holy being so that I may be satisfied by You. Lord, I ask You for wisdom to establish godly boundaries in my life, and that You might give me the fruit of godly self-control by the power of Your Holy Spirit filling me'. Are you ready to pray that? OK, let's pray together and mean it - let's go together:

'Lord Jesus, I surrender completely to You, spirit, soul, and body - all that I am and have. I relinquish all ungodly personal control that I have taken away from You, Lord. I confess and repent of any sinful responses to others attempts to control me, such as: submitting to a wrong authority or controlling habit; obeying fear and intimidation; rebellion; self-protection; attempting to control others or circumstances. I freely choose to forgive all who have ever tried to control or manipulate me by whatever ungodly means, specifically I forgive' - now you just take a moment and name the people, or the group of people that you're forgiving. Before God it would be good to take it on your lips, people around you don't need to hear it, but just take it on your lips, whisper it to the Lord. 'Lord please break the yoke and ungodly tie between' - name those people - 'and I' - a person, an organisation, a thing bringing you under control, an influence, a group, a movement, an organisation, an object, if it's attached to a habit. It could be

your own career, OK? Ask God to break the yoke of control, ready: 'Separate me, spirit, soul, and body, from the effects of this ungodly tie'. Are you ready, now this is important, spiritual renunciation: 'I renounce the spirit of Jezebel, witchcraft, control, fear, rebellion, lust. Lord Jesus, I ask You to please heal me from all the effects of control, but also of any brokenness causing me to seek control. Fill the emptiness of my heart with Your holy being so that I may be satisfied by You'. That is very important - all wrong spiritual desire and behaviour is coming from an emptiness in our hearts. Are you ready for the final aspect of this prayer? 'Lord, I ask You for wisdom to establish godly boundaries in my life, and that You might give me the fruit of godly self-control by the power of Your Holy Spirit filling me'.

Now let's all pray, and I'm going to pray over you right now, let's all pray: Father, we come to You in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we declare and proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord - there is no other. The highest place that heaven affords is His by sovereign right. He is the only authorised ruling power in this world or this universe. All power belongs unto God. We acknowledge that at the very beginning in the Garden, that we as mankind took our dominion that was given to us by God and gave it into the hands of Satan - but we thank You that on the cross Satan was divested of all that authority by the Lord Jesus Christ who spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross. We thank You that You have put all principalities and powers beneath His feet, and Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Lord, we declare that tonight, and we - some of us anyway - want that over our lives, and over every aspect of our lives, over every area of our being: spirit, soul, and body. I just pray right now for those who have truly engaged with You in humility, repentance and faith - that You will now deliver them from the yoke of bondage. We give You all the glory, we give You all the praise for being set free. Oh Lord, let Your kingdom power completely submerge us, and let us go on in the freedom for which You have set us free - for Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Deeper Healing – Chapter 5
"The Antidote To Anger"

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by David Legge

We're turning to Ephesians, the book of Ephesians, and we will be referring to several scriptures as we go along - but this is just a bit of a springboard for us to start with tonight. Ephesians 4 verses 26 and 27: *"'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil".* Let's read that again: *"'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil".*

Let's pray, and as we pray I want you to pray now - OK? And what I want you to be praying for is that God would speak to you on this subject - but, do you know something? Here's the thing about God: you can speak on one subject, and He can speak to somebody about a totally different subject - did you know that? That's true! So be prepared: He can just come at you from any angle and touch a particular area of your life, even if the preacher isn't talking about it at all. I've had people say to me: 'Do you remember when you said that?', and I didn't say it at all, I don't know where they heard it - but it must have been the Holy Spirit, because I didn't say it. So God can speak to you in whatever area - if anger is not your problem - but do you know what He can do tonight? He can show you that anger is your problem, and you didn't realise it. OK? That's the way it is for a lot of people: they don't realise that there is a deep anger within them that has never really been pinpointed or dealt with. Now, are you open to God tonight? I hope we've got a crowd of people here this evening that are ready for God just to put His finger on anything, and you're ready to sit up and look at what has to be taken account of. Is that OK?

Let's pray to that end, so I want you to pray: 'Lord, speak to me, speak to me about anger, speak to me about anything that You need to talk to me about tonight' - will you do that? Let's unite our hearts in prayer: Father, we worship You, we praise You, we adore You for Your great love and Your goodness to us. We thank You for that great demonstration of Your love at the cross, where Jesus suffered and endured the pain and the penalty and punishment for all of our weakness, our fallenness, our sin and our selfishness. We thank You that at the cross He put those things to death, He dealt with them once and for all. We thank You that at the cross, that He even defeated death itself. We thank You that on the cross, He defeated the devil, and hell, and the consequences of our sins. Lord, we pray tonight that the full ramifications of what Jesus did, Your Son, on the cross, and the power of His resurrection, and the efficacy of His ascension, and the outpouring of His Spirit would be manifested in this place tonight. Lord, deliver us from talking about things that happened hundreds and thousands of years ago, but not actually living in the fullness of the power of it tonight. We want that power, Lord, to be demonstrated in lives that are set free. I ask You, Lord, and I declare tonight by faith, that there will be people set free from anger in this very meeting; there will be people whose minds, whose hearts, and whose behaviours, and even their very bodies will be set free from disease that has been afflicted upon them because of anger. So come, Lord, and do what You alone can do, in the mighty name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, we pray, Amen.

Amen? OK. Anger has become a taboo subject within the church. I suppose there is a sense in which 'anger' is a dirty word. If you like, it's the black sheep of the emotions to most Christians - and, if we're honest, a lot of us would want to ban anger from our lives and from the church, particularly if we've had difficult experiences with angry, prickly people. I want to say to you right from the outset, this is going to be a massive healing for some of you before we even address anger: you need to know that that attitude toward anger is wrong. Are you hearing that? You see, an attitude that thinks anger is sinful can contribute to false guilt in our lives, because when we feel angry then we feel shameful for feeling it. It can lead to a tendency - because anger is a bad thing, we think - we push it down, we suppress the anger, and there are grave and dangerous consequences when we do that.

Now, of course there are some aggressive people, and they wear their anger on their sleeve - and actually those people (though I'm not advocating that you become like them) those people are probably more emotionally and mentally healthy because they find an expression for their emotion. Whereas there are others, particularly in the church, who deny the emotion of anger, and they bury it. Here's what happens: it either erupts in an unpredictable way and time, out of control; or it begins to destroy you internally, from the inside out, in many, many different ways. I cited even in my prayer that that can even be manifested in physical illness.

So what you've got is - if you've got the perception that anger is always wrong - you could have a passive-aggressive anger, where it is buried and you don't express it the way you should; or you could have an explosive anger, and everybody gets it. OK? I don't know what you fit into, but what I will say tonight is: often Christians have a repressed anger - do you understand what I mean? They have pushed it down, denied it, and because of that they have repressed it and not allowed themselves to express it, and it is hurting them. Now, yes, anger is powerful, it is very very potent, but anger is not sinful per se - that means on its own. You must hear this, because some of us - especially Christians - are in bondage. We feel that we cannot be angry, we cannot express our anger because it's wrong, it's sinful, it's displeasing to God - when, in fact, the truth of the matter is, and what the Bible teaches is: anger is neutral.

Are you hearing this? I have spoken to you on previous occasions and referred to fear and sex, and I've spoken about how both of those are gifts from God. Fear, remember we spent a whole night on it, fear is there to protect us. I've used the analogy many times: walking across the road, we look both ways in case we get run over; when we're putting a log on the fire, we're careful in case we get burned. God has given us fear to protect us, the problem comes when fear ceases to be our servant and becomes our master, and we won't light a fire in case the house burns down, or we won't go out the front door in case we get hit by a car - do you see? It becomes our master. Equally so, sexuality is a gift from God. God had the first sex thought, God devised it - I don't want to be too graphic, but you know what I'm trying to say - it was God's idea! He had pleasure in the thought of us having pleasure, and it is a gift from God - but it is very powerful. Just like fear, it is powerful, and the enemy knows how he can pervert it and use it against the human race.

Now, anger is similar. It is neutral, it is actually given as a gift from God, but the enemy knows how powerful it really is. As this slide just says: 'Anger is only one letter short of 'danger''. That's why a lot of you have probably had the misguided perception that anger is always wrong. You avoid being angry, and you avoid angry people. But we

need to remember something, and it is fundamental to everything we're going to say tonight: God is angry. Now, you're very rarely going to get an 'Amen' for that one. You know, 'God is love', oh, yes, yes; 'God is gracious'; but 'God is angry' - Amen? Let's have an 'Amen'! Amen, hallelujah, God is angry. Well, you see, we have such a perception that there is something fallen or depraved in our anger that we don't like to think of God as angry, because it seems to be nasty, distasteful. But here's where the problem is: it's with us, with our concept of anger.

Psalm 7 verse 11 says that 'God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day'. So if God is angry, it's OK to be angry! Now, we know His anger is perfect anger, perfect wrath. What I want you to understand is: His anger does not cancel out His love. So there is no contradiction when we say 'God is absolute love, but He is also angry'. The reason why He is angry is because He is love, because He loves us He is angry against sin, He is angry against things that will destroy us, that will damn our souls for all eternity - that's why God is angry! But the wonderful thing about God is: all His attributes are in total equilibrium at every given point - do you know what I mean? He can be love and anger at the same time, and He doesn't contradict Himself. Now we find that difficult, because we're not God, but what I want you to understand tonight is: God is angry, and it's OK.

Does that remind you of a biblical story? What is it? It's Jesus cleansing the Temple. Do you know what He did? A lot of people don't realise that this was not an angry explosion of violence when He rid the Temple of the money changers, but in fact it was premeditated anger. Did you know that? Did you know that the night before Jesus did that, He sat and thought about it, and He wove together - look at the chronology of the Gospels - He wove together the leather whip. He thought about it, He didn't lose His temper, He thought about it, and He went in and the anger of God was expressed by Him. Now, He didn't whip people, but it seems that He might have whipped the animals, and He upended the money changers, and He drove them out of the Temple. It says in John chapter 2 that when the disciples saw these things they remembered what was written: 'The zeal of Thy house has eaten Me up'. In other words, 'I'm getting angry because I'm seeing sacrilege in Your Temple'.

Sometimes we as Christians get angry about things that are wrong, and we ought to get angry. But what I really want you to see is: Jesus was often angry at hypocrisy, especially religious hypocrisy - I'm going to tell you, that is one of the top ten things that makes me angry, religious hypocrisy, and I was a religious hypocrite - OK? I might still be one in certain areas that God needs to deal with - but that is something that made Jesus very angry. He was very angry at wickedness. We don't think of Him like that - why? Because it's uncomfortable for us, and often it's uncomfortable for us because we have a misconception about anger. We have been created with the emotional capacity to be angry as an emotional response. It is God-given, God has it, Jesus expressed it, and you must allow yourself to be angry. The question is: do you?

This is where the shackles come off right away for some of you, because some of you have forbidden yourself, you have made an ungodly vow: 'I will not get angry or express my anger'. The irony of that is: some of you have done it under the illusion of holiness, or being a good Christian. 'I will not allow myself to get angry' - that's wrong, and you need to see it as wrong! Now, don't misunderstand me: anger, as we have said, is one letter away from 'danger'. It has great potential to do damage. The problem is not anger on its own, the problem is what we do with it and how we express it. That's

why, in our reading tonight, 'Do not let the sun go down upon your anger', this is why it is vital that we do not believe the lie - what is the lie of the devil? That we cannot deal with anger, just leave it alone, bury it, and it will go away, and there will be no consequences - that is a lie of the devil, do you hear that?

Now, I forgot, but I was going to do an illustration tonight of a glass and a jug of water, and I was going to fill up the glass bit, by bit, by bit, speaking of anger. Then it gets to the surface level, the very top, the very lip of the glass, and you know it only takes one drop of water to cause that glass to overflow - that tells us that you cannot bury your anger without consequences. Eventually there will just be one little, seemingly insignificant incident that will cause your whole anger to erupt. Now, if you're married, you might know a wee bit about this, alright? So the men might leave their socks or their underwear lying on the bedroom floor or something like that, and the wives go through the roof - but it may not necessarily be about the laundry, it may be about something else, and the laundry was the last straw. Yes? So we need to understand that you cannot just file away anger and hope it goes away, it needs to be dealt with.

Now, I'm going to answer three questions for you tonight to help you see the answer to anger. The first question is: what is anger? The second is: what made me angry? What made you angry? The third is: how do I deal with my anger? OK, first of all: what is anger? Do you understand what anger is? Let me give you three things that hopefully will help you understand what anger is. The first thing is: it is God-given. Anger is given to us by God as an emotional release. It is an emotion God has given us, but it is given to us so that we might release - it's like a release valve. We use the expression, don't we: 'Letting off steam'. It's like the pressure cooker, if you don't let off the steam, it explodes, the lid blows off! That's the way we are with anger if we don't express it - by the way, emotions were meant to be emoted, the clue is in the name: they are meant to come out, they are meant to be released! So when we don't release them at the time and at the event that we feel them, there is damage that is done - do you know that? It is healthy to express yourself at the time and the moment of an event that makes you angry. Now, we will learn a little bit later that not every expression of anger is permissible, but we are meant to express it at the time.

So: what is anger? It is God-given, and you've got to get to that place of actually recognising that anger is neutral, in and of itself it is not sin, but it is a gift from God. Now, are you all there? I'm not sure about that one. What is anger? Secondly: it is a signal or a warning that is sending us a message, just like the light on your dashboard, telling us that something deeper needs attention. Now, I know that there are some people - I'm not suggesting that there is anyone here tonight - but, for the MOT, if there is a wee light showing, you'll go to the mechanic and ask him to change the bulb. Some do that, around our country they do that anyway, to get it through the test - please don't do that! But that would be ridiculous, especially in our lives, if we tried to remedy the anger - OK - but not the deep down issue that is causing the anger. So the anger is necessarily the problem, the anger is the warning sign and signal that there is a deeper problem that needs attention.

Now, that being said, there are thoughts and attitudes that could contribute to our anger that are sinful - but we need to be cognisant of unresolved hurts, issues, past occurrences that cause us to feel anger and affect how we think about ourselves, how we think about others, and even how we think about God. So if you're angry tonight, and you're able to admit it, you've got to see that it's a flashing light telling you that

something deeper needs attention. So: one, anger is God-given; two, it's a signal or warning; and thirdly, we must distinguish between the anger which is neutral, and sin which is contributing to the anger, and sin that is resulting from the anger. Are you with me?

So there is the surgeon's scalpel, and the word of God and the Spirit of God are masterful at doing this: dividing soul, from spirit, bone, and marrow, being the distinguisher of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. So you've got to look and say: 'Right, I'm angry, and the anger itself is OK per se; but if it's out of control, or if I'm expressing it in the wrong way, where is sin mixed in here?'. You've got to allow the scalpel of the Holy Spirit to say to you: 'Well, this is sin. You're angry about this, but sin has contributed to this, and this is a sinful way that you are expressing and venting your anger'. OK? So, what is anger? God-given; it's a warning sign; but you must distinguish between the neutral emotion of anger, and where sin has contributed to it, and where sin has come as a result.

Now, second question: what has made me angry? Now many of you tonight may be able to say: 'Oh, I know exactly what it is', but some of you will not. Now, I have to acknowledge tonight some teaching from Ellel Ministries, which has been tremendously helpful in delineating various contributors to making us angry. There are nine here, or so, listen to them carefully, you might want to jot them down. One of the major ways that we become angry, and one of the underlying causes of anger is injustice, OK? The scales are not fair, do you understand? Now, each of us, whether we're Christians or not, we've all been given a God-given, inbuilt sense of right and wrong, a sense of justice. When there is injustice we can become angry.

I want you to turn with me to 2 Samuel chapter 12, 2 Samuel 12 verse 1 - are you ready? Now, just to bring you up to speed here, the last verse of chapter 11, it says at the very end: 'the thing that David had done displeased the LORD'. What did David do? What was the thing that David did? Well, David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and it didn't please the Lord. If you're committing adultery, fornication tonight, it doesn't please the Lord. Also, add to that: he got the fellow murdered that the woman he was committing adultery with was married to - Uriah. He put him at the forefront of the battle, and he had him slain. This displeased the Lord. Then Nathan the prophet comes, verse 1 of chapter 12: 'The LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: 'There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him''. Do you see this? Nathan is telling a parable: there is this guy, and he treats this lamb like a baby, he feeds it like a baby, it's the only one he's got. The rich fellow has a visitor who comes, and the rich fellow who has all these flocks, he slays the little lamb of this man who has only the one lamb and treats it like a daughter. Now, look at the reaction of David in verse 5: 'So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!''.

Now we know, because verse 7 says, Nathan says to David: 'You are the man! You're

the guy we're talking about! You've stolen another man's wife, you could have had any woman in the kingdom, but you stole his wife and you've killed him!'. But what I want you to see is: David, even in his sin, had an innate sense of injustice, that this was wrong, what this rich man did - killing the poor man's little lamb. So all of us can be aroused within ourselves when we hear of an injustice. Maybe you turn the radio on in the morning, and you hear of an old lady or an old man, a pensioner who has had their house broken into, or they have been beaten up - and even the hardest among us will feel a sense of anger and injustice. But when things happen to us, injustices - maybe you're here tonight, and you're saying: 'What happened to me was not fair, it just wasn't!'. Whatever that is, it's not fair, and it makes you angry.

The second contributor to anger is betrayal. Here we see on the screen relational betrayal, which is everywhere, even right throughout the church. Whatever the relationship might be where there has been betrayal, there will be a sense of broken trust. You find it difficult to trust people because you're angry with what happened. You feel you have been disrespected, loyalty has broken down - maybe in your present relationship or past ones - and you find it hard to cultivate that now in the present. Your confidence has been knocked. Maybe out of betrayal, you're angry against third parties, other people who were involved in that whole incident, people who didn't take your side but took your betrayer's side. Maybe you're even angry at yourself? I've heard this so many times, people saying: 'How stupid was I! I was taken for a ride there! I was made such a fool of!', and you become angry against yourself. Or maybe you're angry because you weren't believed when you were telling others about the betrayal, or maybe it was abuse and you spoke about it and the nearest and dearest to you didn't believe you, maybe even punished you. Maybe some of you even feel a sense of betrayal from God? Yes, people feel God was at fault because He allowed this to happen - that's what we say, it's not very accurate, but that's often the way we feel, and that's what we say: 'How could You allow this to happen to me, this injustice, this betrayal?'. We get angry even at God.

Injustice, betrayal, and then thirdly: failure. It doesn't have to just be exams, it can be any form of failure - and all of us have faced it at some time or another. Do you remember Naaman, the great captain in the Syrian army? He had leprosy, and the little girl told him about the prophet Elisha, that he could help him. He goes to Elisha's door, and Elisha - very rude, we might say - never even came to the door! He just sent a message out and said: 'Go and bathe seven times in the Jordan River'. Now, Naaman knew that the Jordan was a dirty, stinking river - he says: 'We have far better rivers where I come from, why would I want to do that?'. It says in 2 Kings 5:11, listen: 'Naaman became furious, and went away and said, 'Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will''' - this is the prophet - '''He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand''' - or clap his hands - '''over the place, and heal the leprosy'''. He got angry because of the failure of his expectations of another. Has that ever happened to you, where others have failed to meet your expectations of them? You might be justified, it might be a Mum and a Dad, or a spouse, or something else, an authority figure, and they have let you down. You feel rejected when that happens, you know. I know we spent a whole night looking at 'Rejection', but that's often when we feel rejected, when someone has failed us that we had expectations of.

But then there are some of us, and it's our own failures that are the problem. We can be, perhaps, a bit of a perfectionist, an introspective, and we have failed to meet our own expectations of ourselves - whatever that might be, in academia or career, or even

religiously speaking. Do you know what that leads to? That leads to self-rejection, you start to loathe yourself for not being good enough or up to the right standard. Then there are failures in expectations of God: 'God didn't do this when we asked Him, He didn't come through when we needed Him, my back was against the wall and He wasn't there for me', as we said earlier, 'Why has He allowed this to happen? Or why didn't He make that happen?' - and so the failure of expectations from God creates, as it were, a barrier between us and God because we think He has rejected us. So, in effect, we withdraw from Him lest we get rejected all over again.

A fourth contributor to anger is affronts to our personal values. What am I talking about? When someone offends us, maybe it's a belief system we have - we Christians are brilliant at this! We get horrified! Maybe it's an opinion that we have, and somebody contradicts our opinion, or shares theirs. Maybe it's a conviction we have: we believe something is true, and someone affronts that value that we have, and we get all angry. Can I just say to you tonight that this is one of the reasons why the world thinks we are all prickly pears, and we're a bit difficult to get on with as Christians - because we're always looking down our noses at them, and condemning them for the way that they're living. Now, we have to speak the truth, but we have to speak the truth in love. 'By this shall all men know that you are My disciples: that you love one another', that's what the Bible says - but what is the emotion that often characterises us as Bible-believing Christians? Anger. Now, don't misunderstand me: we ought to be angry at a lot of the stuff that is going on in our world, but the world is not meant to know us by our anger, they are meant to know us by our love.

Oh, we could spend all night talking about this one in our own land - what? How we are experts at offence, and keeping offence, and keeping scores, and the tit-for-tat - I mean, it's huge, it goes back centuries, doesn't it? We're still doing it, because we have learned to do it by default, we could do it in our sleep! Even the churches - forget about the whole Catholic, Protestant, Nationalist, Unionist thing - just take the churches: how we are experts at falling out with one another because we get so offended when someone takes a view that is not our view. I'll leave that one, or it will take over!

Fifthly: frustration - ever been frustrated? Frustration comes when progress towards a personal goal is blocked. That has happened to me, and it has contributed to near breakdown - where you felt you had to go a certain way, and there were people standing in your way, and you couldn't get there, and you just went into a sort of meltdown. Well, we have it in the Bible, it's not a very commendable incident, but in 1 Kings 21 - you don't have to turn to it - but, you remember a man called Ahab, he was married to Jezebel, we spent a lot of time talking about her in January, Jezebel. Well, Ahab was married to Jezebel, and he liked a vineyard that belonged to a chap called Naboth. It was his only vineyard, and it was his inheritance from his family. Ahab was the King, he could have whatever he wanted - a bit like David and Bathsheba and all the rest - and he wanted Naboth's vineyard. He went to Naboth and he said: 'Give me your vineyard, and I will give you anything else you want'. This is a very interesting statement that Naboth says: 'You will not have my inheritance. I don't care who you are, you will not have my inheritance' - I like that! We ought never to give up to the enemy the inheritance that God has given to us in our families, in this life, and in eternal life in the blessings and inheritance of God.

But listen to what happened when Naboth said no: 'So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for

he had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers'. And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food'. Then Jezebel comes to him and says: 'What's wrong?', and then she says, 'I'll sort him out!' - that was a paraphrase there. She did sort him out. But what I want you to see is how, whenever our own personal goals, what we want, is thwarted - whether it's right or wrong by the way, it doesn't really matter - when what we want is thwarted, how we can become angry. Now, confession is good for the soul, I'm told, so I'm going to confess: I don't often get angry, alright? Honestly, even talk to my kids - maybe don't talk to the kids, but talk to the wife - I don't get that angry, and I don't erupt in anger. But there is one thing that makes me angry: it's whenever my wife asks me to do some DIY - and I'm quite calm and collected when I start it, but if it's not going well I feel anger rising up in me (I'm serious) like nothing else in all of life's experience for me. It's just the way it goes for me. If it goes wrong, and I put the hole in the wrong place, or the shelf is crooked, or whatever it is - that will really get me going. Now, I usually turn internal when I'm angry - I don't shout and rant and rave, I usually go quiet, I might throw the toolbox down a bit or punch the wall or something like that - but I try not to exhibit my anger. What I'm trying to say is that we've all got our particular red button, haven't we? Something that makes us angry. When I don't get to the DIY goal the way I want to, it really frustrates me. What is your particular contributor to anger and frustration?

The next is rejection. Now we spend a whole night on rejection, we're not going to repeat ourselves, but rejection will make you angry because you feel devalued, you feel shamed, maybe confused: 'Why did my Mum not want me?', 'Why did wife or husband leave me?'. Because of rejection we get angry, and that's OK - we've just got to be aware of why that's happening. Sometimes we are made to feel guilty because we have been rejected. Someone once said that when we are red with rage, it can cover up our blushing with shame. It's interesting: when we are red with rage, it can sometimes cover up our blushing with shame. If there are things that we feel guilty about or shamed about, sometimes we can become angry to even cover that up. Now that's not directly related to rejection, I'm just adding that in there. If we feel guilty, we can become angry to cover up the guilt.

The seventh contributor is unhealed hurts. So current anger, what you're feeling right now, can often be rooted in the past. It can be childhood hurts, pain, unresolved issues. That's why Paul says: 'Do not let the sun go down on your anger' - sort the thing out before midnight or sundown so that it won't be carried into the next day and be harder to deal with. There are actually biological things happen to you when you carry something through to the next day. Don't ask me exactly what it is, but I know there is stuff goes on in the brain that makes it difficult second day. Unhealed hurts.

Eighth: behavioural patterns. That can be the result of environmental factors, where you have seen certain behaviours and so you have imbibed them, learned behaviours. So if Daddy got mad at Mummy, or Mummy got mad at Daddy, or reacted in a certain way to certain issues, or if you were heavily disciplined in a very physical or verbally abusive way; you might feel it that is appropriate to do to your children. So there can be behavioural patterns that are a result of environmental factors. There can be defence mechanisms that you have learned, and they helped you at one point in your life but you've carried them on - defence mechanisms that exhibit anger in a wrong way. There can be control mechanisms involved in anger. What I mean by that is simply: do you use anger - as a behavioural pattern - do you use anger to get your own way? Now, when do we learn to do that? When we're standing in the supermarket going: 'I want

those sweets' - you know, toddler tantrum! We learn that emotional exhibition can get us what we want at times.

Ninth: demonic influence. We've covered injustice, betrayal, failure, affronts to our personal values, rejection, unhealed hurts, behavioural patterns, and demonic influence. What did verse 27 of chapter 4 of Ephesians say? Verse 26 says: 'Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil'. The word 'place' there means 'give a foothold' or 'give an opportunity' to the devil. The word for 'foothold' is 'topos' in Greek, which means actually where the rock climber would have put his toe as he is climbing up a rock, or where he would put his hand into a crevice. Do not give the devil an inch to get a hold in your life through anger, it's in the context of talking about anger.

If you were to go to Genesis chapter 4, there is a story there about Cain and Abel. You remember that God received Abel's sacrifice of a lamb, but He wouldn't receive Cain's sacrifice of vegetables. In chapter 4 of Genesis verse 6 and 7, listen to this: 'The LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry?'' - Cain was angry that God wouldn't receive his sacrifice - ''And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well'', listen to this phrase, ''sin lies at the door''. Now do you know what the terminology there is? Literally: sin is crouching at the doorway. That's a very unusual expression to describe sin, because we think of sin as an impersonal thing: breaking the law of God. We don't think of it as a person - but God's word is saying right at the very beginning that when we choose to sin, specifically here it was Cain's wrath, his anger, that it was as if there was a beast, a demonic beast sitting at the gateway; that he had allowed the enemy to enter through wilful sin, that there was something ready to pounce on him. God said: 'Sin lies at the door, it is crouching at your doorway, and its desire is for you, but you should rule over it'.

Now I wonder what the entry points are in your life where something demonic that is crouching at your door is just waiting to pounce and get a hold over you? Is it anger, like Cain? It's just waiting. Maybe because you have engaged in ungodly anger over many many years, the enemy has got on top of your life, and he is empowering that anger against others and to your own detriment. Now, listen: the enemy can get on board even if we just shut down our anger. You know what we talked about the very beginning, if we repress it, if we push it down, if we store it up, we are actually giving the enemy a right - but especially he will get a foothold in our lives if we are using anger in order to control or intimidate others. Some graphic ways of doing that are through blackmail, there are others who actually engage in voodoo - where they get wee doll, and through witchcraft they start to stab the doll and try to get control over another person. Others go and get curses put upon people, they cast spells upon people to try and get what they want. I don't know if that's what you're doing, or have ever done.

Some people, it's just simply that they're trying to remedy anger in the wrong way - that's enough to give the devil a foothold in your life. You could go to anger management, I'm not saying that's always a bad thing to do, I'm just saying: if you go to anger management classes or counselling, but you don't deal with the real issues of deep hurt within you, it will not work! It will put you in greater bondage perhaps. Do you know something? Angry kids are often now being encouraged to go and do martial arts: 'Channel your anger into something controlled and disciplined' - but there is a problem there. Twofold: they are not dealing with the deep down issues that are contributing to their anger; and secondly, by engaging in false religious practices (that's

what martial arts are) they actually open themselves up to a supernatural power of anger that is demonic. That's why people can do things in martial arts that are not natural. Some people are inheritors of secret societies in their families, or even themselves have been participators in it. Take Freemasonry, for instance. I know that often people who have been involved in Freemasonry, or there has been an inheritance of Freemasonry, there can be a very explosive anger in their personality.

But if you're sitting here tonight, and you say: 'Look, there are just times when I don't know what possesses me' - have you ever said that? Have you ever felt like that? Now, we've all got angry, we've all lost our temper, but if this is a regular occurrence, if there is a character trait in your life and you're saying: 'I don't know what comes over me, I don't know what possesses me', it may well be that there is a demonic influence of anger in your life. Anger is neutral, we said, but the enemy can take it and use it.

Now, finally, how do I deal with my anger? Well, your anger will manifest in many ways as we've said, but the important thing is not to suppress it. It's like trying - think of a blown up football in a swimming pool, and you're trying to push it under the water: it will forcibly reappear over and over again, no matter how many times you push it down. It's the same with anger. So, here are ways not to express your anger: you shouldn't do it through violence; you shouldn't do it through control; you shouldn't do it through criticism or perfectionism, turning in on yourself, that will very quickly become depression. You ought not to take your anger out directly on other people, on objects, vandalism, or on animals - don't kick the cat and the dog! We ought not to shift the blame away from ourselves to others. We ought not to self-harm, or abuse substances, or comfort eat. Some people even exercise to deal with their anger. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with exercise, but the problem comes when you're not dealing with the issues that are contributing to your anger.

So here's the thing I will say to you tonight, and this is core to dealing with your anger - are you ready? Two words: be real. OK? Be real about your anger. So, the first thing is: to be real you need to confess the problem, admit that you've got a problem. Christians are not good at admitting that they are angry, for all the aforementioned reasons that we said at the very beginning. There is a stigma with the concept of anger, we're not meant to be angry as Christians, we think. So we're not good as Christians at saying: 'I am angry, I am really angry - and here's why'. But the church is also not good at listening to angry people. I mean, think of the role-play: someone comes up to you on Sunday morning and says, 'I'm angry', I mean, what do you do? You usually will back off, or will distract them: 'Oh, it's a lovely day, isn't it? That was a nice service!'. Or we'll make them feel guilty, and we will look down on them and say: 'Oh no, you don't want to be angry. Now be careful what you say, think before you speak', and all that type of stuff. But what if someone comes up to you or me in church, or the pastor, and says: 'I'm annoyed', or 'I'm really hurt'. We might set them down and say: 'Oh, would you like some ministry, talk it out there, talk it out'. When somebody says: 'I'm angry!', we run!

I want to say this to you: you need to tell God how angry you are - have you ever done that? 'Oh, that's terrible! Imagine telling God how angry you are!' - this is alright! Do you not know: He already knows how angry you are! Did that bypass you? He reads your heart, He knows what's deep down there, He knows what's happened to you all through your life. He knows the wrongs, the injustices, the betrayals, the rejection, etc etc. He knows, and He knows it's buried in there, and He wants you to be real. He wants

you to confess it, because He knows it's deep down there and it needs to come out. Tell God how angry you are, whatever the tone is, whatever it sounds like. I know this is uncharted waters for you, but this is in the Bible. There is no better outlet for your anger than in the presence of God. Do you believe that?

Turn with me to Psalm 88 - you listen to how the psalmist talks to God here. If some of these verses weren't in the Bible, we wouldn't believe it. Look at verse 10 of Psalm 88: 'Will You work wonders for the dead?'. What that really means is: 'Lord, I'm looking a miracle, but it isn't any good when I'm in the grave! I'm dying here! I'm dying, Lord, what are You going to do? A miracle after I'm dead? I need it now!'. 'Shall the dead arise and praise You? Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? But to You I have cried out, O LORD, and in the morning my prayer comes before You. LORD, why do You cast off my soul?'. Imagine somebody sat down to you tomorrow morning and said: 'I think God has cast me off', 'Oh, don't say that, God couldn't cast you off' - but, you see, we're not talking about theology here. The psalmist isn't talking theology, he's talking emotions, he's telling the way he's feeling. Look at verse 14: 'Why do You hide Your face from me?', do you ever feel like that? 'I have been afflicted and ready to die from my youth; I suffer Your terrors; I am distraught. Your fierce wrath has gone over me; Your terrors have cut me off. They came around me all day long like water; they engulfed me altogether. Loved one and friend You have put far from me, and my acquaintances into darkness' - and that's it over! That's where he stops! I like it when he goes on and starts praising the Lord, but not in Psalm 88! He just vents his spleen in anger to God, and he leaves it there - that's his quiet time! Great, isn't it?

So you need to come to God, and you need to be real. We need to be honest, whatever you feel in anger against others, against yourself, even against the Lord - He's big enough, His shoulders are broad enough to take it. Secondly, you need to listen to what God has to say. You need to listen to what He has to say when you unburden yourself. You're still in the Psalms I hope, look at Psalm 73, go back a few pages to Psalm 73. He does stay in God's presence a wee bit longer this particular day, and in Psalm 73 verse 2 we read: 'But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked'. Does that ever get on your wick, when wicked people do well and good people suffer? Does that ever annoy you? It annoyed the psalmist, it annoys me. 'For there are no pangs in their death' - did you ever see a wicked person die peacefully with riches? 'But their strength is firm', they are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men. This was really troubling the psalmist, then go down to verse 16, he talks a wee bit more, but then in verse 16: 'When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me!'. Is there anything in your life that is just too painful to try and understand? I know there is - I know some things about some of you, but I believe the Lord has showed me some things about some of you here tonight that I don't know. I don't know you, but I believe the Lord has showed me some things. Look at verse 17: 'It was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end'. Do you know what that means? Verse 18: 'Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction'. He felt, in verse 2, that he was in the slippery place, he almost slipped; but now he goes into the presence of God, and he says: 'When I went into Your presence, then I understood how things are all going to end and pan out. I understood that one day justice is coming!'. Do you know that? One day all the creases are going to be ironed out. One day a person who got off with it in your life is going to have to face

justice if they are not forgiven by God.

You see, you need to stay long enough talking to God and listening to hear His perspective on things - are you with me? I'm not talking about a pity party, like Jonah - you know, when he sat under the gourd, and he started to moan and grump. What I'm talking about is: be honest and real with God, but let God be real with you - and you need to be real with yourself, and accept perhaps another version of the facts that you haven't already considered. That's a big one. God might tell you a few things about yourself that are hard to receive. He might reinterpret the historical facts for you in a way that you haven't previously understood, and you need to be willing to listen to God, to what He has to say about your situation.

How do you deal with anger? Confess it; be real; but you've got to listen to what God has to say. Here's the third thing that is flowing on from that: you need to be willing to repent - be prepared to repent! Because you might start to realise that: 'Yes, I was justified in being angry as an emotion, I was justified in that initial neutral response that something was wrong; but now I have allowed there to be sinful contributions to my anger, and my anger has now moved me into areas where I'm exhibiting sinful behaviours. I need to repent of that'. You don't have to repent of anger on its own, but you do have to repent of what is sinful. So maybe you need to ask yourself: 'Is it righteous indignation that I have, is it what Ephesians talks about - I am being angry, but I am not sinning - or is it ungodly wrath, selfish, soulish anger?'.

You need to repent of anything that needs to be repented of. Fourthly: you need to break ungodly soul-ties and be released from ancestral sin. By ungodly soul-ties, I mean relationships that have contributed to your anger. The hurts that have come to you have come through relationships, and you're usually angry against people - so whatever unhealthy relationship that is, you may need those ties broken with that person. I'm not talking about the actual physical relationship that might have already ceased, I'm talking about in the spiritual dimension, where this person has a hold, a heart-emotional hold still over you - and that is a channel for to oppress you and to make you angry. You need to break that off. Ancestrally, you could have inherited an ancestral spirit of anger and ungodly wrath. It could come through those secret societies we talked about, Freemasonry etc, or it could come just by a character trait that is in your family line - that needs to be broken.

Fifthly: you need to forgive. You just need to forgive. The picture is of poison being poured out into a glass, and I've often said that unforgiveness is when we pour out a glass of poison for somebody else, but we drink it ourselves - because unforgiveness harms us more than it harms anybody else. So we need to forgive - what does that mean? It doesn't mean you let them off the hook; it doesn't mean you have to feel like forgiving them; it doesn't mean you're saying what happened is admissible, it doesn't really matter; it doesn't say that it's OK, what they did; it's nothing of the sort. It's a choice of your will to say: 'God, this is harming me, and I take this person off my hook and put them onto Your hook. I'm getting out of the way and letting You be God'. Now, it may well be when you do that, that your anger rises to the surface - and that's often what happens. If it does, even tonight, do you know what I'm going to say to you? Let it rise, let it up, and let it out! You need to find the proper and the safe way to release it, but I beg of you tonight: if you take the steps through prayer that we're going to do in a few moments, and you feel anger rising up, do not stuff it down. Healing only works when you actually get in touch with the true issues.

Someone once said, I heard them say it in relation to anger: 'We have an amazing editor in our brain. When we get in touch with anything not nice, we edit it out' - isn't that right? The editor in our brain, when something crops up - we're in prayer, we're forgiving people, and anger comes up - we try to edit it out. Do you know what God wants you to do? Express yourself! Maybe not quite like the Incredible Hulk, but do you understand what I'm trying to say? You see, some of you are in bondage because you're afraid - this is honest - you're afraid of what will happen if you let it come to the surface. Now, that fear is not of God. It's not of God. Particularly the men might feel that way, but there are safe ways to release the anger. There are safe ways to express it. One very safe way is to talk about it, that's one of the first steps to release of anger: to verbalise the way you're really feeling. There are other people, and they need to go out into a wide space and scream at the top of their voice; or they need to get a punch bag or a pillow, or a cushion and punch it to shreds; or they need to kick a football, or kick something else harmless; or throw something, or tear something, or go on a long brisk walk, or go and do some exercise. Maybe it's cleaning, maybe it's music or art or some other hobby that you have - now, I'm not saying that these things will fix it on their own, they will not, as we said earlier. But when you come into touch with that anger, alright, when you prime the pump and you feel it starting to come up, that's the time when you need to go out and do something that will release it that will not hurt you or anyone else.

You see, here's a lesson for us as parents - and I'm still learning this one - we need to allow our children to be real with their emotions. Now I'm not saying you let them do whatever they like and say whatever they like, I'm not saying that, I'm not saying they're to be undisciplined and run riot. But I am saying that sometimes we shut down their emotions, sometimes I've found myself saying: 'Don't you dare speak to me like that! Don't you dare show that expression on your face!' - not even allowing them to have an expression on their face. That's dangerous at times, because if we do not allow them to express their emotions in a safe way it could come out in an unsafe way. We actually need to teach our children to express their emotions, even their anger, in a godly way. Maybe if they do run up the stairs and slam the door, and you leave them instead of running up and saying: 'Don't you dare slam the door on me!', and you run up immediately - leave it, leave it for half an hour, let them cool down, let them get it off their chest, and you can see things change when you allow them to express their emotions.

Now sometimes that doesn't work, of course - but listen: we've mentioned many ways to express yourself, but one way that is unavoidable, that sometimes we have to express our anger, is to confront. Some people don't like that. I'm not a confrontationist, I internalise things and go quiet - but sometimes you have to confront people. Jesus taught this in Matthew 18: if anyone offends you, or does anything against you, you're to go to them - and if they don't hear what you're saying, you're then to take one or two people with you, and in the mouth of two or three witnesses the thing will be established. If they still don't hear you, take it to the church. Now everybody runs away from that, 'Oh, we don't want to cause a fuss!', listen: the fuss is being caused if you have got anger deep within your heart. You need to deal with it. There are right ways to doing it, it is to be done in grace, but confrontation at times is necessary. It can be done in a very loving way, and just say: 'Look, you said something and it offended me, and you maybe didn't mean it - but I just want things to be right between you and me - did you know that? Did you know you offended me?'. Have you

ever done that? Or 'Are things OK between you and me?' - have you ever done that? I've done that, I've done that with people: 'Are things OK between you and me? I'm sorry if I've thought something against you, or said something against you, but we need to clear the air'. Sometimes confrontation is necessary.

Listen: reconciliation may not always be possible. Sometimes it is, but sometimes it cannot be possible - we've got to understand that. Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same thing. We look for reconciliation where it can be, but sometimes it can't happen. But listen to this: withdrawal is not the answer, because it just wants everything to go away, and it doesn't! We've seen this from the very beginning: anger won't go away, it's got to be dealt with!

Sixth, how to deal with our anger: confess, listen, repent, break the ungodly ties, release from ancestral sin, forgive, receive healing for wounds in God's presence. Do you know that Jesus died for all the injustice, all the betrayal, all the rejection, all our failures, all our offences, all our frustrations, all our unhealed hurts, all our ungodly behaviours, all our demonic bondages? He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the punishment of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. He bore our sorrows, He bore the opposition and contradiction of sinners against Himself, and yet He cried: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'. I want to tell you tonight: if you come to the cross with whatever has caused your anger, and even your anger itself, and you look to the crucified Jesus, He will heal you! He will release your anger - it mightn't all happen in one go, but if you continue to look to Jesus, He will begin to work through that with you. He is the only One who has the power to truly heal your hurt and deliver you from anger. Receive healing for the wounds in God's presence.

Finally: choose to maintain a healthy attitude to anger. You're going to be made angry again - newsflash! - because people are going to do stuff on you. Some of the situations we are in that have made us angry are perpetual situations. In other words, the behaviour is ongoing from that person that is hurting you. But listen: all the God-given emotions that He has given us, whatever they are, we are to maintain a healthy attitude to them. We are to allow ourselves to express them - all emotions are God-given! You would think the devil had created emotions, when you go into some churches! I have been accused of playing on people's emotions - I have, by ministers - but God created them, and there is nothing wrong with them, they are just very fickle. They have to be regulated by superior things, like your thought life, and like the truth of God's word - but God wants us to enjoy our emotions in a godly way. What we're not to do is live in denial. Remember those three boys: Speak no evil, See no evil, Hear no evil - don't be in denial of any of your emotions, especially anger. Do you know what that will mean? You need to be humble, you need to be quick to admit when you're wrong, you need to be quick to deal with anger when it rises within you. Ask: 'Where is this coming from, and how can I bring it to the Lord?'. Don't let it fester! That is having a healthy relationship with anger. You might have to confront people in a godly way if necessary, but you're to continually walk in forgiveness. Peter said to Jesus: 'How many times do I forgive someone? Seven?' - he thought that was the correct answer, because seven is the perfect number, the number of completeness. 'Yes! 100% that is going to get from Jesus!', but Jesus said, 'No Peter, seventy times seven', which is 490! Which effectively means, not that at 491 you can club the fellow, but it means: 'Peter, stop counting, and keep on forgiving!'.

So this is something that you have to keep doing in your life over and over again. Listen: the only way to develop your relationship with the Lord is to be real. Listen to me, you might never hear this ever again in a church - we're not in a church anyway, but: you don't need to be polite with the Lord, but you do need to be real with Him. Some of you are deeply hurting tonight, and you need to once and for all let go of the anger, and let go of the causes of that anger in the presence of God. Listen: it doesn't matter how it comes out, all that matters is that it comes out and gets out of you, because it's destroying you. Can I pronounce this Scripture over everyone here tonight: 'Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down'. Now the sun has gone down here, that's Fermanagh for you - but, you understand: don't let midnight strike tonight, and you still retain any ungodly anger, or not be real with the anger that is in your heart, be in denial or suppression of it.

Up on the screen there are a number of prayers - and we do this every night, I hope everyone can see these, if you can't get into a position where you can. What we're going to do, we're going to pray through this, for those people who really believe that you have either suppressed anger or you've got an anger issue that's out of proportion, or the devil has got on top of it or whatever, and God has spoken to you tonight, prejudice, whatever: we're going to go through these prayers, and I'm going to explain each slide. There are about five slides of prayer. We're going to explain each slide so that you know what you're reading before you pray it, alright?

So this first one is a prayer of Lordship: 'Lord Jesus, I confess that I have sinned and am in need of a Saviour'. Now, if you're not converted tonight, that means if you're not born again, you're not a Christian - I'm not talking about being converted as turning from a Catholic to a Protestant, or a Protestant to a Catholic, we're not interested in all that. We're talking about turning from your sin to Jesus, that's conversion, turning from your sin, being converted, turn from a non-Christian into a believing Christian - to personally know Jesus as your Saviour. You can pray this, and you can know Jesus tonight, and I hope and trust that there will be somebody here tonight will do that. But even we as Christians, we continually need the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, so we're asking Him to save us from these problems: 'I thank You for dying for my sin, I invite You to be Lord of my life'. Now, you can be a Christian, but Jesus isn't really - He ought to be, but you haven't allowed Him to be Lord of every area of your life. This just summarises some of that, particularly in relation to anger: 'Be Lord of my life, be Lord of my body and all my actions'. So that's how you express or suppress anger, how it's affecting you, whether you throw it out or whether you put in: 'Be Lord of my mind, and all my thoughts', what contributes to your anger and what comes out of it. 'Be Lord of my emotions and all my reactions; be Lord of my will and all my choices; be Lord of my spirit and all my relationships' - which is usually the way we get into anger problems.

Are you ready to pray this? OK, let's pray it together, meaningfully together: 'Lord Jesus, I confess that I have sinned and am in need of a Saviour. I thank You for dying for my sin, I invite You to be Lord of my life. Be Lord of my body and all my actions; be Lord of my mind and all my thoughts; be Lord of my emotions and all my reactions; be Lord of my will and all my choices; be Lord of my spirit and all my relationships'. The next slide is an acknowledgement that God has given you these emotions, and you have to embrace them if you've never done that before: 'Father, I thank You for my emotions and accept them as from You. I have not always expressed them, but sometimes I have lived in denial or repressed them. There have also been times when I have expressed emotions in ungodly ways, especially anger. As a result I have heard others, and

myself. I repent of hurting, manipulating, or attempting to control others by my anger. I thank You, Lord that You do forgive me, and I embrace that with my whole heart'. So you've got to come into the place of knowing God has forgiven you, and allowing yourself to be in the freedom of that - but, listen: you've got to be honest. If you've been in God's presence tonight, and I believe we are, He may well have put His finger on areas where, yes, you've been hurt, but you've expressed anger in the wrong way that has hurt others. Would you be willing to confess it?

Let's pray together, only if you want to, only if you're ready: 'Father, I thank You for my emotions and accept them as from You. I have not always expressed them, but sometimes I have lived in denial or repressed them. There have also been times when I have expressed emotions in ungodly ways, especially anger. As a result I have heard others, and myself. I repent of hurting, manipulating, or attempting to control others by my anger. I thank You, Lord that You do forgive me, and I embrace that with my whole heart'.

'Help me, Lord, to get in touch with my anger in healthy ways. If I have detached emotions from my memories, please connect them that I might be real before You'. You see, what can happen is that there can, disassociation between a horrendous, tragic, traumatic event that has happened in your life, and the actual emotion. You just did it to survive, sometimes that can be a good thing at the particular time, but it's not a good thing long-term - because what can happen is: you can lose attachment with your emotions, and they actually shut down. In order for you to be healed, you've got to get in touch with your emotions again. Now, that can be painful initially, but you may need God to do that: 'Help me to express my anger correctly. Please heal my deep pain by the power of Your cross' - what contributed to the anger.' Forgive me for blaming You, Lord, for things that have happened to me' - if that's the case with you - 'I know You hate what Satan and others have done to harm me, and You are angry about all the wrong that has taken place in my life'. How often we blame God for things that the devil and others have done! I don't understand everything that God allows, or everything God does, but so often we blame the wrong person. Do you need to pray this?

Let's pray: 'Help me, Lord, to get in touch with my anger in healthy ways. If I have detached emotions from my memories, please connect them that I might be real before You. Help me to express my anger correctly. Please heal my deep pain by the power of Your cross. Forgive me for blaming You, Lord, for things that have happened to me. I know You hate what Satan and others have done to harm me, and You are angry about all the wrong that has taken place in my life'.

Now here's the really difficult part, to forgive those who have hurt you and made you angry: 'I choose to forgive those who have wronged me, specifically I forgive' - and you just put the person or people's names there - 'for' - whatever they have done, and the way that it has made you feel. Then we will pray: 'Set me free from all bitterness and resentment, and heal my damaged emotions. I forgive my parents and all my ancestors for any way they have harmed me by their actions', whether they have taught us anger or we have inherited anger from them or some other thing. 'I confess and renounce all their iniquity, and especially their ungodly expressions of anger through control, violence, hatred, murder, witchcraft, oaths, curses, or secret societies. I claim freedom from the consequences of these sins, from all generational curses and pronouncements, and from all hereditary diseases'. I have ministered to children of terrorists who have had spirits of anger and murder because of their fathers - go figure, but I'm just telling

you the truth of what has happened. It may be that it's not something you have done, or something specifically done to you, but something has come down to you.

Are you ready to pray this and forgive those? I'm going to pause just after the first bit and allow you time to be real with this forgiveness - are you ready? 'I choose to forgive those who have wronged me, specifically I forgive' - now take upon your lips, I don't want you to speak out audibly, but in such a way that you're whispering, you're taking the name or names on your lips just between you and the Lord. Confess forgiveness to that person. It's not 'Help me to forgive them', it's a choice of your will. You don't have to feel like forgiving them, it's a choice, an action, a declaration. Tell the Lord what they did, what you're forgiving them for, and how they made you feel - maybe angry - whatever way they made you feel, shame, or rejected, or whatever. Whatever has contributed to your anger, just express it now - take your time and do that before the Lord.

OK: 'Set me free from all bitterness and resentment, and heal my damaged emotions. I forgive my parents and all my ancestors for any way they have harmed me by their actions. I confess and renounce all their iniquity, and especially their ungodly expressions of anger through control, violence, hatred, murder, witchcraft, oaths, curses, or secret societies. I claim freedom from the consequences of these sins, from all generational curses and pronouncements, and from all hereditary diseases'.

Amen. This is the last prayer: 'Lord, please break any ungodly soul-tie with' - so-and-so and I. So whoever contributed to your anger, if it's a parent, an authority figure, a spouse, a child, a friend, a bully, a church leader, whatever - OK? Whoever it is, but there is maybe still something - in other words, they are still on your back, they are still there holding you - ask the Lord to break that tie. 'Separate me spirit, soul, and body from them. Thank You, Jesus, that You became cursed for me on the cross, that Your blood was shed so that I might be set free. I take my stand with You against all Satan's demons. I command any spirits that have had control over me to leave me now in Jesus' name'. This is where we tell the devil to get off our case, OK? Are you ready? 'Lord, please break any ungodly soul-tie with' - name the person, take it on your lips, you don't need to audibly speak it out that others may hear, but just whisper their name - 'and I' - the tie between so-and-so and I. You can have a list, go down your list - whoever abused you, misused you, hurt you, damaged you, rejected you, whatever. You mightn't be able to remember their name, but the Lord knows - just describe them and ask the Lord to break the tie. 'Separate me spirit, soul, and body from them. Thank You, Jesus, that You became cursed for me on the cross, that Your blood was shed so that I might be set free. I take my stand with You against all Satan's demons. I command any spirits that have had control over me to leave me now. In Jesus' name I expel you'.

Let's all stand please, if you can. Now if you prayed those prayers and really meant them, OK, I want you to be open now for God to do whatever He wants to do. You have given Him permission, effectively, to reach into your life and start dealing with anger issues and the contributing factors to your anger. If there are spirits of anger that are in you or on you, you have given Him permission to just come down and lift it off you - and I believe that's what He's going to do to some people tonight. So I'm going to pray for you, and I just want you to receive and respond to whatever the Lord is doing. OK?

Father, I thank You for what You have done tonight. I thank You for Your word that has

shone a light right into the hearts of people. You have dissected, You have discerned, You have distinguished issues. You have put Your finger on deep hurts that have been repressed for many years. You have even, Lord, allowed anger to surface that had been denied, that people have been ignorant of and not understood why things were the way they were. Lord, I come behind, in the mighty name of Jesus, everything that these people have engaged with You upon through faith. I think You for their confessions, I thank You for their repentance, I thank You for their declarations of forgiveness, I thank You for their acknowledgement of their great need of deliverance and healing. Lord, I pray that You will perform a deep healing now, right now, that these areas where issues have contributed to anger, that You would heal the deep issues, that You would heal the deep hurts. I pray that You will just reach in with Your nail-pierced hand into those fragmented, fractured, broken areas, and You will take them and You will put them together again, Lord Jesus, right now. Parts of people that are stuck in the past, that have been shattered and are in bits, in different places with different people, Lord, everything that has been lost to us, that You will gather it together now - You will gather it together and restore it now, and bring it together right now. Bring wholeness and healing in the mighty name of Jesus, you'll pour in Your oil and Your wine. Lord, bring deep, deep restoration, deep redemption now in people's spirits, Lord, in people's souls, in their minds, in their emotions that are wrecked because of anger and hurts. Oh Lord, we thank You that You are the Healer, we thank You that You are the Saviour, we thank You that You are the One who restores our soul. We thank You, Lord Jesus, that You are anointed to heal the brokenhearted. We pray that You will do that tonight, to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ we pray - and everyone said 'Amen'.

Can I just say one more thing before we finish: our land needs a baptism of love, because our land is so angry. Whether you are a Nationalist, or a Unionist, I don't care. Both of our histories, whatever those are, have very angry parts to them - violent, bitter parts to them - both of them. We've seen them manifested in our own modern era, and listen: we need to repent, and we need to say sorry to the other people. We can't say sorry to ourselves, that's our problem here in this country: we want people to come to us and say sorry, but we are not prepared to go to them and say sorry, even when they're not sorry themselves. Listen: if revival is going to break out, I think we need to bring our sectarian anger, our genuine anger for wrongs that have been done - there have been wrongs done, we're not saying it was right or was excusable. But we need to bring our anger to the Lord, and say: 'Lord, would You replace this anger with Your love, so that I might love my enemy, the one who has hurt me'.

Can we pray just now before I hand over, can we pray together for a baptism of love - that's the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that's what Ireland needs. Ireland needs a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Can we pray for that unitedly? I know there are different backgrounds here, and that's wonderful, that excites me - there are people who have Catholic backgrounds, people who have Protestant backgrounds, people who have Hindu backgrounds, there might be Muslim backgrounds, there might be nonreligious backgrounds - I don't know, but that excites me, because this is the new man in Christ. We're all one in Christ. So let us lift up, and in Jesus' name let us ask: Lord Jesus, we believe that You put a missionary commission upon the land of Ireland, we believe this land was marked by You to send the Gospel through the whole nation, through the whole of Europe, and through the whole of the world. As we approach St Patrick's Day, we thank You for Patrick, we thank You for that man that You put Your Holy Spirit on to come to our island. He wasn't Irish, but we thank You for him, Lord. We thank You that he was an apostle to us, and I pray, Lord, that his legacy and his anointing will come

upon us again. We pray, Lord, that You will pour out love, love and truth upon our island, Lord. We need You, we need You to pour out the true love of God upon Ireland! Lord, would You start something even in us, even here. O Lord, come, we pray, open Your windows upon us. We need You to deliver us from the bondages of politics and religion, and sectarianism and bigotry. We need You to heal the wounds, Lord, we need to heal the wounds, heal the offences, heal the hurts, the deep animosities. We need You to right the wrongs, Lord. We need You to give grace, we need You to give faith that we might be able for this - we are not able for it, Lord. It has to come from You or it cannot be done. Lord, have mercy and forgive us. For You have said: 'If My people, that are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, I will forgive their sins and heal their land' - and that's what we want, Lord. That's what we want, come and heal our land.

Deeper Healing - Chapter 6
"Wholeness For The Abused"

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by David Legge

Hi everyone! It's good to be here on a sunny night in Fermanagh - an added blessing! And to be with you again to share God's word. Now, I know tonight is a delicate subject, but I want you to relax - OK? I'm not going to re-traumatise anybody who is here that this subject affects, and yet at the same time we want to deal with it properly, biblically, sensitively, and yet thoroughly so that the Lord might meet you in your need. And I'm very convinced that God is going to touch people tonight, I'm also aware that there are folk who don't think that this is their problem, and you're actually going to find out tonight that it is. God is going to reveal things to you. So we are very very aware of the presence of God, of His ministry, of the desire of the enemy to thwart that and to hinder what God is doing - but Jesus is stronger than Satan, and Satan to Jesus must bow. We're going to practice God's presence right now as we come in prayer - would you do that with me? Will you pray now that God will speak to you, and meet your need. Now, you might think that this night is only applicable to people who have been abused - that is far from the case. So I want you to come and ask the Lord to speak to you tonight in areas that you feel, or the Lord knows, is an issue. Will you do that? Let's pray, and please do pray yourself:

Father, we thank You and we worship You, that You are God over all. You are exalted above all, You are the Creator of the universe, You are the one who breathed life into us and made us living beings. You are the one who knit us together in our mother's wombs. You're the one who has seen us, and willed us, and ordained our days. Lord, we thank You that we can also declare tonight that You are the one who loves us with an everlasting, unconditional love. You have declared that through Your Son Jesus Christ, You have demonstrated in the cross how much You love us. Father, not only that, but You raised Him again from the grave the third day, and He has come to us in the Holy Spirit. We thank You that He is here tonight, we thank You that He is with, in and beside those who know You as Lord and Saviour of their lives. We pray that You will come very near, and even those who perhaps aren't aware of a personal relationship with Jesus, that tonight will be the night when they step out in faith into that relationship. So, Lord, we welcome You to come, we welcome You to come. We invoke and lift up high the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we plead and appeal the efficacy of the blood of the Lord Jesus. Lord, cover this whole place in the power of the covering of the blood of Jesus, send Your angels, Lord Jesus Christ, to minister to us - that chains will be broken this evening, that shackles will fall off, that grave clothes will wither and the dead will walk forth from those sepulchres that maybe they have been in for years, decades, or all their life. Lord, please come and minister deeply to all of our hearts this evening, in the mighty name of Jesus we pray - and everyone said 'Amen'.

OK, we're going to read just to begin with Matthew 11, just the end verses which are very familiar to most of you. We'll not take any time talking about them just at the moment, but just so that we read Scripture before we begin. Matthew 11 verses 28 through to 30, and these are the words of the Lord Jesus of course. He says: *"Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your*

souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light".

Tonight we're looking at 'Wholeness for the Abused'. If you were to look up several dictionary definitions of the word 'abuse', you would get quite an extensive definition using many words. Some dictionaries define 'abuse' as a wrong use of power. There is no doubt about that, a wrong use of power or position; where someone feels that they have a measure of authority over you and so, as other definitions put it, they take advantage of you because of their power and position over you. Other definitions are 'to violate', or 'to insult'. So we could talk anecdotally tonight, which we're not going to do to any great degree, about the types of abuses there are. We will delineate them, but we will not go into an awful lot of illustration, we don't have time to do that. But, you know, abuse - we immediately think of the worst case scenario when we talk about abuse, yet there are many abuses of power. There are what we might call ranging from insignificant abuses of power. Now, there is no insignificant abuse, but what we're talking about is things like - does this ring a bell with anybody? Office theft, you know, where you take the stapler home, or the Tippex, or the Pritt stick or something like that. Well, effectively what that is is not only stealing - just in case you didn't know - it's thieving off your employer, but it is also an abuse of your position. You feel that because you're working in their employ, and maybe they are taking their pound of flesh, and you feel 'I'm justified in taking this home'. But, of course, we're probably more familiar with the more horrific types of abuse which may affect people even in this room tonight.

When we are abused, we are devalued. The reason why that is is because - and this is the essence, if you want to really know the core and the heart of what abuse is - it is a devaluing by stealing a person's free will. That's it in a nutshell. A person's free will, their volition, their autonomy as a person has been stolen from them. Consequently, there is a loss of honour and dignity because their choice has been taken away. So, the more horrific and serious aspects of abuse are more like this - if you can make that out - the tank steamrolling over the car. There is disrespect. Ultimately stealing a person's will - right, OK, that's bad enough - but it is in order to manipulate the other person to get your way. Have you got it now? So you are violating another person's boundary, their personal boundary of choice and autonomy, by stepping in, robbing them of free will, forcing them to do something - but you're doing it with a motivation, and that is to manipulate that person to get your way at a cost. Sometimes it is at any cost.

Now, it is obvious to say that abuse damages relationships. So that's why, to a large extent, if you take the broad definition of abuse, why there are so many disordered relationships in our society, why there are so many dysfunctional families, why people as individuals struggle on a daily basis with their own self-worth - why? Because they have been devalued, they feel worthless because they have been abused. Now we're going to look first of all kinds of abuse. Some of these may not perhaps have occurred to you initially, but we're going to go down them one by one. There are about six I have here tonight. The first type of abuse is verbal abuse - are you familiar with that? The way we use our words, or misuse, abuse our words. The Bible has an awful lot to say about this. I think I told you before, I have a little key system in my Bible, a colour system, but I've also got a symbol system. Whenever I read about the mouth, or lips, our words, I just put these red lips. It's amazing how many red lips there are right throughout the Bible, how much is said - in fact, from the very beginning in Genesis, God said 'Let there be light'. Now, that shows you right away that there is power in words. You might say, 'Well, those are the words of God', and that is correct - but God

has invested in His creative order a certain power inherent within language. Proverbs 12 verse 18 says: 'There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword'. That's the way our words can be, and the misuse of words is really in order to bring emotional hurt.

So the idea is that you're speaking words that will penetrate the heart, but it's even stronger than that! You know, a lot of Christians are very loose with their words. They think that there is little consequence to the things that we say when, in fact, Proverbs 18:21 says: 'Death and life are in the power of the tongue'. Do you know that you have got power to curse with your mouth? Did you know that? Now I'm not talking about saying bad words, letting out the odd switcher now and again, we're not talking about that type of cursing. We're not even talking about explicit cursing, like saying: 'I curse you'. That's not what we're talking about, although that can happen. We're talking about the heart of your words that express in a certain harshness ill favour toward another, and by doing such the enemy can take those words - even the words of a Christian - and use them against them. We can speak blessing or cursing, James 3 and verse 9 - this is in the New Testament: 'With it', he's talking about the tongue, he says 'With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in the similitude of God', in the image of God. He's speaking to Christians, and he saying: 'One minute you can be praying to God, blessing His name, praising Him, worshipping Him; and the next moment you can be cursing your brother out of the same mouth, using the same tongue'. It's remarkable, isn't it?

So words that accuse - by the way, the accuser of the brothers is the devil, so if you're accusing people you're doing his work. Words that condemn, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ', that's the devil's work. Words that criticise; words that perhaps are very despairing or depressive, hopeless; words that mock; words that are slanderous, ungracious - all of those are ways that we can verbally abuse others. I hope that you know, if you're a Christian tonight, from at least a cursory reading of the New Testament, that God invented words to edify - that means to build up, to affirm, to encourage people - not to pull down and destroy. Of course, Scripture reflects this. Proverbs 12 verse 25: 'Anxiety in the heart of a man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad' - singular, just even one good word can dispel depression. That might seem very simplistic, but if it's a word of God, well, it will work; and we are called to speak the words of God. 'The words that I speak unto you', Jesus said, 'they are spirit and they are life'. If we are speaking the word of God to people, we will see change and transformation in their emotional well-being.

Another Scripture, Proverbs again, 16 and 24: 'Pleasant words are as honeycomb: sweet to the soul and healthy to the bones'. What a lie, whoever taught 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me'! I was taught that - rubbish, utter rubbish! Words do affect us, and just as good words, wholesome words, are like health to the bones; curse words, abusive words can actually make the body ill. You see, Satan's desire with the tongue is that it should be used to destroy and pull down. Can I say this: silence is not golden either, right? Sometimes it's not what is said that is the problem, but what is left unsaid. Often in relationships, like parent-child relationships, husband-wife relationships, we could go on and on, where there should be affirmation, where there should be encouragement and kindness, there is silence that speaks a thousand words. So you may have had a parent, or a loved one, and it's because they didn't tell you that they loved you, or that you were good at a thing - and there was just this hanging in the air, and that is what actually has damaged you.

So there is verbal abuse, one type of abuse - we could talk about that non-stop. A second type of abuse is emotional abuse. Now, again, just as words stir up emotion, emotional abuse will stir up another person's emotional response in order, primarily, to cause pain and in fact to exert a certain amount of control over another. When we talked about control a couple of months ago, we talked about emotional blackmail - this is a form of emotional abuse, where you use people's feelings to get one over them. We've all had that done to us, I'm sure, and maybe some of us have even done it if we're honest. Now, we saw last time when we looked at anger that God has given us emotions - isn't that correct? Emotions are not bad, it's what we do with them that causes grave consequences at times. God has given us emotions in order to motivate us toward doing right things. So we all have emotional needs, every single one of us. We need to be affirmed, we need to be accepted, we need to be comforted. But when that doesn't happen, and maybe the opposite happens, we become emotionally damaged and effectively abused.

Now some people say: 'Would you wise up! You need to harden up! You need to harden up and don't be so soft and sensitive!'. Do you know that the pain of rejection - and we spoke, I think the first night was on rejection, wasn't it? The pain of rejection actually lights up the same place in the brain as a broken femur, did you know that? It is clinically proven that emotional and physical pain actually activate similar regions of the brain. Pain is pain. I remember hearing a nurse speaking on this on one occasion, and they had a saying when she was training: 'Pain is what the patient feels'. I remember having my appendix out one time - I could go on for long enough on this - emergency appendectomy, and the surgeon, the man across the ward from me was delighted to tell me that they nicknamed him 'the Butcher'! That was very helpful for me! Thankfully he didn't operate, but a locum operated on me - but he was the one who did the rounds, and he wouldn't so much as give me his hand to help me out of bed when I was in so much pain. He delighted in telling me that there were men twice my age that were up and running about quicker than I was - but pain is what the patient feels, OK? So what that 60-year-old feels may not be what I feel. Equally, you might think emotional abuse is something minor in comparison with, say, physical or sexual abuse or something else - but that is not the case whatsoever. It's whatever the impact is that it has had on you, pain is what the patient feels.

The fact of the matter is: Satan wants to destroy your emotional well-being and health through abuse, through verbal and emotional and any other abuse you like. In other words, he wants to break your heart. So there is verbal, emotional, then there is sexual. This is what most people think of now as synonymous with the term 'abuse'. Sexual abuse is using sexual knowledge or power to force another person against their will to sexual activity, or to stimulate another person to inappropriate behaviour against their will. So basically, to define abuse again, it is anything that is without free will choice, where there is forcefulness. Can I say something? There has been a great deal in the last five years or so about abuse, sexual abuse in celebrity ranks, about sexual abuse in the church, and about other institutions - but most abusers are in the family, sexual abusers. Most of them are people who are known to us. They are often respected people in our eyes, and trusted people in our hearts - that's how they actually make their move. You may well have been affected by someone in your family. Of course, we are well aware of the church scandal, and it's not just in the Roman Catholic Church, it's right across the board - but it's not just in churches. In fact, it is in many institutions, some of you may have seen the sign that has been up about the place: 'Were you abused while in an institution?'. Some people have been in children's homes, hospitals,

etc etc.

Now, because of immigration and various other things in our modern era, there is human trafficking. We know well about it where I come from in Portadown, there has been a lot of this, where there have been illegal immigrants brought in, sold into slavery, modern day slavery - slavery is stronger today than it has ever being in the history of mankind through sex trafficking. We don't realise this. But sexual abuse can also happen, wait for it, in marriage! We hear so much in the church, correctly so, that God's ideal is that sexual activity should take place in the bounds of marriage, but sometimes people subliminally hear through that that therefore anything that takes place within wedlock is warranted, validated. On the contrary. Even within marriage sexuality can be used to control people, it can be forced on another, there can be perversions within marriage, and sex can even be used as a bargaining chip - a reward or a punishment, withholding sexual activity from a spouse. Now the Bible says that the marriage bed is pure - Hebrews chapter 13:4: 'Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge'. But that Scripture, like many scriptures, has been used and abused to assert that everything that takes place between a husband and wife is OK if it's in wedlock - far from it. So you need to know tonight that that if you're forced to do anything against your will, that is not godly, that is not godly. God's plan for sexuality is actually the same as words: it is to be giving, it is to be nurturing, it is to be protecting, it is to be affirming, edifying, loving - a mutual and reciprocal giving, rather than a taking. Now, we need to hear this, I know it's uncomfortable to hear about sex, especially in the church context and all the rest, but we need to talk about it from the Bible, because the Bible has an awful lot to say about it. The fact of the matter is that all of us, not just our young people and our kids, but all of us are being conditioned by the spirit of the age - that's where we're getting our sex education from, and it's not good.

Verbal, emotional, sexual abuse. Fourthly: physical abuse. That can be many things of course, it can be harsh, unfair punishment. How many times has that verse 'Spare the rod, spoil the child' been used to abuse a child? I'm not going to enter into the theological ramifications of what that verse means. I believe in discipline between parents and children, even God disciplines His children - but that verse is not a licence to abuse your children, and it has been used in such a way. Some people have been put off God because of the way a Christian father or mother administered discipline. It can be bullying, not just in the schoolyard, it can be bullying in the home, bullying in the workplace - there is a great deal of workplace abuse today. There is also alcohol and drug-related violence in the home. If you've had a drunken father or mother, or a husband or wife etc, you will know exactly what I'm talking about. Often the motivations for physical violence are anger, jealousy, lust, etc etc. The most extreme case of physical violence and abuse that we have seen in our modern era - although it is not modern, but it has come to the West in modern times - is honour killing. You've heard of that, haven't you? Particularly in the Muslim culture, where unfortunately it seems to be women, females, are killed because they have done something dishonourable to dishonour their family - that's in the name of religion. Staggering, isn't it?

Verbal, emotional, sexual, physical. Then fifthly, self-abuse, people who press the self-destruct button. Now that doesn't have to happen in a very demonstrative way, that can happen through self-pronouncements that you make over your life. So maybe your mother or your father, or somebody else that has had a controlling or abusive verbal relationship with you, has said things over your life: 'You're no good, you'll never

amount to anything', etc etc, 'You're stupid, you can't sing', all these non-affirming pronouncements; and you actually start to agree with that, and you say it over own life and become self-abusive. So when you make a mistake, you're now saying - it's not just the echo of your mother or someone else - you are now saying: 'You're stupid, you're no good, you're a failure, you'll never amount to anything'. There are inner vows that we can take that are self-abusive. We might say: 'I will never do this', or 'I will never become this', or 'I will never make it at this'. Of course, then there are physical manifestations of abuse where we can misuse or abuse our bodies. These are huge, vast subjects in and of themselves - but eating disorders is really a rejection, at times, of yourself, a dislike of yourself. Maybe it's a sense of shame, and you're trying to purge that out of you, and there can be all sorts of reasons for it - but, effectively, what it is is self abuse. There are people who have burned themselves with cigarettes, there are people who will veer into the area of sexual perversion and not value themselves, think they are worthless, and so they will do anything because they feel like nothing, or they feel that they need to be punished. Or it could be just a negative view of life, pessimism.

It's amazing, I could name you names - but I'm not going to do it - of celebrities, and you can take the ones in particular that go crazy with cosmetic surgery, how they have actually rejected themselves nearly all their lifetime. Self-abuse it really becomes. Have you noticed the explosion of - and this is not a judgement on anybody, OK? But the explosion of body piercing and tattooing in recent times? I believe that that is an expression of self-hatred, I do, partly - there can be other things going on, but that's one of the things, where you devalue the body.

So there is verbal, emotional, sexual, physical, self-abuse. Then, this is the last one I'm going to look up tonight, there is spiritual abuse - it can be physical. 'I am your authority, obey me', that's what the pastor is saying in the picture. Now we looked at this in great detail when we were looking at Jezebel in connection with control, the vast array of different types of control. This is similar, because with spiritual control comes spiritual abuse. In other words, a misuse of spiritual authority and power, harming the sheep. This is the point: people get damaged when spiritual authority and power is misused. But perhaps the most damaging thing out of this particular abuse is that we get a distorted picture of who God really is, we get a skewed vision of the heart of God, we also get a warped concept of God's will for our lives - that God's will is good, that God's will is freedom.

Effectively, what spiritual abuse does through control is: it brings people into captivity rather than freedom. This is what the book of Galatians is all about by the way, and we don't really have time to look into this, but just to say that there were teachers, false teachers coming into the church at Galatia, and they were saying: 'You need to keep the Old Testament law, you need to be circumcised, you need to keep the food laws, the rites and the rituals of Judaism, or you cannot be saved. Yes, Jesus died for your sins, but you need more than that, it's Jesus plus Moses, Jesus plus the law, grace plus law'. Paul comes in, and he pleads with these people, he says: 'You've been bewitched! It's as if a spell has been cast upon you! People are putting you in a straitjacket, they are taking your joy from you, they have crept in to steal your freedom from you!', and he cries to them, 'It is for freedom that you have been set free, stand in that freedom! Be no longer enslaved with the yoke of bondage'. Do you hear him? You can see the power of spiritual abuse here. The Pharisees were experts at this. In Matthew chapter 23, Jesus said to them in verse 4, listen, this is wonderful - what a description of spiritual

abuse: 'They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers'. Isn't that amazing? Just heaping religious expectations and demands on the ordinary people - they are the spiritual, highbrow boffins, and yet they can't do what they're asking other people to do; in fact, they couldn't even move one of those burdens with their wee finger.

What a depiction of this: this donkey has been given a burden that is too strong for it, and it has just collapsed, probably expired completely and died. Take a good look at that tonight, take a good look at that and listen carefully: that is what religion does to people. Whether it is the evangelical type, the Protestant type, the Roman Catholic type, it's all the same - all religion is the same - the Muslims, the Buddhists, it's all like that: they are burdens that people cannot bear.

Now we have to say that some spiritual abuse can be unintentional, it's not meant. Yet, at the same time, whether it's ignorant or not, it causes great damage. Have you ever seen these signs of spiritual abuse in a church or a religious gathering: where there are threats, where there is intimidation, 'If you don't do this, I will do that'. It mightn't be as explicit as that, but it's put in spiritual terms: 'If you don't do this, there will be a consequence for you spiritually'. Humiliation, often public humiliation, where individuals are being pinpointed in the congregation, and everybody knows who is being talked about. Putting down other ministries or other churches - I have done all these things, by the way. Dogmatic assertions, by asserting your own convictions and not allowing any space for disagreement you're actually setting yourself up as the authority and knocking other people down. I'm not saying we don't have our convictions, but we are to speak the truth in love. There is even, at times, very extensive control over people's private lives. I know of people who have been told: 'You mustn't marry him', 'You must marry her', etc etc - and all sorts of disasters that have taken place because of that. There can be harsh, unfair church discipline as well. There should be church discipline, but it ought not to be harsh. There can be graceless preaching, where it is all law, law, law. There can be extortion for money; soullish praying, where you're praying horizontally against others around you, rather than praying vertically to God. There can be a stimulation of false guilt and shame and condemnation to try to get people to behave a certain way. There can be insensitive counselling on a one-to-one basis. We could go on and on, and on and on, but this whole area of spiritual abuse is vast and it is prevalent within the church. We need to waken up to it!

Now let's talk for a moment or two about the consequences of any of these forms of abuse - verbal, emotional, sexual, physical, self, spiritual. They will cause blots and stains on your personality, on your character and your heart. Here are some of the things abuse of any kind will do to you: it will affect your self-esteem, it will give you poor, low self-esteem; it will dent your confidence - is that the way you feel? It will be, if you have been abused in any form. You will also perhaps have an awkwardness in relationships because of the dysfunction and disorder there has been in the relationships that have been abusive. You will also fear rejection, and because you fear rejection you will not want to enter into any closeness with others. There will be a passivity, perhaps, as well - rather than being active in relationships, because you have had your free will taken away so many times over and over again, you've been worn down, you cease to be active and assertive and you become passive, weak, and vulnerable. Another consequence and effect of any form of abuse - but particularly sexual abuse - is confusion over your identity: 'Who really am I?'. This often affects the sexual identity and sexuality. If a person's sexual awakening has taken place through some kind of

abuse, that can have a serious detrimental effect as a consequence upon their sexuality in the future, where they become confused. I don't want to go into that in too much detail, but I hope that you can understand where I'm going with that.

Another form of consequence is emotional damage. We talked about our emotions, and how people seek to use them against us - and some of the more common emotions are fear, where we are intimidated by others, or in a moment of abuse where we are open to trauma. Maybe it's loss, loss of innocence, or loss of childhood. Maybe it's grief, or bereavement. It can be rejection, it can be guilt and shame. This is a very interesting one, because so many people you talk to who have been abused, they talk about a great deal of a sense of filth, a sense that they somehow - how many times have I heard this - that they somehow were to blame. You've got to understand what happens, actually, the logistics at times of abuse. What happens often is there is a transference of guilt that moves from the abuser to the abused - and, in fact, this is one of the things an abuser will work on if given enough time, if it's an ongoing thing they will work on that guilt in order to make that person feel responsible for what's going on - that's part of their control. But you've got to understand (and this is a bit of a digression) you've got to understand who is really guilty for that activity, and the guilt ought to go where it belongs: on the abuser, not the abused. Do you understand? There is a story in the Old Testament, I'm not going to go into it in much detail, but David had a son and a daughter, Tamar and Amnon. They were half brother and sister, different mothers, and Amnon was attracted to Tamar. He caused a ruse that he was ill, for her to come and bring some of her baking wares to his room, he raped her. It says that the hate with which he hated her after that moment was greater than the love with which he loved her, or the attraction that he had. Then she is left broken, and she says these words: 'Where shall I cause my shame to go?'. So the abuse, it was not her fault, but the shame had been transferred onto her - that's a huge struggle.

Anger, of course, is an obvious consequence of any form of abuse. We spent a whole evening last time talking about it, but basically anger is not wrong - but it's often a sign that there is some injustice, something wrong that has taken place that needs to be dealt with deep down. You mustn't deny your anger, but it must be faced and dealt with. There is physical damage that can take place, of course, obviously with abuse. The most obvious is direct injury of physical or other types of abuse, where you are hurt, there is a broken bone or a bruise. But of course there are internal heart and emotional and mental scars that people cannot see, and they are equally as real - but there are also undiagnosable conditions. What I mean by that - and I'm hearing so many people saying this - that they go through tests, they continually are going to doctors and consultants, and they cannot put the finger on what is wrong with them. I'm not saying all those conditions are spiritual, but I believe most of them probably are. Really what we're seeing is the bones or the physical frame is aching because of the ill-health of the spirit. The Bible has talked about it for millennia!

Physical damage, directly and indirectly, then of course there is spiritual damage. I have alluded to it already: crushed, broken spirits. You know that your spirit is where your identity is, that's the real you. Your soul is your mind, your emotion, your will, that reflects the real you, it exhibits. So your thoughts exhibit what is going on deep down in your spirit; your emotions exhibit, your feelings tell us what is going on in the real you; and your actions, your behaviour testifies how you are deep inside - so if you're broken, if you're crushed, if your identity is marred and distorted. But another, and the most serious spiritual consequence and damage is a distorted view of God. We mentioned it

earlier where, if there are authority figures in your life who have abused and misused your trust, used their position over you to force you against your will, if it's a father or husband you can very quickly superimpose such an atrocious characteristic upon the Almighty God - because, after all, He is above, I mean He is the greatest authority figure, He is the greatest power, He is the most forceful in the sense of what He can do. Have you seen some of the stuff that He can do? We immediately assume: 'This is someone I ought to be afraid of, this is someone I cannot trust, because I am so vulnerable before Him. Look what happened to me when there were lesser people that I was vulnerable to!'. Are you hearing this?

Another consequence, spiritually, of abuse is demonisation. We're not going to talk much about that, other than to say: just as an open wound attracts bacteria, a wound of the heart, an abusive wound can also attract demonic empowerments, demonic entities. What I'm talking about is: there are demonic spirits that corresponds to many of the issues that we've already mentioned. Take some of the emotional damage like fear, there is a spirit of fear as well, there is a spirit of loss, there are spirits of rejection, there are spirits of false guilt and shame, spirits of anger - we could go on and on. So when this is given way to within our emotional life, it can be an open door for a spiritual empowerment to actually come in and enforce these types of responses.

Some of the consequences. We've looked at the kinds of abuse, we've looked at the consequences - some of them - of abuse; but quickly I want us (and this is the most important thing of all) to look at the cure for abuse, OK? The first and key cure for all types of abuse - now listen - is to see the Father through Jesus. Have you got that? To see the Father through Jesus. Philip asked Jesus on one occasion: 'Show us the Father, and it will suffice us' - which basically, to paraphrase, was saying, I think he was saying in on himself 'We're hearing all these parables, we're hearing all these mysterious sayings of Your teachings, You're doing these miracles that we are expected to interpret; Lord, would You please just be straight plain and clear to us, and show us God! Just show us God, and that will do us!'. Jesus says: 'Philip, have you been so long with Me? Whoever looks at Me sees the Father. He who has seen Me, see the Father'. Do you want to know who God is, what God is like? I've said this so many times, but I'm going to keep saying it until people get it: if you see Him as this great authority figure to be feared - God is to be feared, and He is great - but the greatest, completist, most perfect revelation of God was Jesus, and I can live with that! Can't you? Jesus as your God? Because Jesus displays the heart of God perfectly, and it says in Isaiah 61, and Jesus claimed it in His own home town synagogue in Luke chapter 4. He opened the scroll of Isaiah 61, it was the reading for that particular Sabbath, and it says: 'The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me, for He has anointed Me to preach the glad tidings to the poor; to heal the brokenhearted, to bring recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty the captives; to preach the acceptable year of the LORD' - the year of Jubilee when slaves are released, land is returned, and debts are cancelled. This is the ministry of Jesus, He has come to heal the brokenhearted. If you think God wants to pour salt in your wounds, you've got the wrong God - it's as simple as that. You need to look at Jesus, you need to see how He dealt with the broken. I'm not talking just about lepers, I'm talking about the morally broken, the people who were shamed.

Do you know the story of the woman caught in adultery? You read it when you go home. What happens is, it says - and Scripture is very clear, it's never salacious in its explicit nature, and yet it says she was caught in the very act - that's what it says. The Pharisees caught her in the very act. Now, I have loads of questions about that - how

did they catch her in the very act? I would love to know that, if they weren't peeping toms, or if it wasn't a trap for that girl. I don't know, but she was caught in the very act, and they dragged her before Jesus in the precincts of the Temple. They thought they had got Jesus, because He's meant to be a rabbi, a teacher of the law, and the law says such a one should be stoned - that's what they said: 'Doesn't Moses say that she should be stoned?'. But they knew Jesus was getting a reputation as this friend of sinners, and they thought: 'We've got Him between a rock and a hard place! He can't transgress the laws of Moses and not stone her, and yet His new reputation is going to crash and burn if He is the Man to get this woman dead!'. This is masterful: Jesus wrote something on the ground which all the theologians love to debate about. We can't know what He wrote on the ground, because nobody told us - so what's the point in wasting time talking about it? Let's talk about what He did say! What did He say? 'Let whoever among you who has no sin cast the first stone'. That's one of the most misquoted verses in the Bible: 'Let he who is without sin cast the first stone', that's what people say, 'he who is without sin cast the first stone' - that's not what it says. It says 'Let he who is among you without sin cast the first stone', why? Because He was the only one qualified to judge, because He was the only one perfect - do you know that? Yet, He chose not to judge because He had come not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. What does He do? By saying such a word, it convicted them, and from the eldest to the youngest - because the eldest were the ones with the most skeletons in the cupboard - from the eldest to the youngest they went out one by one, and it's just the adulteress left with Jesus. Probably half clad, with the very scent of adultery still on her, and this is minutes away now - 'Give her six months probation and see how well she does', eh? Minutes away from her sin, He says: 'Where are your accusers? Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more'. Go, and don't do it again.

Now, why am I sharing this with you? To show that He heals the brokenhearted. If you have been abused, you're not even in that category, because it was against your will. I have a hunch this was against her will anyway, I have a hunch about that. What I want you to see is the heart of God - and not only in issues of moral brokenness, but it says He looked on the great crowds, these were the Jewish people, this was the ancient people of God, the chosen of God; but the Pharisees, their spiritual leaders had let them down. It says Jesus looked upon them as sheep having no shepherd, and He had compassion upon them. Whatever your abuse is tonight, alright, whatever your form of abuse is tonight, I want you to consider something: 'Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls', Hebrews 12:3. Have you ever considered the hostility that Jesus received at the hands of sinful people? I want to say: there was never anybody more abused than Jesus. It doesn't mean He experienced every form of abuse, but there was never anyone abused more than Him. Hebrews 4 and verse 15 consequently says: 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin'.

Now listen carefully to what I'm about to say: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, perfect, sinless, undefiled, separate from all sinful humanity, was stripped naked, hanged upon a cross, and we believe that it was not 20 foot in the air, we believe that in fact crosses were at ground level - that figures with Scripture, 'All you who pass by, is there any sorrow like unto My sorrow'. Actually, what seems to be the case, more than the pictures and portraits we see of the crucifixion, was that the offenders, the criminals who were put to death would be crucified along a pathway, along a thoroughfare at almost eyelevel. So if you imagine the cross maybe only being a foot above ground level

along a footpath, as the people are coming to and from the town, they would be passing by, they would be ridiculing, and the shame and humiliation of the victim is palpable. So here you have the Son of God stripped, beaten, bruised, bloody, hanging on the cross as the world passes by. I don't know whether you ever thought about the humiliation of the cross quite like that, but I think God the Holy Spirit wants you to understand tonight that you've got a High Priest who knows, who is cognisant of what it is like to be humiliated, to be abused against His will. Might I add that He did this willingly, He allowed Himself to go to the cross willingly. The Father didn't force Him to do it, in fact the Father was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself - this was an agreement between the Father and the Son that this should happen, in order that all our abuses should be taken upon Him as a sacrifice so that we would be set free. But what you need to know here tonight is that Jesus knows, there mightn't be another living soul in this room, even in your life, who knows what you went through - but Jesus knows, and better than does He know, He understands! Not because He's God, but because He is man and because of what He endured. Have you ever thought about it? How much, how much He endured - have you considered it? Do you hear the word of God to your heart tonight: Jesus knows your hurt, and He feels your pain. If you could believe that, that would revolutionise your life.

The first thing you need to do in order to be cured and healed from abuse is to see the Father through Jesus. The second thing you need to do is to learn to be God's child. Even in this room, I believe tonight, there are many orphans. You might even be a child of God, but you live like an orphan, you come with your begging bowl to God; or you're still living as a slave before God, you haven't got out of the law, you haven't understood that you're actually a son, you're an adopted child of God - and that means you're protected, that means you're loved with an everlasting love! It's a perfect love, and therefore you can trust God. I don't care what your father was like, I don't care what your parental guardian was like, or authority figures in your life, or what your pastor, or minister, or elders were like - whatever, your teacher, whatever: God is a perfect Father, and He's got a perfect love. Here's the good news tonight, some of my favourite verses again of Scripture: you are loved, and there is no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear - hallelujah! For fear has got to do with judgement, whoever fears has not been made perfect in love. So if you still have got a fear that has been engendered in you because of abusive treatment, you know that there is some healing that still needs to go on, you know that you're not made perfect yet in love, you know that you're not resting in the security and protection of Abba Father's love. That's 1 John 4:18-19 if you want to know.

Another marvellous verse, what a picture, Romans 8:15: 'For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'' - isn't that wonderful? I've told you before, haven't I, that 'Abba' is Aramaic, didn't I tell you that? 'Abba' is Aramaic - maybe I didn't, you're all looking very blank at me - 'Abba' is Aramaic, and it's derived from Aramaic baby speak. You know the way in our culture babies when they start speaking say 'Mama, Dada', in Aramaic they said 'Abba, Imma'. People have a fit if you say it's like a child saying 'Daddy', but - get over it - that is what it means! Now I'm not talking about 'God All-matey', He's 'God Almighty', we've got to reverence Him - but if you've got a problem with the intimacy and the familiarity of what Jesus has done with us, you've got to work that out, because these are scriptures that testify that this is the intimate relationship; like a wee Jewish boy has with his Daddy. That is meant to be my child-Father relationship with God. No fear, no bondage, and if you actually do that as a child of God, it will mean that you

don't have to push other people away, you don't have to build walls, but you can actually build networks of trusted friends who know their Father too and understand that they're not accepted because of any of their performance, but they are accepted by grace - that is so liberating! We're all in the same boat, we're all in the same family.

So you need to see Father through Jesus, but you need to learn to be a child of God. Thirdly, you need to forgive and break ungodly ties. One of the greatest problems when people have been abused, obviously, is unforgiveness. You might say: 'Well, this is a tall order. I mean, you can talk about forgiveness with other people, but not abused people - I mean, come off it!'. But listen: forgiveness is only necessary when we are hurt, and if it doesn't hurt to forgive, forgiveness probably isn't necessary - most likely it's not necessary if it's not hurting. So, if there is resentment, as I've said before, holding onto anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die - guess what? It doesn't happen! So what you need to stop doing is being a debt collector, do you understand? You need to release that person in order for you to be released. I know you mightn't like that, but that's just the way God has done things - just be thankful God has a way for you to be released. But if you don't do that, in effect here is what is happening: that individual who has abused and misused you is actually still pulling your strings. If you like, they're still on your case, that could be the reason why they are still haunting you in this very present-day. Partly associated with that is you having taken on guilt at times that is not your responsibility, you are not responsible for other people's behaviour, even if you were involved. Now it's important to forgive, it's important to break ungodly ties - that can mean practical things. In other words, don't put yourself in danger, stand up for yourself, resist control, beware of devaluing yourself - but it also means spiritually. If you've been at any of these meetings before, you will know that we will do it in our prayers, where there will be a spiritual bond that takes place - especially in sexual unions, but in any disordered relationship this is a possibility - where there is a hold that a person can have over you in the spiritual, even if the relationship has moved on and you're not having anything to do with each other again. There can be a spiritual hold, so you need to forgive and you need to have the ungodly tie broken.

You also need to deal with old thought patterns. Romans 12:2 says that we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. Second Corinthians 10:4-5 says we are to take the authority of Jesus over our thought life. This is one of the problems: we have old thought patterns that need renewal, but we are still walking down those old trackways in our minds, the old way of thinking about what the devil says about us, what others have said over our lives, what consequences have come to us, and the fact that we believe this is just life that stinks. We need to get out of that and start to hear what God says about us, allow our mind to be renewed according to the identity that we now have in Christ, what He says is our new position, and our possessions, and our significance in Him etc.

The final thing we need to do - let me just recap: you need to see the Father through Jesus, you need to learn to beat God's child, you need to forgive and break ungodly ties, you need to deal with old thought patterns. Finally: you need to allow Jesus to heal the deep hurts. Will you tonight, will you - however broken and wounded your heart has been - will you bring that heart to Jesus, and will you place it in His hand? I believe there are people in the gathering tonight, and you have a crushed spirit. Often when I pray with people about a crushed spirit, I see a little shoot of a plant that comes up in the spring - and you start to worry 'Oh, is the frost going to come and kill it, or is the

son going to wreck it with the football, or is somebody with a hobnail boot not going to see it and just squash it'. That's the way our little spirits are, especially when we are young, and they can be so easily bruised, broken, and crushed - Jesus wants to heal your broken spirit. Part of that for many people will be the healing of their memories. You can have a box within your heart filled particularly with childhood memories, but not always the case - and a lot of people who struggle with forgiveness, time and time and time again pronounce forgiveness over somebody, but don't seem to ever break through to it in their heart. It is because there needs to be the healing of memories, there are strong powerful memories that still have a grip upon them that need to be healed and redeemed - and Jesus is in the business of doing that, I have seen Him do that so so many times, and break the power of memories and the hold that they've had over people. But you need to come to Jesus with your box - maybe that has been an untouchable box up until now, you feel it's too painful to enter.

Can I assure you tonight, where we started off, listen, this is Jesus speaking to you now, it's not me, it's Jesus: 'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' - that's an emphatic statement. 'If you come to Me with your burdens, I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you', so that means take off all those false yokes, those false burdens that other people have put on you of control and even of religion, put them off, 'Take My yoke upon you'. So there needs to be some kind of authority figure in your life, but it ought to be Jesus: 'And learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart'. This yoke - Jesus was the perfect carpenter - this yoke never chafes, it's never too heavy, He takes the weight actually. He takes the weight: 'You will find rest for your souls'. Just pause there: 'Rest for your souls'. How much money would you give for that if it was purchasable? Rest of mind, rest of heart, rest of actions, behaviour, rest in your body - some of you are wound up, you've so much electricity going through your body right now in nervous tension that it could drive a tram up a hill, literally! What would you do for rest? What would you do to be able to put your head on the pillow at night and rest? 'For My yoke is easy and My burden is light'. Do you know something? There is wholeness for the abused, whatever your abuse is, if you come. I mean, look at that, who could say that? Who could say that only the Son of God! Imagine a doctor pronouncing: 'Come to me and I will give you rest for your souls' - eh? Who is going to go to him? A church can't say that, no mere man could say that. Will you come to Him tonight? Let's pray.

Now on the screen I'm going to put this prayer, as I have done. It's not the same one, it's similar - but I'm going to talk through it quickly with you so that you understand before we pray it. The first thing is: 'Lord Jesus, I confess I am in need of a Saviour. I thank You for dying for me, I invite You to be Lord of my life'. If you're not a Christian here tonight, that means - you're not born a Christian, you know, it's a Christian country so-called and all the rest, maybe you've been to church and baptised and all. We're not talking about that, we're talking about a personal relationship with Jesus where your sins are forgiven, you have peace with God, you know that you have eternal life within you - if that has never happened to you, you need to receive that tonight. If you need to know forgiveness of sins, and know Jesus Christ as your Lord - would you pray that? But even if you do, just surrender to the Lordship of Jesus again: 'I thank You that You perfectly revealed the heart of God the Father', who we talked about tonight, 'and I ask You to bring me to the Father and make me His child. I choose to trust You, Father, and I release myself to be under Your protection, and follow Your perfect plan for my life. Thank You that Your plans are not to harm me, but prosper me and give me a hope and a future. Forgive me for blaming You' - sometimes we blame

God for what others have done to us - 'I know that You hate what Satan has done in my life'. Some of you might need to release bitterness and resentment that you have toward God. This is the big one: 'I choose to forgive those who have hurt or abused me, and those who failed to protect me. Specifically I forgive', so and so, 'for what they did and how it made me feel', and we will fill those blanks in quietly as we sit. 'Set me free from all the bitterness and resentment, and heal my damaged emotions. I confess that as a result of being hurt, I have allowed myself to sin' - and we've got to admit that. It's not our fault if we've been abused, but often it can precipitate sinful behaviours in our life by maybe attitudes, or thought patterns, or behaviours. 'I repent and ask You to forgive and cleanse me. Forgive me for wrong attitudes, wishing I was dead, harming myself, or making agreements with Satan. I take away from Satan every right to my life, I renounce all agreements made with him, I reject his lies in Jesus' name, and I choose life. Father, I thank You for my emotions, and I accept them as from You. I have not always expressed them, but sometimes I have lived in denial or repressed them. There have also been times I have expressed emotions in ungodly ways, especially anger. As a result, I have hurt others and myself. I repent of hurting, manipulating, or attempting to control others by my anger. Lord, please break any ungodly soul tie with me and.... Separate me, spirit, soul, and body, from them. Restore to me every part of myself which has been wrongly tied to', name them. 'Return to them any part of their being wrongly tied to me in Jesus' name. Thank You Jesus, that You became cursed for me on the cross, that Your blood was shed so that I might be set free. I take my stand with You against all Satan's demons, and I command any spirits that have had control over me to leave me now - in Jesus' name I expel you. I thank You that You understand my pain, and that You will perfect my healing through the power of the Your cross. Thank You Lord Jesus, Amen'.

There is a lot in that prayer, but let me just say to you tonight, listen carefully: we are available for prayer afterwards, OK? If any of you need help even after praying this prayer, we are there for you. But I know that this is a very private thing sometimes, and very delicate in nature, some of the subject matter we have touched on. It would be wonderful if you could deal with these issues now in the presence of God - so will you? Will you engage, will you cooperate with the Holy Spirit now, and pray through some of these things? You might need a little more help afterwards, and we are available, but only God knows what He can do to break bondages in this very moment - and God is here. Can I also say to you: God is wanting to break this stronghold off our land, because abuse, institutional abuse, church-wide abuse, family abuse is rife. You only have to be in prayer ministry for a very short period of time to realise how widespread this is, and it is huge! We can testify, even here, those who are leading The Stables, of the opposition that has been in the spiritual realm even this week and even today - there is a real sense of everything coming against - but Jesus is greater, OK?

This is very painful, I know, for some of you - but it has to be done. It is a true saying: 'No gain without pain', it is true. So, will you pray with me? We will pause at the relevant parts, OK? Let's say it: 'Lord Jesus, I confess I am in need of a Saviour. I thank You for dying for me, I invite You to be Lord of my life. I thank You that You perfectly revealed the heart of God the Father, and I ask You to bring me to the Father and make me His child. I choose to trust You, Father, and I release myself to be under Your protection, and follow Your perfect plan for my life. Thank You that Your plans are not to harm me, but prosper me and give me a hope and a future. Forgive me for blaming You for what others have done to me. I know that You hate what Satan has done in my life. I choose to forgive those who have hurt or abused me, and those who failed to protect

me'. Now, in this next moment of prayer you're wanting to name those people - not audibly that somebody beside you will hear, but whisper, take their name on your lips. Please do speak with your lips their name, maybe it is someone who should have protected you and they didn't. Maybe that's who you need to forgive, but let's do it and take our time over it: 'Specifically I forgive', now name the person or people, tell the Lord what they did, tell the Lord how they made you feel and still make you feel if it's still an issue. We're not wanting to drag stuff out of the past that has been dealt with, but stuff that is unresolved if you've never done this before. Tell the Lord the way they made you feel, take your time, you may have a number of people - verbally, physically, sexually, spiritually, emotionally - who have abused you. Let's continue: 'Set me free from all the bitterness and resentment, and heal my damaged emotions. I confess that as a result of being hurt, I have allowed myself to sin by' - now you put the words in, whatever it is. Maybe it's alcohol abuse, maybe it's promiscuity, maybe it's rebellion, maybe it's harshness or violence yourself, or rejection of others. Sometimes abused people become abusers, and maybe you need to confess tonight that you are an abuser. Let's finish: 'I repent and ask You to forgive and cleanse me'. God's Son died so that all sins could be forgiven. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses all sin. Let's continue: 'Forgive me for wrong attitudes, wishing I was dead, harming myself, or making agreements with Satan. I take away from Satan every right to my life, I renounce all agreements made with him, I reject his lies in Jesus' name, and I choose life. Father, I thank You for my emotions, and I accept them as from You. I have not always expressed them, but sometimes I have lived in denial or repressed them. There have also been times I have expressed emotions in ungodly ways, especially anger. As a result, I have hurt others and myself. I repent of hurting, manipulating, or attempting to control others by my anger. Lord, please break any ungodly soul tie with', you name the people, name the ones who have abused you. Again, you don't have to speak it out, please don't - but just take it on your lips before God, name them, anybody who has had a disordered, dysfunctional, controlling, abusive relationship with you, name them. Let's continue: 'Separate me, spirit, soul, and body, from them. Restore to me every part of myself which has been wrongly tied to', name them. 'Return to them any part of their being wrongfully tied to me in Jesus' name'. Finally: 'Thank You Jesus, that You became cursed for me on the cross, that Your blood was shed so that I might be set free. I take my stand with You against all Satan's demons, and I command any spirits that have had control over me to leave me now - in Jesus' name I expel you. I thank You that You understand my pain, and that You will perfect my healing through the power of the Your cross. Thank You Lord Jesus, Amen'.

Let's pray. Now, if you have prayed that prayer and truly meant it, God will meet with you right here. God's presence is very heavy - do you know that God comes especially near to the broken, to the bruised, to the abused? He's going to come near. Lord, I just pray that You will come closer now, come close now. These people have reached out to You, for some of them very difficult it has been, but they have reached out to You. So, Lord, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I pray for Your grace just to descend upon this gathering. I pray for Your mercy, Your love, Your liquid love, Your security, Your sense of being, Your acceptance to just envelop people in this gathering tonight. I thank You that You have recognised the pronouncements of forgiveness that people have made. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I declare that people are forgiven not only of their sins, but as they have forgiven others that they have been released of the bondage of bitterness. I declare that those shackles should be broken off right now in the name of Jesus. I declare in Jesus' name that all resentment and bitterness that have caused an opening to tormenting, torturing spirits may be broken off people's lives right

now. I command all those spirits of torment to leave, spirits of unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, I cut the root of bitterness in Jesus' name; and I command that all those wicked spirits leave now in Jesus' name. I pray, Lord, for a deep healing in the heart, a deep healing in the crushed spirit, those spirits that have been crushed through abuse, though spirits and identities that have been malformed or deformed because of what has taken place - that You will come and bring healing now, You will bring restoration, You will cause them to grow up straight before you as a plant out of dry ground - like the image of Jesus, that they will become strong and healthy as You pour Your life into their spirits right now. Lord Jesus, would You do that? I pray, would You take Your nail pierced hands and just envelop their broken spirit. Take the broken pieces, if there are parts of them scattered in different events or traumas, would You bring those broken parts of their spirit, those splinters, and bring them all together. Gather them and make them whole before You. Cause their heart to fear Your name before You tonight. If there is any part of them still stuck with another person, I cut it off in Jesus' name - those people that were named, we cut them off, spirit, soul, and body; we divide them from every abuser, every bully, every person that has taken advantage of them or violated their will - we break off with them. I send away, in Jesus' name, every part of another person that should not be with someone here tonight - I command that they return to their being, whether living or dead, and call back everything that the enemy has stolen. I call it back, and I pray, Lord Jesus, that by the Holy Spirit You will unite those parts with the core being of everybody in this place now. Thank You, Lord Jesus. We cut every tie, every tie with memories, with people, with institutions, with places, with smells, with sights, with sounds - we cut those ties in Jesus' name. They will no longer have a bondage. We pray that You will do a deep healing of the memories, Lord. Now, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command every demonic spirit that has entered through abuse, I command spirits of the abusers and abuse to leave in Jesus' name. Hallelujah, thank You Jesus. Go, every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ as Lord, I command you to leave the temples of the Holy Spirit now in Jesus' name. The Lord rebuke you. Lord, I pray that You will give revelation to people in this place tonight, oh, revelation, Abba Father, of Your heart for them - and that they would feel that roundabout and underneath are the everlasting arms of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a pure love, this is a safe love, this is chaste. Some of us don't know what love is, because it has been perverted - this is pure love, pure love, no threat. Oh thank You, Father, for what You're doing. I pray that You will pour Your healing on our land. Lord, even tonight I know there are people from Catholic backgrounds, Protestant backgrounds, all sorts of backgrounds - Lord, I pray that You will do something in this place that actually will be rolled out right across our whole land, where there has been so much abuse. A lot of it, Lord God help us, has been in Your name, or under the cover of Your name. O Lord, forgive us, forgive us as the church, those who bear Your name, for all abuses. We repent, and we ask You to cleanse us and forgive us - we don't deserve it, but send us times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

If you have abused at all in the past, you can come to the Lord and find forgiveness. I know that's hard for some people to take in this room, but that's the truth: all manner of sin and blasphemy may be forgiven of men, Jesus said. It doesn't mean there aren't consequences of what you've done, and you may have faced those, or have to face them - but there is forgiveness for the most reprehensible sins, but you must come into the light.

Father, this has been a heavy night in more ways than one, but I thank You that You

have been working here this evening. Just as we are still in the attitude of prayer, and I'm about to close, is there anybody here tonight and this has been your night to become a Christian? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed please, it has been your night to become a Christian. You've taken that step already, or you would like to take that step, would you raise your hand just where you are seated if you have become a Christian tonight. Is there anybody? Most of you may be Christians, if not all of you, but we just want to give space for that. Is there anyone? God bless you! Praise the Lord! Thank you, Jesus! Is there anybody else? Any backsliders who have come back to the Lord? Maybe you were angry against God for what happened to you, you blamed Him - is there anybody that has been a prodigal and come home? Anybody? God bless you! Praise the Lord! Anybody else? Just as heads are bowed and eyes are closed again: who really feels that a bondage has been broken over them tonight, and God has done something with something of an abusive nature? Would you be able to testify to that? Nobody knows what it is, we've covered so much ground nobody knows what it is - would you put your hand up to testify to the work of God that He has done in your life tonight? Praise the Lord! Anybody else? God bless! Praise the Lord! Praise God! God bless you!

Father, we thank You for what You have done this evening. We know that a work that You have begun, You will perfect to the glory of Jesus Christ. We thank You that You love us, You love us beyond our wildest dreams. I pray that people's antenna will be right in the air tonight to pick up the signal that is coming from the heart of God, the messages toward us which are more than can be numbered, that are vaster than the sand on the seashore and the stars in the sky, and that we would get the program tuned in of You loving, loving, loving, loving, all of the thoughts that You have toward us. Thank You Jesus, thank You Father, thank You Holy Spirit. Amen.

Deeper Healing - Chapter 7
"Judgement vs Forgiveness"

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We're going to look tonight at 'Judgement vs Forgiveness'. Now that might have confused you a little, in the sense that many people might think we're referring to the judgement of God against us because of our sins, and maybe forgiveness from God that we experience at salvation - but that's not what we're talking about tonight. What we're talking about is the judgement of others, when we in our hearts make judgements against another person, and the ability - through the grace of God - to offer forgiveness to people who we might feel a right in judging. Now this is a complex subject, and I've said this probably several nights: we're not going to look at it in too much depth, it's impossible to do that, but hopefully you'll get a gist of what the Bible has to say on this subject this evening. But the big question is: to judge, or not to judge? Because, as you read the Bible, you begin to discover that there appears to be contradictory information concerning the issue of judgement. Now we know the Bible doesn't contradict itself, but on a superficial level we can get confused about this subject.

Let me just show you this. We're turning in our Bibles to Matthew chapter 7, to quite a well-known passage of Scripture here in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 7. We will be looking at several scriptures here, so stay with me as we begin this subject tonight and delve into many biblical passages. Matthew 7 and verse 1: *"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye*".

This is what Bible scholars call a hyperbole, an exaggeration of the Lord Jesus to prove a point - and it really does, doesn't it? I mean, if I was to go over to Trevor there and I had this plank in my eye, and I would say: 'Trevor, look what you've got in your eye there, look at that speck in your eye, take that out!' - it is ridiculous, isn't it? But it illustrates for us how we can be so judgemental of others in a spoken or unspoken way. If you look, there are two references here: we can look at other people and judge them in our hearts when we have got planks hanging out of our eye; or we can actually take it upon ourselves to step beyond their boundary and reference that speck in their eye, and tell them: 'I can help you with that', with the plank hanging out of our own. That is judgement, and what Jesus teaches here - we'll not go into the whole depths this - but that will come back on you, that's what He says. Now we're not talking about 'karma', we're not talking about 'what goes around comes around', but nevertheless Jesus is saying: 'From others you will be judged, according to how you have judged them'. OK, so others will judge you as you have judged them; but also: God will judge you for how you have judged others, in accordance with how you have judged others. So that's why Jesus says here: 'Don't judge'.

If you turn with me to Romans chapter 2, Paul goes deeper in a sense, or he teases out

what Jesus is getting at in verse 1 of chapter 2 of Romans. He says: *"Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?".* Now Paul was speaking here specifically to religious Jews, and it's interesting that often religious people are folk who think they are right and are just in judging others, but often they are hypocritical - because what they are judging in other people's lives is actually present within their own. Paul is saying here: 'Do you honestly think you're going to get away with this? Judging other people for the things that are in your own life?'.

In Romans chapter 14, if you want to go a few passages further into the epistle, you will see categorically the teaching of Scripture on judgement. Verse 10: 'But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: 'As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God'. So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way'. I think that's pretty clear, isn't it? Paul goes even further, if you turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 4, he says that we ought not even to judge ourselves - apart from judging others, we're not meant to judge ourselves. First Corinthians 4 verse 3, Paul says: 'But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know nothing against myself', that's something else, isn't it, 'yet I am not justified by this' - he's saying, 'As far as I know, there is no sin in my life, conscious, wilful sin; and yet I am not justified by that, because there could be something hiding deep within my heart that I don't know about' - 'but He who judges me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time', that's a good word there for perfectionists or introspective people in our gathering tonight, 'judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God'. Paul is saying: 'I don't waste any time analysing my inner motives, I just try to live a godly life before the Lord and before men, and I'm leaving everything to the day of judgement'. That's interesting, isn't it?

Another very clear passage, if you want to turn to it, is James chapter 4 verses 11 and 12. You might want to just listen to it: 'Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?'. Categorically: you're not meant to be judging your brothers and sisters, that seems clear enough, doesn't it? The problem is there are other scriptures, and the other scriptures - such as John 7:24 - say, Jesus speaking of course, 'Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgement'. Hold on a minute, is this a contradiction? When you look at the epistles, turn with me again to 1 Corinthians 5 - do follow with me if you have your Bible, it's important that you see this - 1 Corinthians 5, just after where we were already reading, verse 1, it seems that Paul exhorts the believers in Corinth to judge. Verse 1: 'It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles; that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you'. Now watch this: 'For I

indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus'.

Paul is saying: 'There is sin in your church, and you need to judge it. I'm not even there, and I have judged it! You need to deal with it!'. If you look at the end of chapter 5, and look at verse 11, he says: 'But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; not even to eat with such a person. For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore 'put away from yourselves the evil person''. Now look at the first couple of verses of chapter 6: 'Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?'. Paul is saying: 'You should be judging matters in the church yourselves, but you're running to the law courts, the secular law courts'. Verse 2: 'Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?'. Do you see this? Alright? Paul is saying: 'You need to judge and sort out these matters in your ranks that are not pleasing to God, and don't be running to the law courts - you judge and deal with the matter!'.

Now, you ought to be really confused by now - because, on the one hand, Scripture seems to teach 'Do not judge, lest you be judged', and 'However you judge, that's the way you will be judged'; and yet there are several scriptures that tell us we ought to be judging righteously, not according to appearance, but according to the heart. Now, here's how to solve this conundrum, alright? What does 'Judge not' actually mean? Well, Derek Prince puts it very well, he says: 'Judgement is a function of ruling, descending downward from God Himself' - now it's vital that you understand that. Judgement is a function of ruling, descending downward from God Himself. Now, in the Bible, ruling and judging always came together - that's not the way it is in our modern Western society. So what I'm saying is: judges ruled, you look at the book of Judges and you'll see that, judges ruled, and later on rulers judged - but we have separated the government from the judiciary and all the rest - but in Bible terms the two were together. So if you ruled, you also had the responsibility of judging. We know from Scripture that God takes just judgement very seriously, so whether it's in the national government, or whether it's in the church as we have been reading, God wants there to be righteous rule and judgement. He has given authority to certain people to make judgements, He has given those who are responsible to rule the authority to judge. Do you understand? He has given those responsible to rule the authority to judge.

So Hebrews 13 verse 17 teaches us: 'Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you'. It's talking about leaders in the church, and it's basically saying: those with responsibility to rule over you with authority, also are given the responsibility of judging - and they themselves will be judged according to how they have ruled. Are you with me so far? Let me illustrate it very simply: say you give your eldest daughter responsibility to babysit on a night out,

you also have to give your eldest daughter authority to rule. Right? If she's got the responsibility, she needs the authority to apply the rules - i.e. what television programmes are they allowed to watch; what time do they have to go to bed; are they allowed any treats and, if so, what are they? Are you with me? It's not enough giving her responsibility, you've got to give her the authority to rule - and that's the way God works, OK? So the government is responsible to judge its citizens; parents, to an extent, are responsible to judge their children; leaders in the church are responsible to judge, under God the Chief Shepherd, responsible to judge the flock. In other words, the principle is: we are to judge what we are responsible for, even ourselves. We are responsible for our behaviour, that's why Paul says: 'Examine yourself, look at your life'. We are responsible for moral standards in our own walk, in our families, and in the church. We are responsible for what we believe, doctrine, and ministries that we get behind. We are meant to responsible, as Paul says, for disputes among believers - so if somebody has something against me, Matthew 18, I'm responsible to judge that issue and go and sort it out with them. Equally, leaders are responsible to judge issues between believers in the church.

But what we are not responsible for is what we are not given authority over to judge. You're not responsible for the final evaluation of anybody's character, even your own. Did you get that? You're not responsible for the final evaluation of anybody's character, even your own. We read it from James chapter 4 verse 12: 'There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?'. The only person that knows our hearts is God. You're responsible for things He has given you authority over, if you're in a ruling position, but you're not responsible for evaluating your own motives, your own character, the final analysis of your whole life or anyone else. So, to put it practically: if we find ourselves speculating in a negative way about a person's motives for doing a thing, or their desires, we're probably judging in an ungodly way. Ungodly judgement can contain an element of the truth, but it lacks balance. Ungodly judgement tends to be harsh and uncompassionate, and often leads us to expect the worst in other people.

Now, I'm going to illustrate this for you tonight very, very practically, to show ways in which we judge in an ungodly way. One very common ungodly judgement is against God. Yes, many of us have made judgements against God. Whether God didn't come through for us at a time, or something happened that we think He ought to have interjected and stopped, and it can be long after we actually made those judgements - they may well be forgotten about - and yet they are still affecting us. Sometimes the earthly fathers we have had, we have superimposed their inadequacies upon God, and we have problems - or maybe other authority figures in our life - and we get problems with God. We make judgements against God. Another ungodly judgement is against ourselves. We tend to focus on how we judge other people, but many of you in this room have looked at the limitations that you've got - and, by the way, you've all got them, we've all got limitations - but you have judged yourself because of them. Do you know something? You should never define yourself only in terms of your limitations, we've all got them but they do not define us. Neither do our failures define us. We're not denying them, we're not ignoring them, or trying to be something we know we are not, but what we are stating is: that is not the way we ought to find our identity. So often we judge ourselves: 'I'm not athletic', or 'I'm not good-looking', or 'I'm not clever', or whatever - and we condemn ourselves because of that.

Another ungodly judgement is the judgement of pastors upon their people. Now this is

not just in legalistic types of circles, although that does happen, but it's an awful thing to hear a pastor run down his flock, or members of his flock. I've probably done it, it has to be said. It's a very easy thing to do, it's not the easiest job in the world being a pastor - and yet it is an ungodly judgement to do that. Now we're not talking about genuinely discussing legitimate problems. Remember, when you're given a responsibility to rule, as God has given pastors and elders to rule over the flock, there is a necessity to judge between issues - but that's not the same as ungodly judgement. Equally, people can judge their pastors, or their ministers, or their leaders with ungodly judgement. Now, don't misunderstand me: pastors and leaders are not above contradiction, and this whole 'Touch not the Lord's anointed' is a copout, OK? We are not above contradiction, but if you've got serious issues - that's a vital term, serious issues - with leadership, there are accepted biblical procedures for you to go through, that you ought to be prepared to pursue if the matter warrants it. If it doesn't, shut up! It's as basic as that. If there is an issue, deal with it biblically; if there is not, pray for your leaders. Have you ever had roast pastor for Sunday lunch? Have you? Carved him up, discussed slanderously leaders in your church? Do you know something, I believe very much in the spiritual gift of discernment - but, you know, people who maybe have that gift, it's very easily lapsed into criticism when you're in the flesh. Maybe God's Spirit shows you something that is deficient within your leaders, or something that's just not right, or something that is going wrong - do you know why God is showing you that? He might be asking you to go and do something about it through biblical procedures, but more often than not, He's asking you to intercede on behalf of that person or that particular issue. But when you lapse into the flesh, what do you do? You don't pray about it, but you talk about it. Maybe you do have the gift of discernment, but make sure that fine line between discernment and a critical spirit is not crossed by you. It's very dangerous.

So we can make ungodly judgements against God, ourselves, pastors make them of their people, people of their pastors and leaders - but another very common people group that we make judgements about, which is probably the most popular, is family. Right at the top would be our spouses, if we are married. Now I haven't got time to go into this one, but whether it's the wife of a husband, or a husband of a wife - take, for instance, a husband judging his wife; maybe in one particular negative area, but it can be the case that the husband will allow that perception of her to colour every other aspect of her character. He forgets about the positive qualities, and becomes obsessed with her negative trait. A further dangerous step that moves on from that is that he, or she, might look at other spouses, other couples, and think: 'I wish he was like that', or 'I wish she was like her'. That's very, very dangerous, the enemy will use that, potentially, for adultery. We can so easily judge our spouses.

Then, of course, maybe one of the most common of all is parents judging their children. How do you do that? Well, there are a thousand different ways we can do that, but even innocent ways. We might say: 'Well, our eldest child is the smart one', we mightn't articulate that, but that might be what we think; or 'Our youngest child is the fit one' - and we're not saying that you ignore realities, but we're saying we ought not to judge. Maybe some have said even more strongly: 'You'll never be this', or 'You'll never be that', which is a judgement not only on their character, but upon their future. Of course, we're all familiar with the judgement of children on parents, the blame game. I honestly believe that, because we emphasise so much in healing and deliverance ministry upon the need to forgive, that we can often fall into the trap of blaming our parents. Now, there is no doubt about it, that our parents are guilty for a lot of things that go down in

our lives, but we've got to keep the biblical balance in all of this teaching. Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 2 is very clear: ''Honour your father and mother', which is the first commandment with promise' - it is one of the Ten Commandments, and of course the promise within the commandment in Exodus 20 and verse 12 is: 'Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you'. So there is a connection, Paul is saying, with the command and the promise: honour your father and your mother, and the promise is that you'll live long on the land. It's critical to this concept of judgement: when we do not honour our parents, when we make hard judgements upon them, God is saying we actually close the door to many blessings that God desires to shower upon us as His children. We close the door to many blessings, not just longevity, but many other blessings He wants us to have. But also, conversely, we open the door of negative consequence upon ourselves.

Let me illustrate this to you, for instance: if you've got a Mum or Dad and they are not exemplary, and you make a vow in the place of judgement against them that sounds like this, 'I will never ever be like you', or 'If I ever have children I will never treat my children like you treated me' - OK? Do you follow? When you make those vows from a place of judgement, those can be deeply damaging. In fact, what actually may happen is: the thing that you have vowed never to happen, does happen - OK? You don't want to become like your mother, perhaps, but often this can take place - where the very thing that you have detested in a parent, you start manifesting yourself. Why is that? Here's one reason perhaps: when we make those vows, 'I'll never do this', 'I'll never be like that', in the place of judgement, that is an act of the flesh. It is an act of the flesh that is actually contrary to the Holy Spirit's power changing you into what He wants you to be, OK? 'That which is of the flesh is flesh, that which is of the Spirit is spirit'. So if you align yourself with the flesh, that's enemy territory, and if you make a vow in judgement in the flesh, the enemy can make it happen the other way round. It can actually be like a sort of self-fulfilling thing. Do you see how serious this is? It's a huge subject, isn't it? The danger of making judgements. The Lord says it will come back at you. Judge not that you be not judged.

Another huge area of judgements is that of generalising judgement, generalising judgement. Let me explain myself: it begins with a simple judgement against another person. So maybe you have an abusive parent, or an unfaithful husband or wife, or an offensive person of a different race, nationality, or religion; and then based on that one, or couple of negative experiences with those people, you judge the larger people group because of that one or two people. So then the judgement becomes: 'All parents stink', or 'All men are bad', or 'All Asian people', or whatever nationality or ethnicity, 'All of them'. What it is is stereotyping due to prejudice, but it is coming from a judgement, and then from it may well evolve an expectation, so that you expect - because all men are bad - you expect that when you meet a man, or begin maybe to explore a relationship with a man, you expect it to be a bad experience; and, lo and behold, it becomes bad because you have put faith in that belief, that stronghold of the mind that the enemy is very obliging in fulfilling. Again, it's almost self-fulfilling - are you with me? Do you see what a vast subject this is, of judgement?

There are areas that God gives certain people responsibility of authority over to judge, but what we are not meant to judge is the motives, or the heart, or a life evaluation of another person. You're not meant to judge what you don't have authority over. Judgements against God are perilous, against ourselves, against our leaders, against our spouses, against our parents, against our children, against whole swathes of people

groups, political or religious persuasions - it's ungodly judgement.

So the question begs: are you here tonight, and you are caught in one of those aforementioned types of judgement or another? You realise now, and maybe you can even identify how this is kind of reversing against you, and revisiting you - the very thing that you feared has come upon you, having done all in your power to avoid it. You're realising that it's a consequence of judgement. So, if you're caught in judgement, and probably bitterness as well - what is the answer? Well, I hope you're starting to see, even through this talk, but right throughout the scriptures, that God has established certain laws in the universe. He has established natural laws and spiritual laws. Now, man-made laws can at times be broken without any consequence, but God's laws cannot. Whenever you break His laws, there is always fallout. Take gravity, for instance, you may want to fly, you can try and jump off a building if you like, wave your arms, but you will die - OK? Because the law of gravity is: what goes up must come down. You say: 'Well, what about aeroplanes?'. Well, that's the law of aerodynamics, and the law of aerodynamics overcomes - it doesn't cancel out, as it were, or deny, or break the law of gravity - it is a stronger force, a stronger law that overcomes it.

Now that reflects - all these unchangeable laws in nature actually reflect the character of our Creator. In the spiritual realm, and we're going to look at this in great depth next month, bad choices bring curse, good choices bring blessing. It's as simple as that. Here I'm going to share with you in the rest of our time one divine law of blessing, and it's this: forgive and you will know forgiveness. Forgive and you will know forgiveness. If you want to get out of the entrapment of the judgement cycle, you need to express forgiveness to know forgiveness. Jesus taught this in His prayer, we call it The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:12: 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors'. How many times do we pray that, but do we actually do it? Now, the Lord was teaching the disciples how to pray, and of course the disciples wanted their sins forgiven - of course, anybody with any sense would want that as well - but a cursory reading of the gospels will show you that the disciples struggled with the idea of forgiving one another. It's OK for me to get my sins wiped clean, but do I have to forgive other people? So Jesus had to reiterate this teaching in the very same passage of Scripture in chapter 6 verses 14 and 15: 'For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses'. He wants them to get the message. Later on in Matthew 18, quite a number of chapters after that, Peter asks the Lord again: 'How often do I need to forgive someone who has offended me?'. He thought he was being very overgenerous by saying: 'Lord, seven, the figure 7, would that be enough?'. Seven is the number of completion and perfection often in the Bible, he thinks this is it, seven must be the number of times! What does Jesus say? 'Peter, seventy times seven'. Now what is seventy sevens? 70x7 is 490. Now what did Jesus mean? At 491 can you deck the person, or take them to court? That's not what Jesus meant. What He meant is: 'Peter, stop counting and keep on forgiving! There ought to be no limit to your forgiveness!'.

Now here is the spiritual law that you need to grasp. We are, all of us, in danger of judging, if we are not at this present moment caught in it. Here is the law that Jesus enshrined: if we want to know the continuous blessing of God upon our lives, then we have to continually be forgiving others. Did you get it? If we want to know God's continuous blessing, we have to continuously be blessing others with forgiveness and pardon. Otherwise, effectively we are asking God to forgive us, and when we are asking God to forgive us for our sins, we are asking Him to do something we're not prepared to

do for others. Do you know what that is called? Hypocrisy. We're asking God to forgive us, when we won't forgive others. We become trapped in our own hypocrisy, with grave spiritual and personal consequences.

Now Jesus, to illustrate this to Peter in Matthew 18, told the parable of the unforgiving servant. A very, very quick summary of that is: there is a guy who owed the King an awful lot of money, and the King is going to send him to prison until he has paid the full amount. He's going to get in real trouble with his family and everything, and he begs and begs; and the King has compassion upon him, and the King says: 'Look, I'm going to wipe the slate clean, you're forgiven, your debt is cleared, away you go!'. That fellow, that owed such a great debt, goes out and he bumps into a mate of his who owed him a small debt. He grabs him by the throat, demands his debt, that fellow begs him to be let off and he won't allow it. He throws him in jail until he pays every last farthing. The King hears about the hypocrisy of the unforgiving servant who was cleared such a large debt, but wouldn't forgive a small debt, and the King says: 'No, I'm not having that, he's going to jail! He's going to jail! He's going to get his just deserts!'. Just hear the conclusion of the Lord Jesus Christ about this matter, He says: 'His master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses'. Is that in the New Testament? Yes, it is. Along with Matthew 6, both those verses that we cited in the Lord's Prayer, verse 5 and verses 14 to 15, they're all there, and many many more. We can try and fudge these scriptures, but what Jesus is actually teaching here: 'My Heavenly Father will hand you over to torturers if you do not forgive those who offend you from the heart'. If unforgiveness is in your heart, you will never know true freedom.

Some of you, I believe, here tonight, are in the torture chamber of an unforgiving spirit. Jesus said unforgiving people would be given over to the torturers, and I believe that these are actually tormenting spirits, tormenting spirits that will hold you in the bondage of your bitterness, that will manipulate your mind and your emotions because you will not give over your offence to God, allow Him to deal with it, and be healed. Do you realise that our reactions to our offenders can do as much harm to us, if not more, as the original offence? Did you hear what I said? Our response to how others hurt us can actually do more harm than the original incident, because our own bitterness and unforgiveness can imprison us and torture us. I have to say to you: some of the most bitter, twisted, tormented people I have ever met are Christians who have got chips on their shoulder. You see, Jesus is teaching that there are consequences for conscious unforgiveness. So if you have got something against someone in your heart tonight, and it's not just a hurt - we're all hurt from one time or another - but an actual judgement, you're in the bondage of bitterness, you've got resentment in your spirit toward another, Jesus says there are grave consequences of that and you will certainly not be knowing the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Can I go a step further? You might be aware of issues that you have with other people, but you could be here tonight and there are unconscious issues where you have made judgements against others. Maybe people have hurt you, and it's deeply hidden, it has been suppressed and buried, you're unaware of it, you're oblivious to the effects. Let me seek to diagnose if that might be your condition. Peter Horrobin wrote a book 'Forgiveness: God's Master Key For Deliverance', and he uses an analogy in that book about our lives being like buildings with many rooms. Each room contains memories of important events in our life. Some of the rooms have the doors wide open, we can

happily enjoy those memories, we can walk in and out and reminisce. Other doors are closed and even locked because there is pain associated with those memories behind the door. There are rooms named 'Trauma', 'Rejection', 'Betrayal', 'Abuse', 'Disloyalty', 'Addictions', 'Accidents', 'Divorce', 'Mistakes'. Because we don't know how to resolve these painful memories, we lock the door and throw away the key. Maybe we conceive that these are forgotten now, we have moved on. But Peter Horrobin says as the years go by it gets harder to cover up the hurt inside. Often what happens is: the mess on inside starts to seep under the locked doors. You try to cover it up, you try to carry on as if nothing is happening, but everybody can see the mess, the cracks are showing, you're going to pieces. Often what happens is that the mess on the inside seeps out.

Some people, maybe even in this meeting tonight, have so many locked doors that they have very little living space left. Perhaps you know that things need to be sorted, and they can only be sorted if you go into those rooms and clear up the mess, but you don't know how to get in. The problem is: you've locked the door and maybe thrown away the key. Well, the good news tonight is that Jesus has the master key to get into those rooms, and it is the master key of forgiveness. You don't have to go into that room on your own. In fact, Jesus will go into that room with you, He will go in before you, He will clean up the mess - but you've got to use the key. I don't know whether the Holy Spirit, as you've been here tonight, already has been delineating to you names and events, historic incidents in your life where you have offence, where you have judged others. Would you be prepared, this evening, to take that master key of forgiveness and work your way down that list? You need to! If you haven't seen it already, there are grave consequences for not dealing with it. In fact, Satan, the Bible says, will get advantage of us - 2 Corinthians 2:10-11. The person we read about in 1 Corinthians who had committed gross sexual immorality, they put him out, he was disciplined by being put out, but now he had repented and he really was the genuine ticket. He had repented and he wanted to come back into the church, and they wouldn't let him into the church, they wouldn't forgive him. They had judged him, but they wouldn't forgive him. So Paul says: 'I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ' - you remember he said he had judged that one, and he had the authority to do that as a leader in the church, but now he was forgiving that one - 'lest Satan should take advantage of us', literally it means 'outwit, outsmart, overreach' us. That is what happens when we are in an ungodly judgement and we won't forgive: Satan outwits, overreaches, and outsmarts us - for we are not ignorant of his devices, his schemes, intentions, and designs... but, you see, we are so often. We think we can harbour hatred in our hearts - and that's not too strong a term at times - we think we can do that without consequence, but Scripture teaches the contrary.

So do you have your list? I remember one of the very first ministry sessions I ever had in a private capacity with someone in healing prayer. They had a very long list, and as we began to pray down them, they had like a stoppage in their speech. They couldn't. I thought, I didn't know whether it was something demonic was going on or what, but it wasn't. The person then looked up at me and said: 'David, how can I forgive these people when I can't even forgive myself?'. Some of you need to put yourself at the top of the list of the people you need to forgive. Now the terms we are using here - we don't forgive ourselves, God forgives us - what I'm talking about is letting yourself of the hook, stop holding yourself under judgement for something you did, a skeleton in the cupboard, some mistake that you made, and you haven't been able to get over it, and you need to release yourself tonight into the freedom of God's forgiveness. You might confess and sing and pray about the cross and the power of the blood and all the rest,

it's time for you to experience it in reality and stop holding yourself under condemnation! Stop doing the devil's work for him!

Some of you, as I've mentioned already, need to put God somewhere near the top of the list, because you've got issues with God. Now, by the way, there are mysteries that I can't explain. I can't explain all your pain, all the turmoil, why things went down the way they did in your experience - I can't. What I do know is: often the devil does things, and God gets blamed on it. I do know that much. The thief is the one who comes to steal, kill, and destroy, Jesus came to give us life. God did not originate sin, and fallenness, and death, and all the rest. There are mysteries, and I can't explain every happenstance, but you need to come to God tonight and talk to Him about the controversy that is in your heart with Him.

Maybe the other people who are on the list, you're struggling with the concept of forgiveness because you're thinking: 'But they don't deserve it!". That's right, they don't! Just the way you don't deserve to be forgiven either! They still persist in that behaviour, that can be a tricky one - you know, if this is a live situation, if the offence is being perpetuated. It's different if it's an historical event away back in the past, done and dusted - it can be very grievous, but nevertheless if the behaviour is constantly being repeated... but is that not what Jesus said? For Peter's own good He says: 'Peter, stop counting, keep forgiving!'. Maybe you think: 'Well, they're dead and gone, how can I forgive them?'. Well, you can still forgive them, because it's still affecting you in the present. You see, we need to realise - and this is not selfish - but we are not forgiving people primarily for their sake, it's for your sake, so that you can enjoy an open heaven above you, knowing God's forgiveness, knowing all the blessings that come to you in the new covenant. You see, you need to be free, that's why you need to forgive. Until you do, you're still going to have the hold of that other person on you. Now this is very strong terminology I'm going to use, but it brings home what you need to understand: that person is still abusing you, still misusing you and mistreating you if you won't forgive them. They've still got a hold, you could still be hooked to that memory, chained to the past.

Now listen, just in these closing moments, what I want to do is take a bit of time to clear up some misunderstandings about what forgiveness is and what forgiveness isn't. Neil Anderson's 'Steps to Freedom' has been very helpful to me in my ministry along these lines, and if you know those you'll hear some of that coming through. The first thing that you need to understand is: forgiveness does not mean forgetting. You know that quip 'Forgive and forget', it's garbage, absolute nonsense. You cannot forget deep, hurtful offences in your life. Even God can't change the past - maybe you don't agree with that. But, you see, God has set time in motion, and this is a law that He has chosen to enshrine, He doesn't change the past. What He does is, He heals the past, He redeems the past - but for some of us, our problem is that we're trying to bury the past, we're trying to forget it and erase it from our psyche, and we can't do it! What we need to do is face the past, but face it with Him; then He will restore to us the years that the locusts have eaten. Sticking your head in the sand is not an option, being in denial, repressing issues is not an option.

Forgiveness does not mean forgetting. Second thing: forgiveness means living with the consequences of other people's sin. Now let me be categorically clear: I'm not talking about being irresponsible with your own welfare, I'm not talking about exposing your children carelessly to danger, or yourself. You ought not to tolerate sin or abuse, that's

not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is: whether we like it or not, we do have to live with the consequences of what other people do. That's the way the universe is made, no man is an island. So if someone chooses to do something it can affect you, and you can't always control that or save yourself. The only choice you really have is whether you will do so in the bondage of bitterness or in the freedom of forgiveness, whether you react one way or the other. No one ever genuinely forgave without bearing suffering and pain of another person's sin. It figures, doesn't it? You would have nothing to forgive if it wasn't painful or hurtful. We, as Christians, should know this of all people because that's what the cross is all about, isn't it?

Throughout the years (and I'm going to be a wee bit political here), throughout the years there was a debate went on here in Northern Ireland that we cannot forgive unrepentant people - do you remember that one? People will say, even in this whole area of teaching, we have to wait until a person is sorry in order to forgive them. 'Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing' - did Jesus wait until they were repentant or remorseful before He forgave? You might say: 'But where is the justice there?'. Well, the justice is right where it should be: with God, not with us. You see, we can't dispense justice because we are finite, we are partial, and that's why Scripture says in Romans 12:19 in the New Living Translation: 'Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath. For it is written, 'It is mine to avenge, I will repay', says the Lord'. You might retort: 'But you don't know what they did to me, David. It's all right you standing up there talking this way, you don't what they did to me!'. Correct! I don't know, but Jesus does know, God the Father does know, the Judge of Heaven knows. You say: 'But practically, how does that work?'. Well, 1 Peter 2:23, again in the New Living Translation, speaking of how Jesus dealt with the wrong offences against Him: 'He did not retaliate when He was insulted, nor threaten revenge went He suffered. He left His case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly'.

Now this is deep stuff, because there on the cross when Jesus said: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' - does that mean every one of those Roman soldiers went to heaven when they died? Is that what it meant? Of course that's not what it meant. So if Jesus was forgiving someone, does that not mean their sins are forgiven? Listen, Jesus was doing this for Himself. What do you mean? Jesus knew what it was to suffer like no other, OK? So don't put any theological sugar-coating on this, 'Oh, He was the Son of God, He's perfect', and all that. He was the Son of God, and He was perfect, but He was man hanging on a cross being killed. I know that He gave His life, but He's being put to death, He's being executed, people are harming Him, people are spitting on Him, people are humiliating and abusing Him. So He knows, as a man before God, that the only way to deal with offences is to give it up to God. The only way to be free from offence is to get out of the way, not retaliate, leave room for the wrath of God, and leave it in God's hands who always judges fairly. That's why He said: 'Father, forgive them', because He wasn't going to let bitterness or resentment get a hold of Him. Do you see how we deal with it, practically? That means if someone perpetuates an offence, as they continue to offend you and hurt you, you've got to ask God for grace to continually offer that offence up to God, to continually forgive them moment by moment. That's not easy, nobody said it was easy, Calvary wasn't easy - but it's necessary for you to be free.

A third thing - it doesn't mean forgetting, living with the consequences of others sin - thirdly: choosing not to hold someone's sin against them. The Greek word for 'forgive' is 'aphiemi', which literally means 'to let go of a debt by not demanding it', let go of a debt

by not demanding it - like the King of the unforgiving servant in that parable. In other words, letting a person off your hook, keeping no record of their wrong, placing them in God's hands - so they're not getting away with it, don't think that - you're taking them off your hook, but you're putting them on God's. God will deal with it, but you're choosing not to hold their sin against them any more. Now you might object, if you're human, by saying: 'But I just don't feel like doing that'. That would be honest, wouldn't it? Because who is hurting deeply, and at the same moment feels like forgiving the person that hurt them? No one. So you're normal if you don't feel like forgiving. But, you see, here is the fourth point: it's a decision of your will, it's not a feeling at all. If you wait until you feel like it, you're never going to forgive anybody. You must choose to forgive.

Now, here's how it works in the spiritual realm. Once you choose to forgive, and you declare the forgiveness, do you know what happens? Satan loses power over you in that particular area, and God will begin to heal your damaged emotions. That means that the feelings, the right feelings might come later, it might be after a period of time - but it will certainly never happen until you choose to forgive. Some of you may well have heard of Corrie Ten Boom, and read some of her writings, or watched 'No Hiding Place' the movie. She was well known for her family's work in preserving lives, over 800 Jews pursued by the Nazis in World War II. Four of her own family gave their lives for this project. Her sister, Betsy, died just before the end of the war in Ravensbruck Death Camp. Corrie Ten Boom learned in Ravensbruck these words, and I'm quoting her: 'There is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still'. Now, if I said that, that wouldn't mean too much, but when she is saying it it means a lot. Listen to something else she said: 'God will give us the love to be able to forgive our enemies'. I'd vote for her if she was up for election here! Here's the most profound in the context of what we're doing tonight, listen: 'Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart'. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. In other words, forget about your feelings, forget about them! Choose to forgive.

Now, that being said, and this is not a contradiction, I will explain myself: forgiveness must touch the heart for healing to come. Now maybe that really does confuse you, but let's clear up the apparent contradiction. When you choose to forgive, as an act of your will, do you know what often happens? The emotions of the hurt come to the surface, that's what we're talking about - the pain and the heartache - and you ought not to suppress that. Too often we bury those emotions because we are afraid of losing control or composure, especially we men - but in that moment of the act of forgiveness, choosing over our emotions, sometimes that pain comes up. It is Jesus' way of just drawing it out of us and taking it away, because He took it into Himself on the cross. But then what do we do? We push it down again, and we say: 'Jesus, You're not getting at that! That's mine!'.

Will you take these steps tonight in a few moments, will you be prepared to allow God to bring painful memories to the surface in order to get free of them? Are you ready to acknowledge how you feel toward those who have hurt you, honestly? You see, it's only when this is done from the heart that God can begin to heal, He can change you from the inside out. Many of us have hearts like this - do you know what that is? A borehole on the ice, and many of our hearts are like reservoirs of tears covered in a layer of ice. The Lord Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit tonight, if you take the step of obedience to forgive, and to break judgements that you have made, renounce those and

repent of them against other people, He wants to bore into that ice, and He wants to allow that little spring of warm salt tears to come up. Will you let Him? Because that's the process of healing: forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you - that our mandate. If you want to be a Christian, that's the way we have to live. The question is tonight: will you take that step? I believe very very strongly, and I know this is a heavy message, a lot to take in, but I believe very strongly that God has put His finger on stuff in your life tonight. I believe that this could be your Rubicon, this could be your breakthrough, this could be the night that you've been waiting for all your life. You've never known what's wrong, you've never known why you've been held back, you've never known why the things you hated in your father you see in yourself, in your relationship with your children - or put the analogies in there as it applies. But now you know: you have made judgements, you have got bitterness or resentment. I'm not underestimating what you've gone through in your life, or what abuse you've been party to, but you need to be free tonight.

I've got some prayers we're going to pray just now. I would like you, if you feel ready, to walk through this. I'm going to explain this before we pray it, so follow with me. 'Heavenly Father, You know my pain' - OK, so we are being real about how hurt we are - 'You know how much so-and-so's words and actions hurt me. I do not come to justify what they did', sometimes we do that with parents, sometimes we try and justify what they did, we try and explain it because - if we are the older generation in particular - 'Honour your father and your mother', that causes us to fear, and shut down, and be in denial about what they actually did. It's not honouring to them to lie about what they did. If they hurt you, if they harmed you, if they deprived you in any way, let's just be real about it. 'I do not come to justify what they did, but to forgive them for it. I now open my wounded and angry heart before You'. Two sessions ago wasn't it, we talked about anger, you can get the recordings: anger is not sin - it's what we do with the anger that can be sinful. God wants you to express that anger to Him and get rid of it. 'I open my wounded and angry heart before You, and I release to You all the negative feelings, the anger and the bitterness that I feel toward so-and-so. I also release any judgements that I have made against a person or persons, as well as my right to revenge' - that's a very hard thing to let go of. We have no right to revenge, but we perceive a right for our pound of flesh, justice. Would you release that right to revenge? 'I know that only You have the right to judge, and that You will do it justly'. Do you think He'll do a good enough job to leave it in His hands? 'I also ask You to come now and fill my heart. Where there has been bitterness, fill me with love. Where there has been turmoil, fill me with peace. Where there has been sadness, fill me with joy. I choose to forgive so-and-so for their words and actions, give me strength to walk in forgiveness toward them each day while You bring to completion Your healing work in me'.

So that's for the perpetual offences, this next part is very important for the spiritual dimension of all this. 'In the name of Jesus my Lord, I break the power of the judgement I made against... both in my life and in theirs. Also in the name of the Lord Jesus, I break the power of any judgement made against me'. So if a person has made a judgement against you, in the name of Jesus break the power. 'Namely that I' - what is the judgement they made against you? That you're stupid, or you would never amount to anything, or that you're ugly, or whatever, whatever it was that they judged you for. 'I ask You to break all ungodly ties between me and' - the person you have judged or who has judged you - 'I now declare in the heavenlies that the power of this judgement is broken, and that no spiritual powers may use it against them or against

me'. Now that's deep stuff, but it's necessary. Some of you here tonight may have tried doing this many many times, and you've never been able to break through. Maybe it's because of a lack of understanding like you've gotten tonight, but it could be that you need the healing of memories, you need somebody to pray with you over those memories that have power over you. We can deal with that afterwards if that's the case, we maybe will together in a moment to - but initially, don't be discouraged, don't lose hope, pray through this prayer, believe God for a break through tonight. I really believe there are going to be huge breakthroughs, OK?

Will you pray it with me? Only if you want to and only if you mean it, let's pray together: 'Heavenly Father, You know my pain. You know how much' - you put the word in, you put the name in - 'their words and actions hurt me. I do not come to justify what they did, but to forgive them for it. I now open my wounded and angry heart before You. I release to You all the negative feelings, the anger and the bitterness that I feel toward.... I also release any judgements that I have made against... as well as my right to revenge. I know that only You have the right to judge, and that You will do it justly. I also ask You to come now and fill my heart. Where there has been bitterness, fill me with love. Where there has been turmoil, fill me with peace. Where there has been sadness, fill me with joy. I choose to forgive... for their words and actions. Give me strength to walk in forgiveness toward them each day, while You bring to completion Your healing work in me. In the name of Jesus my Lord, I break the power of my judgement I have made against... both in my life and in there is. Also in the name of the Lord Jesus, I break the power of any judgement made against me by' - and you might want to name that judgement, what they pronounced over you. Let's continue: 'I ask You to break all ungodly ties between me and... '. Let's stand together before we say this last part, let's stand together. We're going to declare that we are free from the power of judgement, it is broken, no spiritual powers may use it against us or against these other people. Are you ready? 'I now declare in the heavenlies that the power of this judgement is broken, and that no spiritual powers may use it against me or against them'.

If you have resentment toward God, you might want to say something along the lines: 'Lord, I'm sorry for blaming You for the bad things that have happened in my life', or for the good things that haven't happened, or whatever, 'I know that You don't want to harm me, please forgive me'. If you have held yourself in justice because of something that you've done that you haven't forgiven yourself for, you might want to pray: 'Lord, I now release myself into the freedom of Your forgiveness. I thank You that at the cross I am cleansed, I am pure'. Receive it, embrace it with both arms, embrace in your heart that forgiveness, completely as yours.

I'm just going to pray for the people that prayed this prayer right now: Father, I want to thank You for what You've been doing tonight. I thank You that the godly counsel of the mind and heart of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has been displayed here tonight. It's a vast subject, but Lord, I want to thank You that it has been made clear enough for people to know where they should be judging, and what they should not be judging. Lord, I pray that those ungodly judgements that You have uncovered, that we have been guilty of, Lord, that we will receive Your forgiveness for that - but that You, right now Lord, would release the freedom of Your forgiveness upon every person, having forgiven others who have offended or wronged them. Lord, for those who have genuinely and honestly taken that step with integrity, I thank You that all heaven comes behind them tonight. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I thank You that You forgive

them, and I command every tormenting, torturing spirit of bitterness, unforgiveness, resentment, ungodly wrath, anger, hatred, spirits of judgement, spirits of legalism - I command you to leave in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ right now, leave the vessels of the Lord, leave the temples of the Holy Spirit. Every spirit of condemnation and accusation, every spirit of the devil the accuser, I renounce you in the name of Christ, and I command you to go in Jesus' name. We cut the soul ties with anybody who has judged these people, or they have judged. We break the power of any self-fulfilling act. We break the power of judgement. We break any curse that came into being because of acts of judgement or unforgiveness. Enemy, I give you your marching orders now in the name of the Lord Jesus, and I command every spirit that does not confess Jesus as Lord, who has people bound in bitterness, locked into their own hypocrisy, I command you to leave now in the name of the Lord Jesus. I command spirits of hurt and pain to go, all manner of spirits that have caused deep wounding, I command you to go in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus, would You just clear people completely of the enemy's encroachments, of his bondage, of everything that would come against them, mind, body, soul, and spirit. Lord, release them now in the wonderful name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Lord, I pray for deep healing now in hearts where there is hurt, where there has been abuse, where there has been offence, where there has been rejection, where people have been misused and mistreated. Lord, I pray that You will come and minister where there have been father wounds and mother flaws, and, Lord, when we have failed toward our own children, and we are guilty, Lord, would You bring healing, Lord, would You bring deep, deep, significant healing. Lord, if anybody is caught in any experience in the past, would You release them, spirit and soul, and bring them into the present, that You will take all those fragments and fractures and You will reunite them together in people right now. Lord, I pray, bring healing to minds and souls, I pray Lord now that You will even touch bodies. Lord, if there is anybody who is in some physical way wizened up because of bitterness, if there are pains in their body because of bitterness, if there is weakness or fatigue because of bitterness, Lord, would You heal them now in the name of the Lord Jesus. If there is anything coming from the source of judgement or unforgiveness, I speak healing to bodies, minds, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be healed in Jesus' name. Lord, pour in Your healing, anointing, right now'.

If you're not a Christian tonight, you need to be right with God, you need to be born again. You need to trust Jesus as your Saviour - will you do that tonight? Will you admit your sin, ask Jesus to save you, because He died for you? If you need help with that, come and seek us out. If you're a backslider, come back to the Lord tonight, get the help that you need. I'm going to pray, we're going to sing, then you're free to go. There is a deep work that is going on here tonight, really deep work. Can I just say, listen - and I often am led to this at the end of the night - this is what Ireland needs, this is the Gospel that Ireland needs. Now I have not suffer gravely through the Troubles, I lived through them, and I witnessed things. I went to school in the centre of Belfast, there were bomb scares regularly, our windows were blown out. I had family members in the security forces and so on - but thankfully there wasn't huge tragedy but came to our home. I don't underestimate what anybody has gone through, but listen: if we're going to be free, if we're going to know revival and healing for our whole land, we've got to know this forgiveness and we've got to stop judging one another. It's big, isn't it? We have a culture of offence in our land, a culture of offence. We put memorials up to how we have been offended over the years. We engrain them within our psyche, and we pass them on to succeeding generations. That cycle needs to be broken - will we be the ones that will break it for our children and our children's children?

Father, thank You that what we are hearing tonight goes so deep and so broad across so many strata of spiritual dimensions, and even in our nation Lord. It's unreal. We pray that this recording will go to places we would not even have believed possible, we pray that there will be great knock-on effects. Lord we need - not underestimating the pain that people have gone through through the years here - but Lord we need grace to forgive, and as the church we need to lead the way. We have not, and we ask forgiveness, Lord, because if anything we have given a bad example of how to hold offence and how to judge people. Lord, forgive us, forgive me for when I have judged people, and am still judging people. Lord, forgive me, teach me, put a watch upon my mouth, purify my heart Lord. Forgive me, and help us Lord, to forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven us. Thank You for this evening, thank You that the cross is the great leveller for us all. When we see Him naked, hanging between heaven and earth, and off His lips roll those words: 'Forgive, forgive' - how dare any of us stick our noses in the air in offence or in pride, when He forgave so much. Thank You, Jesus.

God bless you.

Deeper Healing - Chapter 8
"Blessing Or Cursing"

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by David Legge

It's good to be with you tonight, and it has been a real privilege, it has been my privilege to be with you this year. This is now the second year, isn't it? It's the second year I've been here, it's incredible to think of that. It has been the highlight of my ministry, I have to say that, just being among you and seeing what God has been doing. It has been such a blessing and such a privilege, and I want to thank you for the invitation to be with you and to share with you in what God is doing in Fermanagh and here at The Stables - it's my privilege and joy.

I want you to turn with me in your Bibles to two portions of Scripture, Deuteronomy chapter 11 and James chapter 3. Let's just pray before we read Scripture, do pray with me now that God will speak to you - and I believe He is going to speak, but we need to have hearts that are open and receptive to what He has to say. So let's just pray together to that end, that we might know His presence: Father, we do thank You for the many blessings that You pour out upon us. We don't want to be unthankful and ungrateful, and so we do worship You, and we do say: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Forget not all His benefits, who forgives your iniquities, who heals your diseases, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies'. We thank You, Lord, that Your 'hesed', Your lovingkindness, Your covenant love never fails, it never gives up, it never runs out on us. We want to praise You: great is Your faithfulness! You have been faithful to us this year, but Lord we want You to reveal Your covenant heart to us tonight; we want You really to show up in our midst and break curse over people's lives and release blessing. That's what we ask tonight, Lord, for the mighty all-victorious name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and for His glory we pray. Amen.

Let's read together Deuteronomy 11, we're reading two verses, Deuteronomy 11:26-28: *"Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known".* Then over to James chapter 3 verse 1, and we're reading the whole chapter so just follow with me, verse 1: *"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude",* or the likeness, *"of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and*

cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace".

Now tonight we're looking at 'Blessing or Cursing'. Now let me say right at the outset that this subject - in fact, like every subject we have considered each night - you could take a series on this alone. Blessing and cursing are just too vast to deal with in one night - but, as you know, I'm going to try my best and take up as much time as possible! But the word for 'bless' or 'blessing', it's found around 410 times within the word of God. The word 'curse' in its various forms is found approximately 230 times in the Bible. So there is a lot of material about blessing and cursing in Scripture. Here we read - in the New Testament, I hasten to add - in James chapter 3, James says that the tongue has got power to bless or to curse. So right away the apostle is teaching us that words are charged either by God's power, the Holy Spirit, or by Satan's power. In fact, James graphically describes the tongue as having the potential of being set on fire from hell.

Now, from creation words were meant to be blessings. In the book of Genesis we read: 'God said, 'Let there be...''. 'Let there be light', etc - and we know it was through what we call the Second Person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus in pre-incarnate form, the Word of God, that God made the worlds. We read in the New Testament that without Jesus nothing was made that has been made - but it was actually God's spoken word that brought blessing, as it were, in the creative act. When man was created, both man and woman were also created to bless the earth, to subdue the earth, and a lot of that was done through their words. It wasn't until man chose to sin that curse came into the universe. I want you to understand, right from the very beginning of Scripture, the record that we have is that it is the presence of sin that allows curse to remain in the earth. But this point is important to labour: vehicles for curse are words. It's the same with blessing, of course, but the main vehicle for curse is usually our words - now that can be spoken words, it can also be written words, it can be internal words. We laboured this in our last study I think it was, and we have touched on it several times, where we can make self-pronouncements, inner vows in our head or in our heart. I think it was our last session that we talked about soulishness, and how we can make judgements toward others - and if they're done in the flesh, whether towards them or towards ourselves, that is something that the enemy can use against us. Soulishness, something that is not led of the Spirit, but actually comes from our own minds, our own hearts, and our own volition, our own will but is devoid of the exercise of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, James, if you look at James 3 here, verses 14 and 15, he hints at this: 'If you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual', and he actually uses the term, 'demonic'. In chapter 4 and verse 11, if you look there, it says: 'Do not speak evil of one another, brethren'. Some versions translate that 'Do not slander one another', and the word 'slander' literally means 'to speak against another'. So curse

often is carried in our words when we speak against one another. Proverbs 18:21 tells us explicitly that death and life are in the power of the tongue, and there are many other scriptures that we could look at tonight - but I hope we don't need to - to verify that. So, just to summarise it basically for us: blessing, often in our words, produces good and beneficial results. Conversely, cursing results in bad effects, harmful outcomes.

Now, all of us are familiar with the term 'curse', aren't we - and 'blessing', of course - but we know what a curse is. You may even know of some famous alleged curses in the world. Let me give you a couple of examples. There is the Kennedy family, and of course this alleged curse was meant to have begun at least in manifestation when John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and then there was Bobby, and there were other things that happened in that family. Another famous curse is the curse of the Hope Diamond, and this diamond was meant to have been plucked from an Indian idol, and the thief who took it later died, and others who had relationships with this diamond have died. It has even been attributed to the falling of the French monarchy, you can look into the story yourself. Then there is the curse of King Tut, Tutankhamen, and this curse supposedly was that those who opened his tomb were affected by the curse and by death. I don't know whether you heard of this on the news recently, but it featured in the Sunday Times about a month ago: the curse of Thomas Becket was meant to have been re-invoked. They brought part of his bone or something back, I think to Canterbury Cathedral, but the curse of Thomas Becket was supposedly a 600 year curse on all English knights - because, of course, Thomas Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral in the 12th century. Apparently some of the knights that were involved in this welcoming of this bone back were affected in some adverse way. Then there are other curses, I'll not name any of the films, but they have been associated particularly with horror films - casts that have died, producers that have died, even people who have watched them who have been affected.

But we use this term 'curse' - whether we believe these things or not - we use 'curse' to cover misfortunes that have taken place in people's lives and in history. But we want to consider tonight: what does the Bible have to say about curse? In fact, I want to ask you: what do you believe about it? I have found, and I think most could say this, that generally Christians believe in blessing - you've been singing all about it already, unless you don't believe what you've been singing about the blessings of God. We believe God has blessed us, don't we? But not all Christians believe in curse. The fact of the matter is: both are real. I want you to think about this statement I'm going to make: you cannot focus on one aspect of opposites. I repeat that: you cannot focus on one aspect of opposites. Let me illustrate: the opposite of hot is cold, and both are real, yes? Hot and cold are real. The opposite of good is bad, and both are real. The opposite of blessing is curse, and both are real. Yet we, as New Testament Christians, tend to only emphasise the blessing side - probably because we don't want anything to do with curse.

Now some of you might object - and this is maybe why you don't think too much about curses - by declaring: 'But has the cross of Jesus Christ not removed all curse, have we not been set free and redeemed from the curse?'. Others might argue: 'Well, is curse not an Old Testament concept, and we don't have it in the New? Surely it doesn't apply to us under God's grace? The things that you read in the Old Testament are under law, under the old covenant, but we are not under that any more - surely we are not affected by it?'. Now we're going to address all of these objections as we go through,

through teaching Scripture, and I hope that you pick it up on the way through.

But what I want to look at first of all is to answer the question: what are blessings and what is cursing? If you like, blessing and cursing are like two mysterious forces that are running throughout the Bible. They are mysterious because sometimes they come from God and sometimes they come from men. Let me turn you to some scriptures, and we're going to be looking at quite a number of scriptures tonight to lay a biblical foundation. Turn with me to Genesis chapter 22, Genesis 22 is where we have Abraham offering up Isaac, and God then blesses him for his faithfulness. We see in verse 15 of Genesis 22 - go as quick as you can so we can get through these scriptures in time - verse 15 of Genesis 22, now notice the cause of this blessing from God: 'Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son; blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice''. This is the Abrahamic blessing: he was obedient to God, and God blessed him. Now we know he was chosen, we know that, he was called of God out of the Ur of Chaldees, but he has been blessed - and there is an aspect of the cause of blessing, enjoying the blessing of God through his obedience to the Lord.

Now what I want you to see is: Abraham is blessed, then Isaac becomes blessed, then Jacob becomes blessed - and in fact, the blessing goes on to all the descendants from the Abrahamic line, isn't that right? So, with blessing, there is often a generational aspect - and also with cursing, it can be generational. Many times we have referred to this concept of generational curse or generational blessing. Of course, when God was giving the law in Exodus chapter 20 verses 5 and 6 - let me remind you of the verses - God revealed His character, and He also then says: 'He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments'. There it is, generational curse to those who are guilty of iniquity, to the third and the fourth generation, but blessings to the thousandth generation - isn't that wonderful? I mean that reflects the heart of God. It's just like there's going to be a day of judgement, but there so far are 2000 years of grace. He is a gracious God, He is a loving, merciful God, long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish - but He is also a just God, and He must judge sin to the third and the fourth generation. Some believe that that is just an idiom, if you like, referring to the fact that generational curse is perpetual, it keeps going on; but others take it literally. When you think about it, it's quite considerable that we've all got two parents, we've all got four grandparents, we've all got eight great-grandparents, and that gives us sixteen great-great-grandparents. So, when you add all that up, there are about thirty people in the third and the fourth generations that can affect you in some kind or other. That's significant, isn't it? I mean, can you be sure of what those thirty people have or have not done that may have had an impact upon you? Don't think about it too long, but what I'm illustrating is that it's like a long arm that is stretching from the past into your present. Whether we like it or not, Scripture does teach that we are affected by what others in authority, even in our ancestry, have done before us.

So there is blessing that comes from God, and there is also blessing that comes from man on behalf of God. Turn with me to Genesis 27 till we see this, men can bless other

men on behalf of God, chapter 27 and verse 27. This is the story we looked at last year of Isaac blessing Jacob, and you remember there was a bit of tomfoolery went on here, and Jacob dressed up like Esau to receive the blessing, verse 27: 'And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing', Isaac smells the smell of the clothing, 'and blessed him' - he thinks it's Esau, and he blesses Jacob as Esau. He says: 'Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!'. Now look down at verse 33: 'Then Isaac trembled' - he's realised it's not Esau, it's Jacob - 'Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, 'Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him; and indeed he shall be blessed'. Now Esau comes on the scene, and he realises he's given the blessing to the wrong guy. Look at verse 37 - Esau is asking for his blessing, and Isaac says to him: 'Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, 'Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?'. And Esau said to his father, 'Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me; me also, O my father!'. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: 'Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; and it shall come to pass, when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck''.

Now, there are so many points that could be made there, but what I want you to see is: Isaac, a man, was blessing his son Jacob. He thought it was Esau, but this is a man blessing another man on behalf of God, and when you see that it was executed in a mistaken identity, he couldn't revoke it, it was irrevocable, there was a spiritual power and dynamic within it that was irreversible after it was given. Now Esau did have another blessing from Isaac, but it was a different one than the firstborn was meant to have. Now can I just say before we go on any further: all that we have read came before the giving of the law of Moses, do you understand? So this is not something that is peculiar to the Old Testament law of Moses, blessing and cursing, alright? It's something that precedes that. Now that's important to keep in mind.

The same that we have just said applies with curse, curse can come from God, or curse can come from men on behalf of God. I'll just read this one to you, it's again Abraham in Genesis 12:3: 'I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'. What is the name for cursing God's people Israel? There's a name for it, isn't there? What is it? 'Anti-Semitism'. God's word says 'I will curse those who curse you, and bless those who bless you' - and that is still intact today, that curse and that blessing. I believe the nations that bless Israel - I'm not saying that they countenance everything that the Israeli government does, I'm not saying that - but nations that bless Israel will be blessed, nations that curse Israel will be cursed, because they are God's people.

In Deuteronomy 27 - you may want to turn to this, I'll not be referring specifically to verses, but in Deuteronomy 27 verses 15 through to 26 we have twelve curses for breaking the law of Moses. This is now after the giving of the law, there are twelve curses for breaking the laws, the Mosaic laws. Let me just pluck out the general topics that incur the curse of God. The main thing is idolatry, and we read that in our opening

verse in Deuteronomy 11, that if we go after other gods we will invoke the curse of the Lord. I have to say to you that this is the chief and primary reason why curse comes upon us. Under that umbrella of idolatry comes the whole realm of the occult, the hidden world and arts of darkness. We can quickly summarise idolatry and occult activity into three areas: there is witchcraft, which, if you like, is the power of the occult; there is divination which is knowledge, you know, fortune-telling, looking into the future and so on; and then there is sorcery that is often dabbling in potions, even drug abuse, and also in sorcery objects can be used. This is idolatry, this is occult, and this is also condemned in the New Testament. So what we're reading here in the Old Testament law, even the law of Moses, it is repeated within the New Testament. God is very clear that He hates idolatry, and there is a curse when we look into the hidden areas of the occult.

Are you aware that objects, physical, material things can actually carry both blessing and cursing? Did you know that? Look with me at Deuteronomy 7, we're looking at Deuteronomy 7 verse 25: 'You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire', that's false gods, 'you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing'. Now listen: physical objects can convey blessing. Look throughout the whole Old Testament and even the New, and oil is often used to bless things in God's name, it conveys blessing and healing at times. It's not magic now, but God has countenanced this as a vehicle of blessing in some way. There is also in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 16 the Communion cup is called 'the cup of blessing'. So the Communion wine that we take in remembrance of our Lord is an object of blessing, do you understand? In Numbers 5 there is a very strange, bizarre, but instructive law called the law of the jealous husband - has anybody ever heard of that? Not has anybody ever heard of a jealous husband, but has anybody ever heard of that law? Has anybody ever heard of the law of the jealous husband? Numbers 5, listen to what happens: if a husband was to suspect his wife of being unfaithful, whether she was or wasn't, and he had no proof, there were no witnesses; what he was to do was to bring his wife to the priest. There was to be an offering that was to be given, and then what would happen is that the priest would bring the woman, the wife, before the Lord, uncover her head, and put the offering within her hand. Then he would require her to take an oath, an oath that she should be cursed, effectively, if she is not telling the truth. He would take a clay vessel, and he would pour water in it and take the dust off the ground of the Tabernacle and put it into the water, and it would become the bitter water of curse - that's what it's called. Then the priest would write the words of curse, the oath that was taken, in a book; and he would actually take that book and scrape off - the law says - scrape off the words of the curse into the water, the bitter water. The words, the curse, were actually put into the water. The water was to be drunk by that wife to discern whether she was telling the truth or not. If she was lying, the Bible says - and this was the curse - that her thigh would swell, her thigh would effectively rot, her belly would swell, and she would be accursed within her generation.

Now I don't understand all of that, I imagine that you don't either - writing in a book, scraping those words into a glass of dirty water and drinking it - but what it does illustrate is that through these objects there was curse conveyed. Now, God was doing it. Are you aware that objects are not neutral? I have prayed with several Christians who have been in foreign lands and brought things home, and it has caused them a

problem, sometimes on the mission field. They think: 'Oh, that's a beautiful piece of art, that carving' - and maybe it's the witch-doctor's mask or something like that, and it's hanging up on their walls; or it could be other objects that they have brought - but they are affected by it. We've got to realise what the Bible teaches: that part of the occult is objects that carry spiritual curse.

As we go on reading in Deuteronomy 27, we find out that another thing that brings curse not only is idolatry and occult, but disrespect to parents. I think we touched on this the last time in 'Judgement', but in Ephesians 6, the New Testament again, reiterating the law of Moses: 'Honour your father and your mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with you', go well with you, 'and you may live long on the earth'. This is the first commandment with promise, what is the promise? If you honour your father and your mother - that doesn't mean you agree with everything that they think, or you do everything they say, but it is giving them honour and respect - it will go well with you. There are many people for whom it is not going well with them because of judgements that they have made against their mother and their father, there is bitterness, or unforgiveness, or resentment of some kind and it's bringing a curse into their life. That is actually found in Deuteronomy 27.

Another aspect that we won't elaborate on is injustice. When we are unjust in our dealings, whether it's in business, or in relationships, or whatever it will be, there is a curse that was incurred in Deuteronomy 27. Another vast area again, that we don't have time to delve into, but it's very contemporary, is a curse in Deuteronomy 27 upon unnatural sexual practices - that includes everything outside of wedlock that God forbids, whether it's same-sex relationships, whether it's incestuous relationships mentioned in the passage, or bestial relationships - everything that is outside God's will, it will incur a curse. This is found in the New Testament as well, in Romans chapter 1 we find the same thing happening: God gives up, God gives over societies that give themselves to these cursed practices. We could elaborate on that, but we will not.

So there are not only blessings that come from God, there are curses that come from God, Deuteronomy 27. There are not only blessings that are made by man on behalf of God, but there is also cursing from men on behalf of God. Let's look at this in Joshua chapter 6, you don't need to turn to it, regarding Jericho - you remember Jericho was destroyed by the children of Israel as they were making conquest of the land, and Joshua made this curse upon Jericho: 'He charged them at that time, saying, 'Cursed be the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates'. So Joshua's saying: 'Whoever rebuilds this city that God has destroyed will be cursed, his family will be affected'. When you go to 1 Kings 16:34, listen to this, in 1 Kings 16:34 we read of what happened - in the days Hiel of Bethel, Jericho was rebuilt, he rebuilt it: 'He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun'. Effectively he started rebuilding Jericho, and he incurred this curse upon himself from Joshua many years ago. So this is a curse from a man on behalf of God. In 2 Kings 5, we're not going to look at it, but Elisha - some of you may know the story - you know the story of Naaman who, in the Jordan, dipped those times and got free of leprosy. You remember Gehazi, Elisha's servant, went off and took money from him for the miracle - which was offered, Elisha refused it, Gehazi took it. Elisha knew in his spirit what had happened, and he cursed Gehazi with the leprosy that had come off Naaman, he says: 'That's going to go on you now, Gehazi'.

In Mark chapter 11, and I would like you to turn to this one, we have the Lord Jesus cursing. It's the only incident that I'm aware of in the Gospels - I could be wrong on that - but as far as I'm aware. Look at this, Mark 11 verse 12: 'Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry', Jesus. 'And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again'. And His disciples heard it'. Now let me just say, if it wasn't a season for figs, why did Jesus come to it expecting figs from it? Well, there were two fruit on a fig tree, there was one at the beginning of harvest that indicated the harvest would come, the proper harvest; this was the fruit He was looking for, it wasn't the final harvest time, it was this indication that the fruit was coming, and it wasn't on it. That's why He cursed the fig tree, verse 20 of chapter 11 down the passage: 'Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away''. Now if you look at verse 14, Jesus didn't say: 'I curse you, fig tree', He just said, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again'. Peter was astute enough to know that that was a curse, he says the next day: 'Look, the fig tree that You cursed has now withered'. This is Jesus.

There are also self-imposed curses - not only curses from God, not only curses from men on behalf of God, but there are self-imposed curses. Turn with me back to Genesis 27, and this is Rebekah taking a curse due to Jacob - do you remember what happened here? At the behest of his mother, Jacob agrees to dress up like Esau to receive the blessing from Isaac in stealth, and Jacob objects to this initially in verse 11. Look at chapter 27 of Genesis verse 11: 'Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, 'Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smoothskinned man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing'. But his mother said to him, 'Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me''. Now, that's a big thing to say, but she's taking the curse, a self-imposed curse.

Look at Matthew 27, back to Matthew, New Testament, and here we have Israel and the Jewish people taking a curse upon themselves for delivering Jesus to death. Verse 24 of Matthew 27: 'When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it'. And all the people answered and said, 'His blood be on us and on our children''. Now that is a Scripture, that is a curse, a self-imposed curse that is still being fulfilled today with anti-Semitism. You can see how serious curse is.

Then there is Satanic curse. We have alluded to this through idolatry, and the occult, and even objects - but in 1 Peter 3:9 we are taught there by the apostle Peter that when people curse us, when people revive us, when they insult us, slander us - Jesus taught it as well, he is echoing the teaching of Jesus - 'Bless those who curse you'. There will be those in this world who will curse us, even with a Satanic curse. Can I just give you a bit of advice: do you see if anybody curses you? Whether it's a word curse and they are not into witchcraft, but they just say to you: 'You're a failure, and you're always going to be a failure', or something along those lines, or 'This is going to happen to you'; or if someone from a certain community, or a certain background, or with certain leanings or persuasions religiously or spiritistically comes and says 'I curse you

to this, or that, or the other'. You return a blessing to them, and you will nullify the curse, you just cancel it out. But if you receive it and act in fear before it, that is tantamount to acting in faith and engaging with it. Bless those who curse you, and they will not know what to do if you bless them, really - why don't you try it?

Even if it's not a Satanic curse, and it's just a word curse, or a soulish curse, if you don't counter the curse immediately with the truth you have tacitly agreed with it - and when you agree with the curse it can become valid in your life. There is a great protection in blessing, isn't there? Just go around blessing people all the time, and you'll be safe! It's incredible. But when we talk about Satanic cursing, we need to spend a moment speaking about professional cursing. Do you know there are professional cursers? We have it in the Bible, we have it in Numbers 22, a man called Balaam who was a professional prophet, and he went about cursing or blessing, probably depending on what the pay was like. He was being hired by the enemies of Israel, or at least they wanted to hire him, but God had to interject lest he would curse God's people. You are aware, aren't you, that there are people whose profession it is to put curses on folk. You might say: 'Well, we're not in the jungle here', well, there are people operating in this here, but even on the mission field I have dealt with people who I believe have come under the curse of the witchdoctor. Whether it's voodoo, or hoodoo, or some kind of animistic religion or anything like that, but we have it in our own country, we have it in this very county. People, if you have an animosity against them, you can go to these professional administrators of curse and they will put a curse on them, they will put a hex upon them. That can happen to Christians, and we need to know how to deal with it. It's a vast subject, isn't it?

So there is cursing from God, there is blessing from God; there is cursing from men, there is blessing from men; there are self-imposed curses; there are Satanic curses. Here's a verse that really - if you're starting to get concerned about curses especially in your life - Proverbs 26 verse 2 lays down this principle: 'Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause shall not alight'. What does that mean? There is always a cause for a curse, if there is a curse there has to have been a cause. That's what we have to ascertain: what is the cause of any curse that might be on our lives? Now the primary cause of blessing is found in Deuteronomy 28 verses 1 and 2: 'Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God'. It's emphatic: obey the Lord, obedience is the way to be blessed. Coming into agreement with the plumbline of Scripture, coming under the canopy of God's covenant covering by obedience - that's how to be blessed. The primary cause of blessing is obedience, but the primary cause of cursing is also in Deuteronomy 28 down in verse 15: 'But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you'. So the primary cause of curse is disobedience.

Now let me just tie up a few things here if you're confused at all. It was never God's desire that we as humankind should be cursed, never! It was never God's original intent, but because we have chosen our own way, we have chosen sin, we have chosen disobedience, curse has come into the world. It's more like a spiritual force that gets set in motion by either our actions or our words. It is a bit like sowing or reaping - there are

consequences, what we sow we reap. It's like a force, like gravity, it's a principle, a law. This force is an invisible spiritual force, but it actually has a direct manifest effect on the visible and the physical realm that we live in. A good way to think of curse or blessing is like spin - do you understand? It's like spiritual spin, once blessing is set in motion it sets this spiritual spin in motion; once curse is set in motion it sets this spiritual spin in motion. It's like momentum. You know that there is both positive and negative momentum, and this movement of blessing is positive, or cursing is negative.

Now we don't have time to look at this, but you read it at your own leisure in Deuteronomy 28. In Deuteronomy 28 Moses sums up the list of blessing and cursing - this is Old Testament, I know, but there are principles here for us - the blessings are very clear. The first is exaltation, that's not speaking of pride, but what it's speaking of is being lifted up high; God exalting you in your life - that's a blessing of God, the favour of God. Another is health, reproductiveness - now I'm not just talking about fertility there, the Bible is speaking about fruitfulness, having a fruitfulness in our lives, but it also includes an element of reproductiveness - prosperity. Now 'prosperity' has become a dirty word unfortunately, prosperity has been misused at times within Christendom - but when we speak of prosperity it's not the same as wealth, we're not saying God is going to make everybody a millionaire. We're talking about being prosperous in our lives, God's blessing in more than just financial terms. You can be a prosperous person and not be terribly wealthy - but this is one of the blessings. Another is victory, being an overcomer, and having God's favour on your life and people recognising that. That's the list of the summary, really a summary of blessings in Deuteronomy 28.

But you've also got a summary of curses. Humiliation, not being exalted but being debased; the inability to reproduce in any area of your life, an unfruitfulness. There is mental and physical sickness - now, understand what I'm saying here: I am not saying that all physical or mental sickness comes from curse, that is not what I'm saying. But when there are often undiagnosable conditions, it can be that the source of them is curse. Also a consequence of curse would be family breakdowns, marital breakdowns, family dysfunction, poverty - poverty is not a blessing, but there are people who experience poverty even when they have sufficient income to be classed as wealthy. Let me explain that: you could have plenty of income, but still have nothing. Do you understand? Still not be able to make ends meet, that's when there is often a curse in action. Defeat, being overcome rather than an overcomer; oppression, a cloud over your life in some way; constant failure, that can even involve being accident prone; God's disfavour that is upon the life - that's Deuteronomy 28.

Now please don't misquote me or misunderstand. I'm not saying that if you're experiencing any of these things that there is curse in your life, but when there is curse these things can be there. Deuteronomy 28, there is a very interesting verse, verse 13 says: 'The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, if you pay attention to the commandments of the LORD your God, that I give you this day, and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top and never be at the bottom'. Now, isn't that some verse? He will make you the head and not the tail, you'll always be the top and not the bottom. Now that's not talking about success in our human terms, but it is talking about the blessing of the Lord. Derek Prince shares that once he asked the question: 'What does it mean to be the head and not the tail? What does it mean to be at the top and not the bottom?'. He said the answer is simple: 'The head makes the decisions, and the tail gets dragged around' - isn't that right? The head makes the decisions, the tail gets

dragged around. So what role do you play? Let's make all of this very personal: what role do you play in life? Do you play the role of the head or the tail? Are you making decisions in your life - under God's Lordship and leadership of course - but are you exercising self-control or are you being dragged around? Are you struggling under your circumstances? You know, people ask you 'How are you doing?', and you say 'I'm not bad under the circumstances'. Now, I know that's a phrase, but we as Christians are not meant to be under circumstances - by the way, you can't get rid of your circumstances, that's not the blessing of God - but the blessing of God is to be over and above your circumstances. None of us are that all the time, but that's something it's available to us. Are you making decisions, are you taking initiative, are you pressing forward and through? Are you determining things that will happen in your life, or are there outside circumstances and forces that are determining your way? Are you at the mercy of circumstances?

Let me be even more specific: are you always under financial pressure, always? Are you always struggling with health pressures? Are you always struggling with family pressures? Are you just being dragged around? Now, please, again I say please don't misunderstand. I know there are people here struggling with lifetime illnesses, I know there are people here struggling with family issues and broken relationships, I know there are folk struggling with bankruptcy and financial problems and business issues - I'm not saying it's a curse. But if this has been a characteristic, a constant stream of a conglomeration of these types of things without a chink of light throughout your existence, that's what we're talking about. We go through seasons in life, we all go through valleys, we all have certain aspects of all these problems at one time or another; but what we're talking about is if the sum total of your existence seems to be these things one after another - we need to consider whether or not you are the tail dragged around or you're the head.

There are other curses, and we don't have time to look at them all, but one of them I just want to deal with is legalism. The curse of legalism, carnality, and apostasy. There are Old Testament passages for this, but I'm going to concentrate on the New ones just to show you it is in the New Testament. Galatians 3:1,3, and 10: 'O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?'. Watch this: 'For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them''. Now the Galatians were moving away from their grace position of believing in the death and the resurrection of Jesus only and alone for their salvation, to move into works of the law. Paul is saying: 'Look, you go and do that, but if you do that you have to keep all the law perfectly, but you've got to understand that there is a curse comes with law and legalism'. There is a curse, he is telling New Testament believers: 'If you live under law, you will be under curse'.

Now, that's very significant, because if you're struggling under legalism it will bring a cloud over you. If you're operating in the flesh as a Christian, Galatians 5 says that what will manifest are the evil works of the flesh. If you're trying to live your Christian life through the power of the flesh in a good way, evil works of the flesh will manifest, because that which is flesh is flesh, there's a curse with it. But Galatians 1 verses 6 through to 9 also talks about apostasy: 'I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not

another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed'. Now that's curse in the New Testament, the curse of legalism, the curse of preaching another gospel. There are other mentions of curse in the New Testament which I don't have time to look at, but let me say in relation to this - legalism and apostasy - that nearly every Christian movement that has been began out of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and so often legalism or carnality or apostasy comes in. Theology is exalted above revelation, intellect is exalted above character, program becomes more superior than the presence of God among us, reason becomes more important than faith, eloquence is esteemed more than the supernatural. Can I say: I have experienced this as I have moved around, barriers in the very atmosphere, though I have felt God has been with me, there was just something that was not allowing me to break through - and I'm talking about in church contexts.

So what is blessing and what is cursing? Well, I hope that you know now an element of what they are. What I want to ask you is: have you ever sensed that you are wrestling with the shadows, that you're shadowboxing, that there are invisible barriers in your life that you cannot break through no matter how much you try; that you're fighting with something that you just don't understand? Do you ever sense that you're continually overshadowed - and failure and frustration (that's a good word that summarises what it's like to experience curse) frustration is constantly your experience? Where there are problems, but there is no natural or logical reason for those problems - we've all got problems, all of us, but we can point to the reasons - but whenever you don't discern what the cause is, or if there is a pattern without obvious reasoning. It might apply to your business, it might apply to your career, it might apply to your health, it might apply to your finances, and it actually counterintuitive to the way you live. If you won't work, you're not going to have money, that's not a curse? But you could be a hard worker, you can have all the qualifications that you like after your name, you could think positively and do everything that you possibly can, but success eludes you. Even some people who achieve success, they can't enjoy it. Like the people I talked of earlier, they might be wealthy, but they still can't make ends meet. Maybe it's in the area of personal relationships or marriage, or family life, the relationship with your children. This can affect communities, it can affect whole nations.

Now, it would be very misleading of me to imply that all misfortune in our lives is due to curse, I hope I'm clear in saying that is not the case - but there is a biblical question to answer. Now, the good news tonight is (and this is what I want to labour on and finish on) is the answer to all curse: how to move from curse to blessing. The answer, interestingly, is found in Galatians chapter 3 verses 13 to 14: 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written', and this is a quote from Deuteronomy 21, ''Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith'. Now remember the Abrahamic blessing came before the law, and we who are in Christ come into the blessing of Abraham - but the curse has to be broken, and the wonderful good news of the Gospel is that through the redemption of Christ, Jesus was cursed so that every curse upon us might be broken. Jesus died and was made a curse in accordance with the law of Moses, Deuteronomy 21, Deuteronomy 22, Deuteronomy 23, these verses are even quoted in Galatians. He was cursed.

Most of you are familiar with Isaiah 53 verse 6, speaking of Jesus prophetically on the cross: 'We all like sheep have gone astray; each one has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all'. Do you know what that covers? That statement of what Jesus did on the cross covers all the consequences of our disobedience. Do you understand? 'The LORD laid on Him the iniquity', the curse, 'of us all'. The consequence of every curse through our disobedience came on Jesus - that's a very graphic picture, isn't it, of our sin being laid on Him? Now, as I alluded to at the very beginning, some will say: 'Well, that's it then! Forget about all that curse stuff, that's gone! Jesus died on the cross!'. Now, hold on, because Jesus died on the cross for all men and their sins does that mean all men are saved? Does it? No, we don't believe in universalism, do we? What do people have to do? They have to repent of their sins, and by obedience have to obey the Gospel - through faith of course, not through works, but they still have to obey the Gospel, repent of their sin, believe - in order to appropriate the efficacy of the cross, isn't that correct? It doesn't come automatically.

To overcome sins in our life presently - you're a Christian, does that mean that from the moment you were saved you had no problem with sin anymore? Anybody here like that? I would love to meet you! That's not the case, you have to appropriate the efficacy of the cross to overcome sinful habits in your life and become sanctified - isn't that right? It's a process. It's the same with the wounds that we have considered over these nights, we need to appropriate the healing of the cross through faith in what Jesus has accomplished for us. It's the same with the demonic, it's the power of the cross that breaks the power of the enemy in our lives. It's exactly the same with every hindrance in our spiritual pathway, including curse. If we sense this hindrance and this binding and opposition, we need to bring it to the cross to have it broken. It might be automatically broken for some when they come to faith in Jesus, just the way some people overcome their cigarette habit, or their alcohol habit, or whatever else it might be at the moment of conversion - but, as you well know, not everybody has that victory at that moment. Your victory might be over bad language, or pornography, or something else - but not everybody has the same experience. Maybe for you here tonight, you're a Christian, and have been a Christian for many years, but there is curse in your existence. It might come from previous generations, but you're starting to realise it's there and you have to come to Calvary, you have to appropriate the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to overcome. There is a principle, we've seen it already, we read it in Deuteronomy 28:1-2, the qualification for blessing is 'observe carefully', obey, listen to the voice of the Lord! Even the Lord Jesus reiterates this in the Sermon on the Mount, doesn't He? What are the Beatitudes? 'Blessed are those who get saved' - is that what it says? No, there are qualifications to those blessings. First John 1, if we want to be in constant fellowship with the Lord - that means enjoying the blessing of God in our lives - we must walk in the light as He is in the light, we must confess our sins. Do you remember in our last session last month, we looked at 'Judgement and Forgiveness', and we saw that if we want to continually enjoy the blessing of God's forgiveness in our daily experience in fellowship with Him, we have to continually be forgiving others.

Luke 11 and verse 28 is explicit: 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it' - there it is! Blessed are those who hear and obey. It's wonderful to be able to say that the power of the cross perfectly satisfied every legal requirement to set us free from every sin, every habit, every empowerment, to heal every wound in our hearts, to expel every demon - isn't that wonderful? We are not diluting the efficacy of the cross, we are actually exalting it, but we are emphasising the fact that - though the

legal requirements have been fulfilled - we have all got to enter in experientially to the application and appropriation of it by faith. We've got to obey by faith. It's a bit like Joshua going into the Promised Land to conquest it for God, what did God say to Joshua? 'I have given you this land', part of God's blessing for him, 'I have given you this land', but He also said, 'You've got to fight for it. You've got to take it by faith, you've got to take My promise, you've got to take what I've given you and you've got to appropriate it to yourself'.

I want to say to you tonight: you were not created to be cursed, you were created to be blessed, and you were created to be a blessing. Do you know, as children of God, as priests, a kingdom of priests, we have the power to bless others? Yet, with our tongues, as James says in chapter 3, so often the mouths that bless God on a Sunday morning or in the prayer meeting are also mouths that speak out curses against others - we slander, we speak against them. But you were not created to be a curse but a blessing. The wonderful good news of the Gospel is: God has given you authority and power in Christ to break curse in your life, every curse. So I ask you tonight: what impact has curse had on your life, on your family, on your future, on your destiny, on your inheritance. Or is there a curse that is actually a barrier to blessing in your life and wholeness, that has been holding you up from moving forward into what you know is God's will for your life?

Look at this verse, again from Deuteronomy 30 verse 19: 'I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses; now choose life, so that you and your children may live'. What do you need to do? Well, if you recognise the pattern of curse in your life you need to repent of what either you have done to set that curse in motion, or what your ancestors have done to open you up to it - you need to forgive them, and repent of it, and seek God's forgiveness. You need to renounce whatever was done, or said, or entered into in that curse. You need to, in the name of the Lord Jesus, revoke that curse - because you have power to do that through the cross as a child of God, if you're a Christian tonight. You need to resist the enemy. What I mean by that is, in the very area that you're being cursed, you need to declare God's truth over that, what God says, God's blessing. Even if people are presently alive and still speaking those curses to you, as we said earlier, you cancel them out by blessing that person and not receiving that thing into your heart. Then you will be able to say - and this is wonderful, we read this, Deuteronomy 28 and verse 2 - 'All these blessings have come upon and overtake me', isn't that an incredible statement?

The book of Ephesians says we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ - the problem is, many of us are not living in the heavenly places, we're not setting our affections on heavenly things but we are living in the doldrums of our earthly existence, deep in the valley. But this is what God wants for us - not getting rid of all problems, that's not what we're saying; but, even in the midst of those problems, knowing the blessing of God overtaking them, overcoming them. So, blessing or cursing? What are you living under? What is your church operating under? What is our community existing under? Do you know that land can be cursed? Land can be cursed through idolatry practised in the land; land can be cursed through bloodshed, we've had lots of that; land can be cursed through broken covenants, that's broken agreements, we've had a lot of that also; and land can be cursed through immorality, and that's a given. Land can be cursed, our land - but we are the people who have got power to reverse that curse and bring the blessing of God upon the very earth itself, but you've got to choose.

Now, we're going to pray, as we always do. I have to say that I believe this message - I don't like to rate messages, especially my own - it may not be the best message, I don't know, that I have ever preached, I don't know, but I think it's one of the most significant. I believe that this recording will go to all sorts of places and release people from curses, even Christians from curses that they are under. But what about you? As usual, I've got a prayer here, it's about three slides or so. I want to explain it before we pray it, but I believe if you can identify anything either in your generational inheritance or in your own life's experience that may be curse, this is something that you want to consider praying through, alright?

'Lord Jesus Christ, I confess You as Lord, I believe that You are the Son of God who died for my sins and rose again. I give up all my rebellion and sin, and I turn to You for mercy'. Now, if you're not a Christian tonight, you're in this meeting and you've never trusted Christ as your Saviour, by praying that prayer and meaning it from your heart - it's nothing to do with the words, it's meaning it from your heart - you can become a child of God. If you're willing to turn from your sinful ways - I know you don't have power over sin in your life, but if you're willing to turn from it, God gives you the power - turn to Him, He will save you because of what Jesus has done. It would be good for you to do that, you need to do that tonight. But equally, witchcraft is as the sin of rebellion, so the disobedience that incurs curse on our life is rebellion, so we need to repent of that. We need to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus and say: 'If I'm going to be the head and not the tail, I want to be the head under You as my Head' - that's the only way to have that self-control. So the Lordship of Jesus is paramount.

'I confess all my sins to You, and ask Your forgiveness. I especially ask forgiveness for any sins that expose me or others to curse'. So, in other words, if there is anything that you know that you have knowingly opened the door to curse in your life, that you have done, you confess it; but if there are things that you have said against others that have been words of curse or acts of curse, you need to repent of that as well. It's not just receiving curse, it's giving it out that we need to repent of and be forgiven for. 'Whether committed by me or by my ancestors', if you're aware of witchcraft, secret societies that your family have been involved in, anything that we have mentioned before, any incestuous relationships, any bloodshed or violence, or anything like that - we need to forgive those people, and add the details in. 'As an act of my will, I choose to forgive all who have ever harmed or wronged me, just as I want God to forgive me. In particular I forgive...' - and if there are any issues of bitterness or resentment in your life that you believe are bringing that element of curse, you need to forgive those people. 'I renounce all contact with anything occult or Satanic, or any secret society that binds me against the will of my Father God', if you or an ancestor have been involved in any secret cult or organisation. 'I commit myself to remove from my house any objects linked to these forbidden areas or activities', we read that portion in Deuteronomy, any abomination, any cursed thing needs to go out of the home. You really need to do a spring clean, whether there are suspicious New Age ornaments, or I know Christians who have little Buddhas in their house because it's fashionable - it's an idol, and it brings curse, whatever the object might be linked to these forbidden areas or activities. 'I cancel all Satan's claims against me. Lord Jesus, I believe that on the cross You took on Yourself every curse that could ever come upon me, so I know I release myself from every curse, every evil influence, every dark shadow over me or my family from any source whatsoever, in Your name, Jesus Christ. By faith I now receive my release, and I thank You for it'.

'Forgive me for misusing this precious gift You have given me, the power of words'. How have you used your tongue? It's not just speaking curse against others, but what about these internal self-pronouncements, the things you have said over your life in agreement with Satan or in agreement with what others have said over you, and you have entered into that curse. You need to repent of that. 'Now Holy Spirit', now this is very important, 'Holy Spirit, bear witness to the truth that I am about to speak' - and this what you're going to speak over your life now - 'I am a blessed person. I have been given by God the ability to be blessed and to be a blessing to others. I have been given by God the power to speak out those blessings in my life, and then see those blessings come to life because that's how You created me: to be blessed and to be a blessing to others. Thank You, Lord. Amen'.

Do you think this is a prayer you can pray? I think it's a prayer we need to pray. You don't want anything hanging on, do you, you want to be free, you want to take the full power of the cross and apply it to every area of your life, every area of your inheritance, every area of your destiny, don't you? So would you pray this with me and mean it, fill in the gaps where you need to. Are you ready: 'Lord Jesus Christ, I confess You as Lord, I believe that You are the Son of God who died for my sins and rose again. I give up all my rebellion and sin, and I turn to You for mercy. I confess all my sins to You, and ask Your forgiveness. I especially ask forgiveness for any sins that expose me or others to curse, whether committed by me, or by my ancestors, or others related to me'. Now just take a moment and take upon your lips, speak to the Lord in your own words specifically if you know of any of those things, what those things might be; whether you have opened up doorways to curse, whether you have spoken curse against others, or soulish words or prayers; whether it's something you're aware of in your ancestry, or other people related to you now - speak it out and confess it to the Lord. Take it upon your lips, mouth it out to God.

Let's continue now: 'As an act of my will, I choose to forgive all who have ever harmed or wronged me, just as I want God to forgive me. In particular I forgive...', now anybody that there is bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, or to put it another way: anybody who has really hurt you. Maybe you did make a judgement against them, but you want to be free of all curse from them or from those actions or words. Just tell the Lord you forgive that person, even bless that person, even if they curse you to this very day, bless that person.

Now we're going to renounce all contact with the occult: 'I renounce all contact with anything occult or Satanic, or any secret society that binds me against the will of my Father God'. Now, whatever that secret society is, whether it portrays itself as Christian or not is irrelevant, if it's a secret society that has dubious oaths and curses and all sorts of weird rituals, you need to confess it. Confess it by name - if it's known to you, confess it by name. Let's continue: 'I commit myself to remove from my house any objects linked to these forbidden areas or activities. I cancel all Satan's claims against me'. Now this is New Testament stuff, in Acts 19 the Christians in Ephesus brought together magic books and artefacts that they were convicted about having, and they burned them all, and then the word of God grew mightily and prevailed. There was blessing because of getting rid of objects, this is New Testament stuff, this is biblical. If you've got regalia of secret societies still in your home, you need to pluck it out, get rid of it. Let's continue: 'Lord Jesus, I believe that on the cross You took on Yourself every curse that could ever come upon me, so I know I release myself from every curse,

every evil influence, every dark shadow over me or my family from any source whatsoever, in Your name, Jesus Christ. By faith I now receive my release, and I thank You for it. Forgive me for misusing this precious gift You have given me, the power of words. Now Holy Spirit, bear witness to the truth that I am about to speak: I am a blessed person. I have been given by God the ability to be blessed and to be a blessing to others. I have been given by God the power to speak out those blessings in my life, and then see those blessings come to life because that's how You created me: to be blessed and to be a blessing to others. Thank You, Lord. Amen'.

Now if you have truly engaged with God and prayed through that, you have a choice to make: blessing or curse. You choose. God said: 'I said before you blessing or cursing, you choose' - and that's as much what you go out of here and speak over your life. What do you say over your life? What do you say to other people about your circumstances? How do you consider your future as you look ahead? You choose. I'm going to pray over you, and I believe - I really sincerely believe - that God is going to break curse in this place tonight over people's lives. So, whatever area that might be, you may, as you've been sitting praying through that prayer, have experienced something already; there can be a sense of something going on already, and you're aware of God moving - that's the Holy Spirit by the way - moving and setting you free from certain things, beginning to set you free. So now receive, as I pray for you - let's pray.

Father, I thank You that in Your Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Abraham's Seed, the Son of David, we have come into the blessing of Abraham in the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, I now I ask You, according to Your word and will, that the blessing of Abraham will come right now in Jesus Christ's name upon people gathered here - to break every chain, to break every binding, to break every curse, to break every encroachment, to break every bondage. Lord, I thank You for those who have engaged with You tonight; and I thank You, through the power of the cross, that we have now authority and we have the power to overcome every curse in our lives. So, in the name and authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lord of All, I now undo every curse in people's lives here tonight: curses over the body, curses over the mind, curses over the soul, the emotions, curses over the will and behaviours. I break curses of addiction, I break curses that have come from dabbling in the occult, I break curses of witchcraft, I break curses of idolatry, I break curses associated with objects, I break curses associated with immorality and perverse sexuality, I break the curse of suicide, I break the curse of depression, I break the curse of poverty, I break the curse of fruitlessness. In Jesus' name we break these curses now, that every disease, every ailment, every sickness that has come through curse, I break. I break the curse of the Masonic, Freemasonry, I break curses of The Black Institution, The Royal Arch Purple, and any other degree that people have entered into that has brought curse through oaths that are ungodly, and secret oaths that have been taken - I break those curses in Jesus' name. I break the curse of idolatry that has come from false religion, both the Roman Catholic and Protestant idolatry. I break the curse of legalism, I break the curse of control and carnality and apostasy. I nullify every spoken curse over people's lives spoken by authority figures, parents, teachers, religious leaders. I break every soulish word that has been spoken through a pronouncement over people here that they have received into their life. I break every curse that came from a fortune-teller pronouncing something, and it was entered into in a kind of faith. I break that power over people now in Jesus' name. We praise You, Lord Jesus, that there is power in Your name to break every chain, that there is power in the blood of Jesus to overcome. We thank You

that Your cross is unlimited, we cannot plumb the depths - we can apply it to every area of our lives. Thank You, Lord. I pray now every blessing, every blessing in Abraham and in Christ will come now to people's lives, that You will bless people's lives. We pray for our land, Lord, we believe that there is a curse upon our land and upon our people. We want to be the people to speak out blessing. Thank You, Lord, for what You're doing tonight. Lord, teach us how to heal the land, teach us how to heal our community, teach us how to open the doorway to receive the heavenly blessing, teach us how to remove the dams that are in the way for the heavenly deluge to come. Teach us Your way, Lord, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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