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Peter's Confession of Christ

On Binding and Loosing

"And I will give the keys of the kingdom of Heaven to you. And whatever you may bind on earth shall occur, having been bound in Heaven, and whatever you may loose on earth shall occur, having been loosed in Heaven." **Mat 16 v 19**



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You can't eat soup with a fork!

If you picked up a fork, how much soup do you think you would be able to eat with it? Not too much. You could try, but it wouldn't work. Put down the fork, and pick up a spoon - use the right utensil - and you will be able to eat the soup.

Wrong weapons

Today, we have an emphasis on *Spiritual Warfare*. The Lord has given us a lot of weapons and strategies, a lot of battle tactics and utensils to achieve the things we are called to do.

Today you will find people using the wrong weapons to deal with the subjects of the flesh, the devil and the world. You would think after a few minutes of eating the soup with a fork, people would have the sense to realize that something is wrong - *this is not working, I must have something wrong.*

In many areas the church is trying to use biblical teaching about ***binding and loosing*** as an instrument to deal with something it was not designed to deal with. They are using the wrong instrument, something that could never possibly achieve what they are thinking or hoping it can.

There is a biblical teaching about binding and loosing, and it is the appropriate teaching, weapon and strategy for what it was designed to deal with.

But what about dealing with principalities, heavenly powers, sin, wickedness in high places and wickedness in the world? It was not designed to deal with those things! We have been trying to eat soup with a fork!

Charismatic failure

After thirty years the Charismatic Renewal has failed to deal with the moral landslide of our society. Instead, during the last thirty years the New Age Movement has replaced Christianity as the spiritual consciousness of Western society. The Charismatic Movement has failed to bring about Revival.

We have more crime, more divorce, more homosexuality, more abused children, more substance abuse, and we have more of everything bad or evil now than we did thirty years ago, before the (so called) Charismatic Renewal.

The Church itself is far weaker and is in far worse shape now than it was thirty years ago. And still you see us, with the fork, trying to eat the soup. We are still using the same silly instruments wrongly. A person with reasonable intelligence would know there is a problem. There is nothing wrong with binding and loosing. It is not the instruments and utensils that are at fault.

Slain in the Spirit?

In those days I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all, until the entire three weeks were completed (Daniel 10:2-3).

Daniel fasted for three weeks. An angel came, and Daniel fell down terrified. But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sounds of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground (Daniel 10:9).

He was not rolling on the floor in hysterics, like you see with Toronto. He had nothing at all to do with what they call "slain in the spirit". Both Daniel and John were terrified. The people fell backwards when they came to arrest Jesus, all the other times, they went forwards.

The angel said, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.

Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia" (Daniel 10:11-12).

The Bible always connects the spiritual battles in heaven with what you see on Earth. In the vision of Zechariah, the high priest was standing before the angel of the Lord and Satan was standing before the throne making accusations (Zechariah 3:1). Same with Job (Job 1:9-11). Whatever was happening in the heavens was reflected in what was happening on the Earth.

Now Satan was cast down on the Earth. Revelation records a battle happening in the heavens and the same going on in the Earth. This always happens in spiritual warfare.

The Bible uses the term "principalities"; it does not say territorial spirits, although you could use that term. Daniel saw a demonic force over modern day Iran - the "prince of Persia."

In the region of Gerasenes in Decapolis, when Jesus cast the demons out of the demoniac, the demons said, "*don't send us out of the region*" (Mark 5:1, Luke 8:26). These spirits are territorial; they have specific areas as their principality. There is a biblical basis for this, but how do we deal with it? First, let us understand how we do not deal with it.

Unbiblical ideas

I have no doubt that the same spiritual force is at work behind Iran today as that which Daniel saw. Daniel fasted and prayed for three weeks before receiving help. Today Christians read a book by C. Peter Wagner and decide to take authority over that same spirit. And they believe that the problem will go away in three seconds. They think it is that easy.

No, it is not that easy. Demons are powerful. Some are more powerful than others, Jesus said, "*This kind only goes by prayer and fasting*" (Matthew 17:21).

The church today labours under the burden of unbiblical ideas. Before we find out what is biblical, let us find out what is not biblical. Let us find out what the Bible says about binding and loosing.

Paul in Athens

Acts chapter 17 tells the story of Paul in Athens. Athens was the European centre of pagan religion. Rome looked to Athens for its culture, for its religious ideas and for its philosophy. Pagan religion started with Nimrod in Babylon, made its way through Pergamum into Greco-Roman cultures, and from there into Western culture. Now while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols (Acts 17:16). He was seeing the temples of the demons, and their places of worship.

So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present (Acts 17:17).

"Those who happened to be present" included followers of Zeus, Apollo, Artemis, Astarte, Hermes, and so on. These people were all under the influence of demons.

What did Paul do?

Did he recite the formulas taught by John Dawson and C. Peter Wagner: "I bind you, I loose you, I take authority over you in the name of Jesus"?

There are people in "deliverance ministry" who uses this formula to save face and fortune. Their 'ministry' and income depends on forgetting the fact that it does not work.

This is a deception which is known as Dominionism, or Triumphalism, or Kingdom Now theology.

The idea that we are going to conquer the world for Jesus Christ before he comes back and set up his Kingdom is bogus.

Not of this world

The idea that we can use the principles of the Scriptures and the prayers of the saints to bring a moral influence into our fallen world and set up the Kingdom of Jesus is absurd.

Anytime God's Law has been used to reconstruct society; it has brought spiritual and theological death to the church, and general decline to society, government and culture.

Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world

(John 18:36). The two hyper-charismatic extremes taking control of the planet, on one side, and withdrawing into a bunker out of fear, on the other are the central pillars on which most of this error was built.

There are times when the door of the Ark is closed (Genesis 7:16), and there are times when we can only strengthen the things that remain (Revelation 3:2).

But we are not supposed to go on the defensive in these last days. On the contrary, we are supposed to be happy, looking up, for our redemption draws nigh (Luke 21:28).

Before the end, the gospel of the Kingdom must first be preached to every nation (Matthew 24:14).

Evangelism: the first weapon

Paul preached the Gospel in the shadows of the demons at Athens.

The first weapon to overrule the powers of darkness in our society is evangelism: we are to reason the gospel and to witness of the truth. The leaders of the March for Jesus think marching will restrain the powers of darkness. But the March for Jesus is lead by false teachers.

They believe in "co-redeemers", and "co-saviours".

They pray to the dead. They believe they are going to Purgatory for their sins, even though the Blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Roger Foster teaches that we can not be sure there is an Eternal Hell.

In the United States there is violence, crime, pornography on television, legalized abortion, Christian clergy saying not to believe in the Virgin Birth, and urging that we ordain homosexuals and lesbians (we can now see this in the UK too – [Steve]).

Islam openly claims to have an agenda from God to restore the moral fabric of this society and put an end to crime. They state that Judaism and Christianity are morally and spiritually bankrupt. Islam claims that it can do what Christianity has failed to do.

Some people think we can roll on the floor and laugh because God is doing a wonderful thing in our nation. That is the mentality of the Rodney Howard-Brownes and John Kilpatrick's of this world. The question is: Which God?

Others are saying: "Bind and loose", "Speak dominion", "Go forth in power marches".

They can claim all they want. It is New Age, Islam, homosexuality, crime, witchcraft and tribal religions that are going on in power, not the church. We need a march of repentance and genuine salvation. The Blood of Christ Jesus redeems from all sin. Go forth in the power of the cross. Repent and be saved. Without proper theology, there will be no doxology (written statement of faith – [Steve]).

Binding the strong man

And knowing their thoughts He said to them, *"Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall his kingdom stand?"*

And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Consequently they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house (Matthew 12:25-31).

Taking Scripture out of context

In the temptation of Christ recorded in Matthew 4:1-11, Satan twisted Scripture out of context. In Genesis 3:1-7 he did the same with Eve, creating doubts. "Hath God said?" Satan did it with Eve, did it with Adam and even tried to do it with Jesus. How did Jesus respond?

The whole argument between Satan and Jesus came from the book of Deuteronomy. Satan quoted from Deuteronomy out of context, and Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy in context. *"It is written." "That's right, but it is also written."*

Satan laughs at Christians who seek to use Matthew 12:29 out of context. What is the context of *"binding the strong man"* Matthew 12:29? The context tells us that the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan: the context is exorcism; casting out demons. This is the closest we come to a description of the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit in the New Testament; not a definition, but an illustration of it.

The religious leaders were attributing to Satan that which they knew was of God in order to keep themselves in positions of power, for their own financial and social advantage. They knowingly misused their position to turn people against the truth. The same thing is occurring today where religious leaders are turning others away from the truth. This happens, for example, when they tell people: *"Don't read Christianity in Crisis by Dave Hunt"*, while knowing that this book tells the truth.

Discernment of spirits

In cases of real demon possession, a person cannot be saved until you first cast out the demons.

The New Testament will help you determine and discern biblically whether it is an authentic demon or not. If you do exercise the discernment of spirits, it will always be with the Bible as your guideline.

Demon possession is accompanied by irrational behaviour: People throwing themselves into the fire, gashing themselves, living in tombs, displaying superhuman strength or superhuman intelligence, counterfeiting the gifts of the spirit.

Signs and wonders can be displayed by demons. Another sign is the presence of a physical malady without any pathology for it (i.e. a physical ailment with no medical reason for it).

Read Dr Kurt Koch. Read good books on the subject. In cases of demon possession, the person's body is inhabited by an evil spirit. The Holy Spirit cannot enter them until the demon is cast out. You cannot set a demon possessed person free merely by witnessing to them.

Jesus is the rock

And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon bar-Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ (Matt 16:17-20).

These verses are used as the basis for Roman Catholic heresy that Peter was the first Pope and that Peter was the rock. The Pope claims he can do whatever he wants because he has the keys. Whatever he binds is bound, and whatever he looses is loosed. But 'Peter' means pebble in Greek. 'The rock' is Christ.

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:1-4).

None of the early church fathers ever said that Peter was the rock. They all say that Christ was the rock.

Galatians 2:11 records the fact that Paul opposed Peter to his face because of his hypocrisy. What? Paul rebuked the Pope? It is absurd. Who presided over the first Church Council at Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15? Peter? No, it was James.

James convened the first council, not Peter. The Catholics have no biblical or historical evidence for their doctrine.

If Peter was the first bishop of Rome, how come it was Paul that wrote the Epistle to Romans, not Peter? Peter's ministry was primarily to the Jews (Galatians 2:7). Giving these keys has nothing to do with 'Papal authority'. This is ridiculous.

Who has the keys of David?

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: "I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name.

Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie. Behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept the word of my perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one takes your crown (Revelation 3: 7-11).

Philadelphia was a good church, with little power; not like the big churches today which are run by world-famous, rich, influential men, who are all after more power.

The Lord Jesus Christ put before the church at Philadelphia an open door, which no one can shut, because they had little power.

These were faithful Christians making up one of the best churches; it was not a flaky church. He told them, "You have no power; I have to open the door for you". Jesus has those keys. He never gave them to anyone else.

The keys of death and Hades

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Write, therefore, the things which you have seen, the things which are and the things which shall take place after these things. As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands; the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (Rev. 1:17-20).

"The living One has the keys of death and Hades" (Revelation 1:18). Jesus has the keys to death and Hades. Jesus has the power to say who goes to hell and who does not. The Pope claims that he has the keys. He does not. Only Christ Jesus has the keys for that.

The key of knowledge

Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in, you hindered (Luke 11:52).

The Pharisees were misusing their knowledge of the Scriptures to create a power base for themselves, politically and financially. They were holding the power of death and hell over people, much like the Popes of the middle ages and some hyper-Pentecostals today.

Spirit of Antichrist

The spirit of Antichrist is a man putting himself in the place of God. One of the most dangerous Antichrist spirits in the world today is not in Catholicism; it is in Kingdom Now theology.

The Greek term antichrist does not mean 'against Christ', it means 'in place of', one who acts vicariously for Christ. In English, one who acts vicariously, in the place of another, is termed a 'vicar'. The true Vicar of Christ is the Spirit of the Most High God, even the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter (John 14:15-17; 16:7-11). He acts in the place of Jesus. When you put someone in the place of the Holy Spirit and say that he is the 'Vicar of Christ', he becomes Antichrist, a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit.

The Papal title 'Vicar of Christ' is translated in Greek as antichristos. Every Pope who puts on that title is saying, "I am Antichrist". The Holy Spirit is the true Vicar of Christ.

Praying to the dead

But this is not just a Catholic phenomenon. Earl Paulk from the United States communicates with the dead. He says, "I know what the bible teaches about witchcraft, séances, and familiar spirits, but for every counterfeit, there is a real."

Note: Paulk begins with the counterfeit, not the real. The Word of God is true. Let's begin with the real. Whatever does not agree with the Word of God is the counterfeit. We know that in Scripture we have that which is real.

Men like Earl Paulk, Kenneth Copeland, Rodney Howard-Browne use the counterfeit to try to find what is real. They talk to the dead as to the "cloud of witnesses", taking that verse out of context to mean that you can talk to the dead. This is an abomination to God. The Catholics talk to dead saints and familiar spirits. When King Saul called up evil spirits and talked to the dead (1 Samuel 28:7-19), it was an abomination. Saul was judged unto destruction for doing that.

People, who claim to get revelation knowledge from dead people, as Earl Paulk does from his dead sister, are committing abomination. When Benny Hinn gets the anointing from the bones of the dead bodies at the gravesides of Aime Semple McPherson and Kathryn Kuhlman, he is committing abomination.

Only the Bible

Every false religion in the world says: "the Bible AND something else", "the Word of God AND the inventions of men." What did Jesus say about the inventions of men? He condemned them. It is the Word of God and nothing else! The Pharisees were condemned for "*teaching as doctrines the precepts of men*" (Matthew 15:9). Satan tried to Judaize the church before he paganised it. The Eastern Orthodox and Catholic religions paganised everything by Judaizing those first, putting people back under the law.

Earl Paulk says it is the voice of older prophets speaking to him with the words of God, and therefore it is God speaking to him. These false teachers and prophets say it is Antichrist who is coming against them. Oral Roberts, Earl Paulk, Jim Bakker, Kenneth Copeland (who says he could have died on the cross instead of Jesus Christ); if you speak against their false teaching they say that you are of the spirit of Antichrist.

They say it is God speaking, not them. Morris Cerullo says when you look at him you are not looking at a man, you are looking at Jesus Christ.

We know that, when He appears, *we shall be like Him* (1 John 3:2). *Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27). Yes, but "are we Christ's"? No! That is the spirit of Antichrist.

It began in Catholicism, but today it is in hyper-Pentecostalism. There are many Antichrists. Anyone who puts themselves in the place of Christ is Antichrist. But there is only one true Vicar of Christ, and that is the Holy Spirit. And there is only one true basis of authority, God's Holy Word.

Building a social, financial and political power base

What these religious lawyers try to do is to use this authority for themselves; defining doctrine so as to secure their social, financial and political power base. Roman Catholicism has always done this.

But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you are hypocrites because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matthew 23:13,28).

The custody of the vineyard

"Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it, built a tower, rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey.

When the harvest time approached he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, killed another and stoned a third. Again he sent another group larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them.

But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

But when the vine-growers saw the son they said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' And they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?" They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons."

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the Lord and it is marvellous in our eyes'? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it."

And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them (Matthew 21:33-45).

Jesus has promised that the people who use the vineyard for their own selfish purposes will lose all claims to it.

First church council

And after they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for his name. And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written. [and he quotes from Amos 9:11- 12] Therefore it is my judgment that. (Acts 15:13-15,19).

It was James speaking, not Peter, so how did the Catholic Church come up with their story that Peter was the leader? This is why the Catholic Church put the Bible on their Index of Forbidden Books.

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole Church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas and they sent this letter by

them, *"The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia who are Gentiles."* (Acts 15:22-23).

The apostolic brethren spoke corporately. Jesus gave the keys of knowledge to the apostles so that they would know what the Scriptures meant. Acts chapter 15 is apostolic binding and loosing in action. Acts chapter 15 is the apostles using those keys to interpret Amos 9:11-12.

Defining doctrine

Acts 15 clearly describes the use of the keys. **What did they bind?** Keep these four commandments. **What did they loose?** The Law of Moses from the people, as the Messiah had fulfilled the Law.

They defined doctrine. They explained: *"This is what Jeremiah meant; this is what Amos meant. Now we have the keys of knowledge, we understand the scriptures. The Rabbis have rejected their Messiah and are going into error. But we have the authority, we bind and we loose."*

The apostles did not use that authority for heavy shepherding; they used it for correcting wrong doctrine.

Apostolic authority is always about doctrine.

It is always used for correcting wrong doctrine. Apostolic authority was always plural and it was always about doctrine.

Matthew 18

And if your brother sins go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax gatherer.

Truly I say unto you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst (Matthew 18:15-20).

Look at the context. This is about going to your brother about sin, not doctrine. If someone refuses to repent of his or her sin, you can bind and loose.

What does that mean, and how did the apostles apply it? Not the way people are applying it today; that is not how the apostles applied it. We read the teachings of Jesus and the rest of the Bible through the prism of the teachings of the apostles.

Think of the Epistles as inspired commentary, God's commentary. The Epistles are the prisms of the apostles. They tell you in a clear and most practical way what the rest of the Bible means, what the teaching of Jesus means.

Dealing with persistent sin in the body

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst. For I, on my part [i.e. as an apostle], though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to

Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:3-5).

What did Paul do? He used his authority to bind a wayward believer. What is the context of the reference to binding and loosing in Matthew 18? When the person would not repent of their sin, the church had the authority to bind him, with the view of seeing him restored.

Look at the context: they were pronouncing judgment on a soul for his restoration. We have looked at the two times Jesus used the term "bind", the Greek word *deo*, and it does not have anything whatsoever to do with what so many preachers are telling you to do today.

Apostolic authority exists to define doctrine and to deal with persistent immorality and perverse sin in the body.

The gospel looses

For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, though she is joined to another man (Rom. 7:2-3).

All mankind is under the law of sin and death, of which the Mosaic Law is a symbol. Understand what the Law of Moses meant. The Jews are more accountable, because they had it written down. The Jews had the oracles of God and salvation was available to them first, and the responsibility was on them first.

I have a balloon here. If I let go of it, the law of gravity says the balloon will fall down. But if I pump helium in the balloon before I release it, the law of buoyancy will make the balloon go up and not fall. The law of buoyancy is a stronger law than the law of gravity. It will supersede the law of gravity.

The Law of Moses teaches that we have a fallen nature. There is nothing wrong with the law. It teaches that we need a Messiah; we need a stronger law to keep us from falling.

Christians do sin, but they have a choice that unsaved people do not have. We have buoyancy, we have helium. We don't have to sin, because we have the Holy Spirit. Therefore, like the Jews, we are more responsible for our sin than the unsaved person. The law is our tutor. It teaches the need for a Messiah to save us. The purpose of the law is to show us we cannot keep the law. The Gospel looses, forgives; setting people free from the law of sin and death. The Gospel frees.

Penance?

If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; and if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained (John 20:23).

The idea that, by these words, Jesus introduced the Roman Catholic sacrament of 'Penance' is absurd. There is no such thing as 'Penance' in the Bible, nor any record of it being practiced by the early church fathers.

Telling your sins to the priests was a Babylonian custom. In the early church there were no prayers to the dead, no prayers to Mary, no Pope.

There was no 'Penance', but there was repentance. People would ask each other for forgiveness for a wrong done, but they never went to a "priest" for this. Those things all came later. They are human inventions, created for the same reason as the Pharisees' teachings: money and power; the same reason the hyper-charismatic churches are inventing doctrines today: money and power.

Setting people free

And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who for eighteen years had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.

And when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness." And He laid His hands upon her; and immediately she was made erect again, and began glorifying God. And the synagogues official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the multitude in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; therefore come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day."

But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead him away to water him? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

And as He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire multitude was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him (Luke 13:10-17).

Demonic oppression can bind people. This woman was not demon possessed; she suffered from demonic oppression. That can make people sick.

Yes, there are gifts of healing. Yes, we can anoint the sick. Yes, we can pray. And yes, we can do what Jesus did. He laid his hands on her and immediately she was freed. No one says we can't loose in this situation. Jesus never did anything except what He saw His Father do.

The power was present

And it came about one day that He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing (Luke 5:17).

We can pray for healing and anoint with oil. If somebody has sickness caused by sin (as in James 5:14-15 and in Psalm 32:3- 5), if that person repents, the sickness will leave because it is the consequence of sin. We can pray for the sick, but, if you are going to tell people to get out of that death bed, or get out of that wheelchair, or get out of that coffin, the dunamis (Greek, "power") had better be there, as it was for Jesus.

Paul prayed three times for freedom from demonic oppression (2 Corinthians 12:7- 9). God said no. *"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."* God said he would leave Paul under this for His own purposes. You can only do what the Lord tells you to do.

He will never allow us to experience more temptation or problems than we can handle. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

You can pray, repent and be saved. If you truly believe in your heart, you will be saved. His grace will be there; certain things will always be there for us.

But some things are not provided in every situation. It is how God leads in the situation. We cannot bind and loose every circumstance as we see fit.

Lazarus raised from the dead

He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go" (John 11:44).

This is a perfect picture of what happens in salvation. When I was in Israel, at Bethany, where Lazarus was buried, the Lord showed this to me. It turns out that I wasn't as spiritual as I thought, because George Whitfield was shown the same thing some two hundred years earlier by the Lord. *"Remove the stone. Lazarus, come forth. Unbind him, and let him go" (John 11:39,43,44).*

This is midrash. When we witness to an unsaved person, the only thing we are doing is rolling away the stone. We are making it possible for them to hear the voice of Jesus. You can witness, and witness until you are blue in the face to someone who is unsaved, but until they hear the voice of Jesus, it is useless. When we witness, the only thing we are doing is rolling away the stone.

I am the good shepherd; and I know my own, and my own know me, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one (John 10:14-15,27- 29).

All we can do is roll away the stone; tell the unsaved, and pray. But that is it. There comes a time when you have done all you can. Then it is up to God. Only the Son of Man can call that which is dead unto life.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word, and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. For just as the Father has life in himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in himself (John 5:24-26).

If you are not born again, you are already dead spiritually. Jesus wants to call you from death unto life, to forgive your sins and give you eternal life. Only the Son of Man can call that which is dead unto life. "Lazarus come forth." But when Lazarus came out, Jesus said "You unbind him."

What is it that we loose? Discipleship, baptism, counselling. Do you understand? YOU unbind him.

This is the "fellowship of the saints". We all come into the kingdom of God with baggage from the world. When people become Christians, they arrive spiritually oppressed, emotionally bound, with all kinds of problems. They need discipleship.

Prayer for those in authority

There are biblical and unbiblical versions of 'binding and loosing'. As you see, none of it has anything to do with what most Pentecostal churches are teaching today. The preaching of the Gospel will always come first. (Paul preached the Gospel.) Prayer and fasting come next. (What did Esther and Daniel do?)

And thirdly, comes intercession and prayer for those in authority, for the political leaders who have authority over God's people.

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

You may not like politics or politicians, but if they are not influenced by our prayers, they will be influenced by something else.

Loss of Christian influence

When did the Third Reich happen in Germany? When Evangelical Christianity declined and 'higher criticism' had replaced it. What did the Germans do? They became genocidal exterminators, butchers of whole civilizations.

The Germans went back and did the same things that they had done in their pre-Christian times.

The Gospel stopped being preached. The church compromised. Then the Government came under the influence of wickedness. Now in England they are starting to hold Pagan festivals again. Where? Stonehenge, Glastonbury, the same places where the Druids, Wicca (Anglo-Saxon witchcraft) and the pre-Christian Britons did. It does not matter what they are called, they are Druid high priests. It is the same things occurring in the same places.

When the preaching of the Gospel becomes compromised with false leaders, such as George Carey (and now Rowan Williams [Steve]), the ancient territorial spirits, if you want to use the term, resurface. The government comes under the influence of wickedness and godlessness. Outside the English Parliament it says, "Our Father Who art in Heaven". On the inside there are Moslems, atheists, Free-masons, and God only knows what else, voting on the appointment of Anglican Bishops.

In Japan, the philosophy of the corporations is based on the old Shogun model of the Shinto religion. It has always been around.

First, the preaching of the Gospel. Second, prayer and fasting and intercession of God's people, especially for those in Government.

The One who restrains evil

God ordained Human Government to hold back evil, and if it is not being influenced by our prayers it will certainly become an instrument for evil itself.

The early Christians even prayed for the Roman Emperors, so that the Gospel could prosper under their rule.

When will the Antichrist be openly manifested? When the lordship of history is given into the hand of Satan for a fixed period of three and a half years.

And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose activity is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness (2 Thessalonians 2:6-12).

The spirit of Antichrist is already here. But He who restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. The Holy Spirit will not always function in the way He does now.

Grace will come to an end. We need to be careful about taking dispensationalism too far, but the age of grace will come to an end.

In the book of Revelation, God goes back to dealing with man the way he did in the Old Testament. Wrath and Judgment, Grace comes to an end.

The power of the Holy Spirit to convict the unsaved and to empower the church to preach the gospel will come to an end.

The Spirit of truth

But once the Holy Spirit is grieved by sin in the Church, once the light becomes dim and the salt loses its taste, what are we going to have? The resurgence of wickedness. It is the convicting power of the Holy Spirit that makes the church age possible. Once he is grieved and withdraws, the innate evil of the world system will quickly re-emerge.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth. (John 14:15-17).

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world (John 16:7-11,33).

It is the prayers and fasting of God's people for those in Government, and the preaching of the Gospel that restrains wickedness.

Restraining wickedness

These three are the only things that will restrain wickedness in the world today:

1. Preaching of the Gospel;
2. Prayer and fasting, especially intercessory prayer for government leaders;
3. The convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

These are the correct ways to use the instruments of binding and loosing. If you want to get somewhere use the correct instrument, put down the fork and pick up the spoon.