

2 Corinthians 2

Sunday 2/26/2012

Have your Bible this morning and turn to the book of 2 Corinthians, Chapter 2. For those of you who may be visiting today, we are in the book of 2 Corinthians.

I. Introduction to Ministry Training and 2 Corinthians

Our church is now at a place where we have really started to develop the ministries of our church. God this year has given us tremendous opportunities. This process began when we started the church, and we have been working through it, and now it is all coming together. Our goal for this next year is to take a group of people from this church who want to be part of it and develop a very intense ministry where we can work with almost any person's problems and issues. We are training ourselves to get to the point where no matter what we find in somebody's life, we have the ability, through the Word of God, to deal with it.

What we are doing is coming through four or five weeks of the book of 2 Corinthians. Then I am going back and giving them, as I did last week, the principles they need to know. They are putting them in their Bible and working with them. Toward the end of this year or maybe the first of next year, they will sit down and take a very extreme test to pass that criteria so they will be ready to get into the next level, which is to help people. So that is what we are doing here. You already have the first 30 principles from last week that you will need to help you in developing your skills and dealing with your own life first, and then with the lives of others.

I told you that when we came to the book of 1 Corinthians, the first two chapters are basically the baseline definitive chapters, defining what the book is all about. Chapter 1 really defines for you and for me what the ministry is. You would be surprised that saved people who go to church do not understand what true biblical ministry is. Chapter 1 defines that for us; we have that definition now.

Then Chapter 2, and this is where we are at today, and we certainly will not get through it today. When we entered into Chapter 2, I told you that where Chapter 1 defines what the ministry is, Chapter 2 defines what the minister should be. Now we are looking at our own personal lives here. These are two key chapters in this book that really help put everything into perspective.

II. The Minister's Primary Quality: Forgiveness

I told you that the definition of the ministry in Chapter 1 is going through what your people go through, suffering with them. The ministry, by definition of 2 Corinthians, is suffering. But Chapter 2 in 2 Corinthians deals with the number one quality that we are to have as ministers, as Christians: the forgiving spirit, being able to forgive others who hurt you or do things to you. That is what we are going to talk about today. There is certainly no place in the ministry, in dealing with people's lives, without the ability to forgive and forget.

I told you the greatest character quality of God that makes us love Him so much and endears us to Him is the fact that God not only forgives our sin, but He forgets our sin and puts us into a

relationship with Him. I want to talk to you today about some other key things that will help you get past those emotions in your life, the things in your heart that keep us from moving forward.

One of the principles I told you is the fact that we are always to examine ourselves. Examining ourselves is a great reality check. Many times, we spend too much time examining the lives of others instead of examining our own life. But examining yourself is so key. It is key because in our lives, in dealing with the lives of other people, you always have to have the right perspective. You always have to be able to see any given situation. You always have a great benefit and an asset to you when you can look at things and see the problem, not as it appears, but as it really is. That is so vital, and you will learn to do that in time.

I am going to teach you over the course of the next couple of months, or six, seven, eight months, and then throughout our intense study when we get into next year, about concepts in the Bible. There are incredible concepts in the Bible that are found in stories; they are found in books of the Bible. When you lift up these concepts, you can apply them to a number of different things in your own life and in dealing with people.

One of those is what I call the High Tower Concept. In the Bible, you are going to find the concept called the Tower of David. David makes reference to it. David's high tower was always God. When we take that concept and use it in our own life first, and then use it in dealing with the lives of others, it becomes very clear what it means. David always looked to God for any situation that he was in. Because of that, he relied on God, who can see above the circumstances that we see—the High Tower Concept.

Coming back now in the movie theaters are the great 3D movies. All you new kids think it is new, but I saw the first 3D movie in 1956. That is when they came out. They have not been out for years and years and years, and now they are making a comeback. I remember the cardboard glasses back then; it was much more primitive. But the first 3D movie that ever came out was *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. I remember going to see that with my mother, and she was big on those kinds of movies. I remember one time she took us to see, and this is still on many times, *The House on Haunted Hill* with Vincent Price. I was nine years old, and my mother took me to see that. I was so scared when I came out. When that old lady jumps out, I pinched my eyes so hard when I came out, I had broken the blood vessels in my eyes. It looked like somebody had punched me in the face.

But I remember the first 3D movie was *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. 3D gives you the ability that if you just watch it, the bird flies towards you, and it is just nothing. If you have 3D, when somebody jumps out, it looks like it jumps right in your seat with you. In other words, in life, most of the time, God's people see things one-dimensional. One-dimensional is just how it looks. Three-dimensional gives you the ability to see not how it appears, but how it really is. God, who has the ability to look over the obstacles in life, sees higher than we do. God understands things to a greater degree than we do. There is never a time with God that in any given situation, He does not understand the full impact of what is going on. Hence, for you to have that ability, you have to get into a high tower. That high tower is simply God, who sees over the obstacles of life. When you and I begin to use His principles from the Word of God, it gives

us the same benefit. We begin to see things from a three-dimensional aspect, and we begin to see things not how they appear, but how they really are.

Forming an attitude of forgiveness is what we want to talk about today. That is very key and crucial in every aspect: handling issues and learning to forgive others in them.

III. Three Reasons People Hurt Us

What we all need to do is put forgiveness in perspective. We hear all the definitions, and you hear people preach and pastors preach on forgiveness all the time. I am going to give you today the absolute bottom-line fundamental key doctrine that needs to be behind our ability to forgive. When we are finished today, you are going to go out of here, if you are paying attention, a little smarter, a little richer, and a little more in tune with where God wants you to be. What we are going to try to do is form that attitude of forgiveness.

When you talk about forgiving people and putting forgiveness in perspective, there are really three things that we always have to guard in our life about getting an attitude toward people. It can happen to all of us. If you do not guard these things and put these three things into your life and become aware of these and have the perspective on these, you will fall right into that trap where you start to get to the part in your life where you do not have the ability to forgive. When you understand these three things, it kind of sets the basis for why you should not hold grudges against people.

Sometimes people will hurt us. That is what happens. Somebody says something to us, somebody does something to us, somebody says something about us, or somebody hurts us in some way. When you stop to look at these three aspects I am about to give you, it begins to form the basis of why you and I should never be in a position where we cannot forgive somebody. It forms the basis of this great doctrine I am going to talk to you about today that shows you why you and I ought to have in our lives the greatest single character quality of God, and that is His ability to forgive.

1. Sometimes people will hurt us simply because we allowed it to happen. We want to blame other people for doing something to us when the truth of the matter is, we let it happen. Sometimes we put ourselves in situations that we should have never been in. When we get into those situations because we made a bad choice, we actually think that everybody is going to treat us right and fine. Then when somebody does not, we get upset and hold a grudge or get angry or will not forgive them because "you hurt me." The only reason they hurt you is because you put yourself into a situation to get hurt. You are supposed to be smarter than the problem. You are supposed to use that perception of understanding. I have told you how many times, when it starts wrong, it usually ends wrong.

I have seen marriages go down the tubes and great bitterness between husbands and wives in situations like that. I know there are a lot of personal things that come in, but you know what? You ought to stop and ask yourself, "I should have never gotten into this marriage to begin with." Getting into something that has no chance is your choice. Then getting bitter or mad or angry or holding a grudge because this person treated me badly, when you should have known before you

got into it that this person did not know how to treat you any other way but badly. It is just the way it works in life: being smarter than the problem.

I have seen relationships where people got together, and it did not work out. They get an attitude with each other, and they blast each other, and they have all kinds of problems, and they hold grudges against each other. When you go back and fundamentally look at how that thing started, it goes back to that great principle: what do you expect? When it starts wrong, it ends wrong. You cannot blame somebody else for saying something nasty about you when you should have never put yourself in that position to begin with. That is what happens in many, many cases.

➤ The Samson Principle

There is a great principle in the Bible called the Samson Principle. Samson is a great study. Though we are not going to get into it all today, I want to show you how this situation works. Samson is found in the book of Judges, and he is an incredible guide of study. You are going to find that God actually put people in the Bible whose stories and their lives unfold, and we can actually lift those stories out and take those principles and say, "Do you see how he got in that problem? This is how I got into my problem."

Samson is a great case. Samson is a picture of the child of God whose greatest character quality is selfishness. That is his greatest character quality. Everything about his life is about him. You go through his life story; it is all about him. The first words out of his mouth are, "I saw a woman." His whole life is built around getting what he wanted in life at the expense of everybody else. His father-in-law and his one wife get killed; it did not bother Samson at all. Samson is so selfish; it is all about him. From the beginning of his life to the end of his life, it is simply all about what he wants. He is a great picture for you and for me to see how he got into the problems he got into. I call it the Samson Principle.

When Samson was born, he became a Nazarite. The Nazarite was a vow you took. Do not confuse it with many people who think that Jesus was of Nazareth, so that means He was like Samson. He was from Nazareth, but He was not a Nazarite in the sense that Samson was. In the Old Testament, a person would take what was called a Nazarite vow. That means that you were going to give your life to God, and God was going to give you the power to get that done. But you had to give up some things. You could not do certain things.

One of the things you could not do is you could not cut your hair. Samson could not cut his hair; he had long hair. If you study the Bible, you will find that the hair was really the secret to his strength, was it not? You will go through there; you will find that when he did his hair, somebody braided it for him, and they did it in how many locks? Seven locks. Do you know why? Because in the book of Isaiah, there are seven manifestations of the Holy Spirit of God. His hair was his strength, showing you that in your life and my life, the strength that you have comes from the Holy Spirit in your life. The Bible says that the head of God is Christ, and the head of man is Christ. So we are to have Him as our head. The seven locks pictured the Spirit of God in his life. That was his power; that was his strength.

He could not cut his hair. He was not to touch dead people. Dead people in the Bible are a picture of unsaved people. It is a picture that if you want to have the power of God in your life, you cannot have any real meaningful relationship with the unsaved world. It just will not work. He was not allowed to eat anything off a vine tree: no grapes, no raisins. He could not drink any wine. He had to abstain from all of those things. If he did that, he could fulfill that vow of a Nazarite, and God would give him the power to do what He wanted him to do. But that is all a picture of things in your life and my life.

Now let me show you where Samson got into problems. This is what I call the Samson Principle. This is why, in the first aspect, many of us really do not have a reason to hold a grudge against somebody or to be angry with somebody, because we put ourselves in the place and set ourselves up for failure. Getting mad at somebody else and holding a grudge because you put yourself in a place that you could not win and it was setting yourself up for failure, that is not the other person's part. You are supposed to be smarter than the problem.

So here is Samson. The Bible says that Samson is a Nazarite now, and he knows basically the things he has to stay away from. So Samson is going out, bebopping with the boys, looking for the girls. The Bible says that he met a lion, by the way. That lion, we know in the Bible, is a picture of the devil.

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

He kills the lion. The next day he comes back, and some bees had gotten into the carcass of that lion, and there was great honey in there. You look at that, and you think to yourself, Samson got that honey. But when he got that honey, he touched a dead carcass of an animal, and now he broke the vow. Here is another good point: there was nothing wrong with honey, but look where the devil put it.

Now let us go back and talk about him meeting that lion in the first place. This is the Samson Principle. So Samson is walking down the road, and he is going out to hang out with the guys, hang out with the gals. All of a sudden, he says, "I am going to take a shortcut." The Bible tells you that he takes a shortcut through this guy's vineyard. You know what a vineyard is, do you not? It is where they have grapes. Whoops. Samson thought there was nothing wrong with taking a shortcut through the vineyard. God said, "You cannot have anything to do with that." Look who he met in the vineyard: it was the devil, the lion. The lion, in time, was the root of his downfall.

My bottom line is this: the lion would have never been an issue if he would have stayed out of the places he was not supposed to go. He had no business being in that vineyard. God's people many times get an attitude about things. We get mad because somebody hurts us when the truth of the matter is that would have never been an issue if you would not have gone and gotten into something you should not have gotten into. How can you blame, how can he blame the lion? How can he blame anything? The only one he can blame is himself because the lion, in the Samson Principle, would have never been an issue if he had stayed out of the vineyard.

I have seen guys that got beat up, unmercifully. Christian guys. I asked a guy years ago, I had a guy that came to church with two black eyes, and his arm was in a sling, and he was all beat up. I said, "What happened to you, man? Were you in a car wreck?" He said, "No." He says, "I got beat up." I said, "You got beat up, man? Were you mugged?" He said, "No, Bob. I will tell you the truth. I went out with some old friends last Friday night, and we got drinking, and it went south, and they just ganged up on me and beat the fire out of me." Now, I have a hard time having sympathy with a guy like that. That is the Samson Principle. You know what? You would never be in that shape if you would have stayed out of the vineyard. In other words, the issue of the lion and him actually breaking the vow would have never been an issue at all. But Samson always has to do it his way. Samson is somebody who is totally putting himself into the position where it is all about him.

In time, I am going to teach you about suicide in the Bible. There are seven suicides in the Bible. Samson is one of them. Samson is a picture of a child of God who gets to the point where his life gets so desperate that he actually becomes a suicide. People make a mistake about people like Samson. People make a mistake about the idea of suicide. I had a person die here a number of years ago, kill themselves. Somebody came up to me afterwards and said, "What would make a person choose that?" I looked at them and I said, "Nobody chooses suicide. Nobody ever chooses to commit suicide. You do not understand the principle. When you get to the point in your life that you are ready to take your own life, it is not the fact that you choose suicide; it is the fact that suicide chooses you."

You think you just wake up some morning and say, "Oh, it is a bad day today. I am going to kill myself." No, suicide always comes in because of a number of bad choices a person has made in their lives, like Samson, that they actually get to the point in their life where there is no way out, there is nowhere else they can go, or they think. But because it is all about them, because it is always about their selfishness, always about what they want, always about what they want to do, they finally paint themselves into the corner like he did. He did not care when his other wife got burned up or her father-in-law got burned up. All he wanted to do was what was concerning him. He wants to go down and be with Delilah. He wants to go down and be the He-Man. He wants to do this. It is all about him.

The Bible says, when he gave back his first wife to a friend of his, the Bible makes it very clear, and I love the way the Holy Spirit of God put it in there, the Bible says that he gave him back to his friend, which he used. He used people. That is the life of Samson. So you see, my point is this: when you put yourself into that kind of scenario and your world goes south and everything is upside down, who do you have to be mad at? Instead of directing your anger at somebody else, you have to direct it at yourself. Instead of casting anger at other persons, take responsibility; be angry at yourself for violating the biblical principles that put you in a no-win situation.

2. The third one is my favorite. If there is anything that ever keeps me from taking things personal to the point where I get an attitude and a grudge against somebody and keeps me from not being forgiving at the drop of a hat, if there is anything in my life that keeps me between the white lines, it is this one. Because at the end of the day, what has anybody ever done to you or me that we have not done to God? When has anybody ever said about you or

me, or said to you, or done to you, that you and I in our life have not done to Almighty God? And yet He forgave us and forgot what we did and forgave us of what we did. No holds barred. He just made a clean sweep of it.

Those are the three issues that you are going to find in life. When you understand this great principle found in Chapter 2 and the aspect of being able to forgive, and see how it is built around these three things and the greatest single probably doctrine in the Bible, which we are going to talk about today, you will have a clear understanding of it.

IV. The Foundational Doctrine of Forgiveness

In Chapter 2, the aspect of being able to forgive is built around something that happened back in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. You will remember a man fell into sin by getting into a relationship with his father's wife. That is 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. Now, in dealing with people, that is about as complicated as it could ever hope to get. I cannot even tell you how complicated that would be to try to work through in that kind of scenario with all the people you are dealing with: the people in the church, the church family. It is somebody's dad. If anything would definitely put a strain on Thanksgiving dinner, it would be something like this.

But now in Chapter 2, this man who did not want to get right and make it right, and that is what happened in 1 Corinthians 5:5, and that is why Paul told the church to deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. In other words, let God just let the devil just work him over so that maybe he will get right. Whatever happened, the details are not given, but this man now wants to get right. He has come to them, and he wants to make it right, and he wants to come back to church.

Based on all of this drama, Paul now uses this situation to teach the church in Corinth the basic fundamental aspects of forgiveness. Paul never misses an opportunity. You want to remember, real biblical counseling, real biblical dealing with people, is basically helping people learn God's lesson through their adversity. That is the job of the church. Based on all of this, Paul now uses the situation to help this church understand the basic fundamentals, how to do it. But at the same time, and this is where it is a great book for us, he gives us a model by what he says and what he tells this church to do. This is what we are supposed to do.

In this chapter, we find the greatest, as I said, single concept on our ability to learn and to forgive like Christ does and how to forget. If you are ever going to get to that point in your life where you deal with people, this is a lesson you are going to have to learn. This is an amazing chapter built around one of the hardest situations that you will ever have to deal with in the ministry: to bring this guy back, forgive him, forget what he did, love him, and then move on with it.

Now I want to begin reading here in Chapter 2, and I want to pick it up in verse 5.

2 Corinthians 2:5-11

But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Now Father, help us today. Help us to glean from this. Lord, take the men and women in this church who in their hearts right now, and I do not even know who they are, do not want to know who they are, but the people in this church who want to get to that next level and to be used effectively, who have the appetite to touch other people's lives with their lives, who have the basic skills to be able to take any scenario, no matter what it may be. After learning the principles and learning the High Tower Concept, learning the Samson Principle, learning the Solomon Principle, learning the Hezekiah Principle, all of those concepts and principles that You built into Your Word, help them, Father, to learn and understand and to put it all together.

I pray as they put their notes in their Bible, as they do the work and try to get all this material organized, that You will help them. Lord, let them know that I will help them. But Father, it is something that they could do all of that. They could put all their notes in the Bible. They could do everything that they are supposed to do. If they fail to understand the single greatest character quality of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are told to be Christ-like, He lives inside us, then Lord, it is all for naught. Help us to learn and glean today on a great concept of forgiveness. We will thank You and praise You. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

The great word here is "contrariwise" down there in verse 7. Where you once threw him out of the church, now you bring him back. The list of things that he says there to do, we are not going to talk about that today, but we will be a couple of weeks in this passage alone here before we even get to the rest of this chapter. But we have to grasp the basic understanding of learning how to forgive. I want today to look at one verse, and I want to teach you a great Bible doctrine today.

Let me give you another definition that you need to have. Most of you probably know this, many of you maybe do not. I want to talk about, so you can grasp what I am saying today, I want to talk to you about the word "doctrine," what it simply means. The word "doctrine" means to teach, or teaching. Bible doctrine is a specific teaching or definition about subjects that, when we put it together, form the Bible as a teaching book. The word "Bible" means "books." When you understand that the Bible, in its most fundamental form, is a book about teaching principles, it is about issues of life.

Yet, when you look at the Bible, it looks complicated because in the Old Testament, you have all of these people with all of their lives, and it unfolds one chapter after the other. But if you just

get past that for a moment and just look at it in its basic concept of what the Bible is in the Old Testament, the Old Testament is nothing more than one story after another, and each one of those stories forms at least one, many times multiple, concepts about life. When you learn those principles out of those people's lives, he told you that in 1 Corinthians, he says, "the things that I wrote unto you in the Old Testament for your examples and your samples." You learn by their lives what to do and what not to do. Hence, the principle of Samson. We look at his life and see the things that he did. Many times we put ourselves into situations that we never should. We wonder why. I have people all the time ask me, "Why did this happen to me?" I mean, like, hello.

When I was a young guy, my wife can verify this story. We did not have a lot of money. Back then, we had just gotten married, and she was pregnant with Kelly. Back then, to have a baby was \$125. Wow, wow, wow. It is probably \$5,000 today. It just goes to show you. Of course, the hospital we went to was just a cardboard box down here along the road someplace. It was pretty quick. But that was a lot of money. I mean, back then, I made \$600 a month before taxes. So, just put it into equation. I was talking to somebody today, and I thought we were talking. I said, "I remember when Hostess Twinkies were 12 cents a pack." Have you ever bought a pack of Hostess Twinkies? I have not for over a year and a half now, but they are up to like \$1.60. It would be cheaper to buy a car to run on Twinkies instead of gas. I know that. But incredible.

Anyway, we did not have any money. Being the entrepreneur I always have been, I decided that there was a real value in that I could make some side money. So I went into catching snapping turtles. You do not think about this much, but back then, there was a restaurant in town in Canton, Ohio, and their specialty was turtle soup. Turtle soup is probably everybody loves turtle soup, but you have to have turtles to have turtle soup. They cannot make turtle soup with chicken. So anyway, all these old boys used to go to Canada, and they would come back. They would do one thing: they would go up there and fish for two or three days, and then they would buy, they would get 500, 600, 800 pounds of snapping turtles. They would put them in a big thing, and they would bring them back, and they would butcher them, and they would sell them to this restaurant. Well, they all were dead or too old, could not do it, and it was becoming a lost art.

So I asked this guy, Bender's Restaurant, I asked this guy, "Would you be interested in turtle meat?" He said, "I will take everything you can get." He said, "I will give you \$9 a pound for it." \$9 a pound. Gas was 36 cents a gallon back then. \$9 a pound. "I see by your outfit that you are a turtle wrangler." That was me, man. I was in it. So I got with these old guys who could not do it anymore, and I said, because I was always kind of an outdoorsy guy anyhow and all those things, and I am telling the story the way I am telling you is true. Most of you know this. These old guys, do you know how they used to catch turtles? They used to go along and reach up under the bank. They called it noodling. They would reach up under the bank, and they would grab a... Their theory was that turtles always went in head first. Now I am not talking about little Lincoln Cuff from the Rockymovie. I am talking about 85-pound snapping turtles. I am talking about ones that it takes two guys to hold up. I am talking to one whose heads are about that big, and their necks are about that long. You never find out how long their neck is until you get too close, and he shows you how far it is and how fast it can come out. There is not any pit viper, any cobra,

any black mamba on the earth that is faster than a snapping turtle when he wants to be. He cannot walk fast, but he can stretch that neck out. He has a neck that long on him.

So, I said, "Teach me how to do it." These guys said, "Well," and the other guy, scratching his eyes, "Oh, he has two fingers missing off a hand." I am thinking here, "I am not sure that is how I want to handle this." So anyway, he set me up with turtle traps. I trapped, trapped, trapped, and we paid off the baby. I still got some of that. It was the funnest time of my life. But anyway, I did. I would go home there, and we would get on a good night every time, even to this day, when I drive down the road and I see a river, or it is not a river, but I see a pond or a lake, I am in my mind saying, "That would be a place to put a trap." I know where they live. I know how they like. I know the time of year. I learned everything about it. These old guys taught me that, and this is how, but they did it. They said, "You just reach them into the bank," and he says, "They always go in head first. So you reach up there, you feel the rim of the shell, you grab their tail, you pull them up and throw them on the thing." Well, my luck, I would get a dominant back then. You know what I am saying? I want to ask this guy, "How come if that is true, you do not have two fingers on your hand there?" Is that a guy who is missing? One guy picked up a muskrat. Now let me tell you something, if you ever get bit by a muskrat, you are in trouble. You know what? There are snakes up in them holes too. I mean, you are crazy. You cannot see what you are doing. You are just going to be the man guy and reach down there and grab that. "Oh, there is a rim of the turtle shell. Oh, I got his tail." And the turtle is saying, "Okay, boys, I sucked him in. Now you get him, you get him," and they both get you from both sides. I would not have any part of it.

My point is this: when you stick your hand in places that you cannot see where it is at, and you put your hand in a situation where there are things in there that can hurt you, you may get away with it the first time, you may get away with it the second time, but sooner or later, something is going to bite you. You put yourself into a relationship or a circumstance or a situation that the Bible says you should not be in. Sooner or later, you are going to get nailed. It is just that simple. It is just that simple. When you understand the doctrine of forgiveness and you see how this thing works, doctrines are specific Bible teachings that are designed to keep you and me from getting ourselves in trouble, reaching for what we think is a snapping turtle and pulling out a big, big water moccasin. That is what it is designed for. Doctrine is to teach, to give you the right teaching.

Last week, we talked about Proverbs 2:7. He said that when you did the things that you did, what did God give you? He said He gave you sound wisdom. You know what sound wisdom is based on? It is based on what Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:10. Sound wisdom is based on sound doctrine. When you get the teachings of the Bible in your life, doctrine is important because it will always form the foundation of any Bible teaching that makes a Christian or a church strong. The mark of the Laodicean church today is the aspect that they have no doctrine. That is where it is at. All these denominational churches today, most people do not even know where they came from. I am not fighting anybody. You find a lot of guys who once started Baptist churches, they are taking Baptist off their offices. Do you know why? Because when you take Baptist off your name, you go in their mindset, interdenominational. You want to reach everybody. Do you know

what you are saying when you have to reach that? I am not under any delusion that Bob Alexander has the ability to reach everybody.

But when you get away from the doctrine, when you get into a situation where everything you believe is okay, everything I believe is okay, let us not make issues out of these things, let us just all get along, you lose your doctrine, you do not have anything. That is what happens to them. There are no specific teachings about anything anymore. Everything is okay. Nothing is wrong. The Bible says the first thing the Word of God is profitable for was doctrine.

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

You have to know what is right and what is wrong. You have to know what God expects and what He says. The idea that everybody in every church is going to believe the same thing is, I do not know where you get that from. It has never been true in history, and it will never be true in any place in time.

When you get into the Bible, you will find there is a doctrine of man. That is the teaching about man. You will find there is a doctrine of eternal security. When you understand the doctrine of eternal security, then you will never fear losing your salvation. There are a lot of churches and a lot of people who teach and preach, and people who are afraid they can lose their salvation or believe they lose their salvation. I will tell you one reason, the only reason: if you laid down a Bible in front of them and said, "Lay out for me the doctrine of eternal security," they could not do it. When you know the doctrine of eternal security, what the Bible teaches about it, you never have to worry about losing it. Never have to worry about losing it.

There is a doctrine of the Holy Spirit. There is a doctrine of Christ. There is a doctrine of God. There is a doctrine of the rapture. There is a doctrine of the second coming, doctrine of the millennium. I gave you a while back, there is a doctrine of salvation. Now that is the case where many of these have other doctrines that go along with them. Do you understand the doctrine of salvation? There are 12 other doctrines you have to figure out and understand that are found in the Bible. If you really want to understand what happened today, you got saved. I would think that would be important to most Christians, but it is not. You have the doctrine of propitiation. You have the doctrine of the advocacy of Jesus Christ. You have the doctrine of regeneration. You have the doctrine of expiation. You have all these different doctrines that when you get them down, you know now what salvation is, and nobody ever can confuse you on it. But when churches take away doctrine, then they have nothing to stand on. That is the problem. That is the problem.

With that in mind, here is the key doctrine on being able to understand forgiveness. This will be the reason why you cannot forgive: it is because you do not understand this basic doctrine.

V. The Doctrine of the Priesthood of the Believer

Look at 2 Corinthians 2:10. Here is what he said:

2 Corinthians 2:10

To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

Now, I want to define that last phrase for you: "forgiving in the person of Christ." Today I want to teach you about the great missing doctrine in God's people's lives. It is simply the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer.

The Bible says in Hebrews 3:1 that Jesus Christ is the High Priest of our profession. That profession is your profession of faith the day you got saved. Over there in Hebrews 4:14-16, it says this. Listen carefully.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

You know the process. The Bible says that when Jesus Christ went back to heaven, He sat down on the right hand of God. The Bible now told you that He is our High Priest. Sitting on the right hand of God, the Bible says in Romans 8:34 that He makes intercession for us with the things that we go through in life. That is the job.

Now, here we have an illustration of the story in the Old Testament that really helps us understand this doctrine. In the Old Testament, God dealt with the nation of Israel, did He not? In the Old Testament, there was a priesthood connected with that Old Testament nation of Israel. That priesthood was a literal priesthood, a physical priesthood. You will find it starts with Moses and Aaron. You know the story. Moses met with God, and God says, "I have a job for you to do." Moses says, "Well, I cannot do it, and I am not good enough to do it." I am not always thinking, and God kind of beat around the bush. That is where that phrase comes from. They are talking back and forth, and finally God says, "Okay, I will tell you what, I will give you Aaron." Aaron will be your spokesman. What happens right there is God now takes Moses and sets him up as the leader, and He sets Aaron up as the priest. From this point on, every son in the Old Testament who becomes either a priest or a high priest has to come from the physical body of Aaron. It is called the priestly line in the Old Testament. This line continues down through all of the Bible. It gets lost sometimes around 606 B.C. This is part of the problem that the Jews have today. They do not understand and cannot find the genealogy of the true priesthood. So they are pretty much in the dark. They will find it here pretty quickly when the tribulation starts, but right now they cannot.

In the Old Testament, you had a high priest. He had one job. That high priest had one job because he is a type of Jesus Christ. He has one job: every day, one time a year, on the Day of Atonement,

he took the sacrifice, he took it beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies, and he laid down that sacrifice for the nation of Israel. The other priests could not do that. He was the only one that was allowed to do that because that high priest is a type of our High Priest. Just as the Old Testament high priest went through the veil into the Holy of Holies and laid down the sacrifice for the nation of Israel, there was a day in history when Jesus Christ, my High Priest, took the sacrifice for me and for you up through the Holy of Holies and laid it on the altar of God and then sat down on the right hand of God and is now my interceding High Priest. That is how it works.

But He has sons who are priests. Those sons are not allowed to go in and do the things in the Holy of Holies, but those sons do the ministry of the High Priest with all the other people. Here is a picture of you and me. This is what you and I do. This literal priesthood in the Old Testament is a picture of the spiritual one today that you and I are part of. This one was literal. It came about by physical birth, being born into the family of Levi, therefore being a Levite. You and I, ours is a spiritual one. It comes about by a spiritual birth that puts you into the body of Christ that makes you a priest after the concept of Christ's eternal priesthood.

For you guys that are a little deeper in the Bible, you know there are two priesthoods recorded in the Old Testament for you. One of them is the literal priesthood of Aaron, which we are talking about right now. That is one that had to be perpetuated by birth, and it is the Israel. It is the physical one. Then there is one recorded back there that is a spiritual priesthood. That is the priesthood of Melchizedek, found in Hebrews 7, found in Genesis 14. This is the one, the guy that says about his priesthood, "there is no beginning and no end, no father and no mother." What are they talking about? They are talking about that Melchizedek's priesthood represents Christ's priesthood. There is no father and mother. There is no bloodline through that priest. It is a spiritual priesthood. That is the priesthood that you and I became part of the day we got saved. When you understand that, you will find that the phrase "after the order of Melchizedek" is found seven times in your Bible.

In the Old Testament, these sons of the high priest, the literal ones, they helped do the work within the tabernacle. As I said earlier, the only thing they could not do was enter into the Holy of Holies and make the supreme sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. That was a picture of Christ dying on the cross and making the atonement for our sins. Only the high priest could do that. You know the process. The Holy of Holies was a place where God's throne was on this planet, and the only one that could go in there was the high priest.

Hebrews 10:11-12

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

See how that works? There is the beginning of the spiritual priesthood. The day you got saved, you not only became His son, you became part of that priesthood. This is the doctrine of the

priesthood of the believer. Just as in the Old Testament, the sons of the high priests were consecrated as priests to do his work. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:5, talking about you and me:

1 Peter 2:5

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

There is your job, me and you. That is what we do. As the Old Testament priest, they worked in there underneath the high priest, and they worked in that tabernacle, and they dealt with the people coming in and all of their issues. That is the job of you and me. Their job was not to be judgmental. Their job was not to say, "Well, you cannot come in here." Their job was simply this: the Bible says, if you trespassed against God or you did this against God, you bring the right offering, the right sacrifice based on the book, we will take it, and God will forgive you. That is all you are to do today. The aspect of the doctrine of forgiveness is nothing more than you understanding that you are a priest after the Order of Melchizedek, and you are to do the work down here, as Christ sits on the right hand of God the Father. This is the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer.

This is why you and I are told in 2 Corinthians 5:20:

2 Corinthians 5:20

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

He is saying, "We are praying to you instead of Christ." "We pray you in Christ's stead." See that "instead of Christ," because he knew he was a priest, and Christ is the High Priest, and it is your job and my job to do the work of a priest, and to help people get reconciled to God. That is why he said, "in Christ's stead." Christ is the High Priest. You and I are part of that priesthood. This is what Paul meant in 2 Corinthians 2:10 when he said, "I will forgive anybody, anytime, anything, anywhere." Then he says this, "in the person of Christ." See, this is the power God gives you and I the day we get saved. You are a priest. You are a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

VI. The Priest's Consecration and Function

When you understand that Old Testament priesthood, Michael back there when he did the chalk talk, drew out seven things that are in that tabernacle. I do not know if you have ever studied that. One of the greatest studies in the world is to take those seven things that are in that tabernacle that the priest worked with and see how they figure into your own life.

You have the brazen altar. That is where the sacrifice was burned. That is a picture of Christ dying on the cross. You have the laver of water. That is the picture of them washing their feet when they go in and out. It is a picture of your daily confession to stay clean with God. That tabernacle had almost the most beautiful, overlaid gold objects in it you could ever see, seven of them. Yet it had a dirt floor. There was no carpet. There were no boards. Every time that priest walked in and out, his feet got dirty. Every time he came out, he washed his feet off that laver of

water. Every time he went back in, he washed his feet off that laver of water. Do you know why? Because that is a picture of you and I in the ministry. The water is a type of the Word of God, and the feet are our walk. To do the work of God, we have to continually keep our feet clean with the Word of God.

You go in there. I do not know if you know this enough, but that tabernacle was completely overcast with animal skins. Animal skins are the most impenetrable thing you could find. No light can get through. There were badger skins all over it. When you walked in there from the outside, it was absolutely pitch black in there. The only light in there was a candlestick that had seven candles on it, and that was all the light. No light switch. No lights like this. You know as well as I do, you all went to the movie theater at some point or other, and probably most of you are going today to see *Above Valor*. But anyway, you know it is true. When you walk in there and you walk into a movie theater, you have to stop for a minute. My favorite thing at the movie theater is not to watch the movie; it is to watch the people trip up the steps with their popcorn because they did not wait until their eyes adjusted to the light. They think they can do it. They think they are bionic persons, and they are not. The funniest thing, I sit on the aisle. I got more popcorn that way free than anything else in the world. They stop up that thing, and the first thing that happens, they start coming up there, and why did they not see the step? Why did not see the step? Because they did not stop and say, "Wow, coming out from the outside into the inside, I better just hold up for a minute here so I can see what is going on." They do not do that.

But that is what happens when you get saved. Do you know what you do? You come out of that glittery light of the world. They walked into that tabernacle. The priest had to stop for a minute. He had to wait for a minute. He had to let his eyes get adjusted because he was coming from the light of the world to the light of God. You just do not walk from the light of the world to the light of God and then just move on in life. We call it discipleship. We call it Bible basics. We call it giving yourself time to get adjusted from the light of the world to the light of God.

All that was in that tabernacle was seven candlesticks. They represent the Holy Spirit of God. On this side was a table. A table represented fellowship. There were 12 loaves of bread on that table, baked fresh every morning. Bread is a type of the Word of God. But it was laid out: one, two, three, four, five, six; one, two, three, four, five, six. Whoever did that, whoever told Moses to do that, told him two-pronged things. He says, "First of all, put 12 of them because it is the nation of Israel. But put them like this: one, two, three, four, five, six; one, two, three, four, five, six, because I am going to give you a book someday. It is going to have 66 books in it." All the light that that priest had to do the work in there, listen to me, was the light off of the candlestick that represents the Holy Spirit of God. The light from the world could never get in. If you want a successful ministry, whatever you do, you have to make sure you keep the light from the world from getting in and just operate by the light of the Holy Spirit of God. They were around that table, and they did that bread. But you know what? If here is the candlestick and here is the table, they had to come around this way to work with the bread because if they did it this way, they could not see what they were doing. Because every time you get between the Holy Spirit of God and the Word of God, you are going to lose the light that God has for you.

I am telling you, the priesthood of the believer was one of the greatest single fundamental doctrines of the Bible. You are to understand that you are now a part of the priesthood of the believer. He is my High Priest. You and I are to do the work in this tabernacle, but there is a way that work has to be done. It is incredible.

One time Christ sent out the 12 disciples. This is what He told them in Matthew 18:18:

Matthew 18:18

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

I struggled with this and this next verse in John 20 for a long time, though I grew up a little bit and understood it. He said in John 20:23, even got more explicit, and He said this:

John 20:23

Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Wow. That is an incredible verse. Then one day I began to understand the power, the binding and the loosing that God gives you and I as a priest. When you win a person to Christ, you have the power and the authority as a priest of God, through the Word of God, to tell that person his sins have been forgiven. That is a pretty good deal. When you deal with a person and they will not get saved and they will not do what is right, then you as a priest, after the order of Melchizedek, by a spiritual birth and a priesthood of Christ, you have the power and the authority to tell that person their sin is still on them, and there is a judgment day coming. God will use you and me to expedite somebody's problems in their life, just like He used the priests under the high priests in the Old Testament to deal with the people's problems when they came to the tabernacle. You are a priest, therefore you have the ability in the person of Christ. You have the ability in Christ's stead. You see how that works? When you understand this great principle, you have the fundamental doctrine for forgiveness in your life.

If we are saved here this morning, and we probably are, based on what I just gave you, we are cooked. We are cooked because your ability or inability to forgive will be either your greatest building asset in your life or your greatest disastrous asset in your life. Come on now. Based on what we have: you are saved, I am saved, you are a priest after the order of Melchizedek, you are part of Christ's priesthood, you are part of His body, you are in His sons' ministry. You and me, like the Old Testament model, we are doing the work down here for Him, and you have the power to remit and retain people's sins by the book that God has given you through the authority of being part of that priesthood, and yet we ourselves will not forgive people in our lives, but we think that we can do it and somebody else is in ministry?

I am telling you, one of the greatest single principles you learn about dealing with people or training people is simply this: it is an illusion. If you are not willing to do it in your own life first, it is an illusion that you will do it later. It has to be done in your life. You have to recognize and understand the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer. You are a priest after the order of

Melchizedek in Christ's priesthood. He is the High Priest. You were left down here to administrate that priesthood in the lives of people that bring them forgiveness. When you understand this great doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, you realize you are God's priest on this whole planet. Your job is to expedite the spiritual sacrifices in people's lives just like they did working in a tabernacle. All power and authority has been given unto you. You have the Holy Spirit of God living inside you. There are your seven candlesticks. You have the Word of God. There is the showbread. You have the fellowship. There is the table. You have the local New Testament church. You have everything that you need except the right attitude about it. As the son of God of the High Priest, you and I should emulate the number one character quality of our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ: that is the ability to forgive and to forget. It is an illusion to think that you can work with people and you can teach them how to forgive and forget when you and I cannot do it ourselves.

Look at 2 Corinthians 2:9. If you are not quite dead yet, this one will kill you. You will be shortly.

2 Corinthians 2:9

For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

To this end, so also did I write, what end? About forgiving this man in 1 Corinthians 5. This whole chapter wraps itself around this church now throwing him out of the church, this church now bringing him back, and what the church is told to do. The proof of you and me and our obedience and our salvation and our priesthood is simply one thing, ladies and gentlemen: your ability to forgive others based on your understanding that now you are part of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the High Priest, and the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer. Realizing the three things I told you earlier on, that most people get into problems they get into simply because of the fact that they either get in the wrong place they should not be, they are catching snapping turtles under the bridge, under the bank, either that or the fact that somebody is mad at God and they are taking it out on you, or the fact that you just exalted it in the fact that, "Well, I should, why should I get upset with that guy? How many times have I done the same thing to my Heavenly Father?" Understanding the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer.

In the Old Testament, the sons of the priest had very strict qualifications, and here again, we see the model. We have laid out the model of the priesthood. Now let me show you the model of the priest. We now know that in the Old Testament there was a tabernacle, that is a picture of our ministry. There was a High Priest who went into the Holy of Holies, that is Jesus Christ, and there are priests who do the office of that for the High Priest, that is you and me. We know that now. We see now the two priesthoods, the Old Testament literal one and the one after the order of Melchizedek.

VII. The Homelessness of the Believer and Valueless Pursuits

Now let us look at the priest themselves very quickly and see their strict qualifications.

3. Exodus 28 says that it has to come only from Aaron's seed. You see, there is a difference in itself.

John 1:12-13

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

That is you and me. Watch how it happens. "Which were born, not of blood," that is Aaron's priesthood, you see, was not born of blood, "nor the will of the flesh," that is Aaron's priesthood, "nor the will of man," that is the old physical priesthood, watch this one, "which were born, not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God." It is the spiritual one. It is the spiritual one.

You will go back there in Exodus 28:40, you will find that the high priest, he had a special suit of clothes that he wore. It is elaborate. Every piece of that garment means something. We do not have time to get into it today, but he wore a special suit of clothes. You will also find out in that passage that his sons wore the exact same clothes. Do you know why? Because in the long and the short of it, those clothes the high priest wore were a picture of Christ's glory and all that Christ has, and God's sons wear the same glory and the same things that the high priest does. It is a picture of getting Christ's righteousness. It is an incredible study, one we will never do justice with today, but just so you grasp the concept of it.

There were three fundamental aspects that the priest's job had to do in Exodus 28. I do not know if you ever saw it before. Three fundamental aspects of the priest's job:

4. In verse 12, he was to carry the burden of the people. That is a good one. That is the job of you and me. "You that are strong, bear the infirmities of the weak." That is what Paul was trying to get across to them over there in 1 Corinthians 5. Everybody makes dumb choices. Just because, I mean, you do not think good people make bad choices? They do all the time. Yes, I know there are bad people out there that continually make bad choices because they are bad people, but in many, many cases, if not in most of the cases, that is not true. Good people just do dumb things because we are dumb. I do not know what else to tell you. The aspect of the priesthood was to restore that.

You are going to find that there are two kinds of sacrifices in the Old Testament: there is a sin offering and a trespass offering. The sin offerings were sins against God. The trespass offerings were sin against man. They brought him into that tabernacle. The priest dealt with it. He told him what the book said to do. They brought the appropriate sacrifice. It was taken care of. In your life, in my life, dealing with people, we are going to deal with the same things. We are going to deal with people who sin against God, and we are going to deal with people who sin against other people. You deal with it the same way as a priest. You take the Word of God, you lay out the principles, you show them what the Bible says, and then you expedite that concept where they deal with their problem. That is how it works. It is not hard once you see it, but you have to understand this great concept.

So the three fundamental aspects of the priest's job:

5. Verse 12 was to carry the burden of the people.
6. The second one in verse 29 was to guard his own heart with God. See, he had some things that he had to do to stay that thing that God would continue to use him.
7. The third thing in verses 31 through 36, he had to guard his mind. Just exactly what the Bible says you and I have to do.

I will tell you something else. In Exodus 28:19-20, there is an interesting thing. Those chapters deal with the consecration of the priest. This is what I harp on all the time. I just beat this into you guys. I just ride you on this. I just keep it before you all the time. I ride this thing in you like a rented scooter, man. I just keep putting it into your life. Keep putting those principles in there. You have to realize that there has to be a consecration of the priest. He just could not do what everyone wanted to do. He was separate from everybody else. He had certain things that he had to do.

So you find there in Chapter 28 that when they had the consecration of the priest, they anointed him with oil, a picture of the Holy Spirit of God in your life. Then the Bible said they took the blood of a sacrifice and they put it on the tip of his right ear, the tip of his thumb, and the tip of his big right toe. That shows you in picture, in form for you and for me, the consecration of the believer from head to toe. Consecrated on what goes in your ears. Consecrated what you do with your hands, and consecrated under the blood where you go with your feet. That is the consecration of the believer: what you hear, what you do, and where you go. His work as a priest under the High Priest was to use the seven pieces of furniture within the tabernacle to do the work, the act of forgiveness, the sacrifice for the people of God.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Those furnishings are what you ought to have in your life to do the office of the priest. Every one of them means something. Your main function as a job as a priest is to emulate the greatest single character quality of Christ: forgiveness. Forgiveness. It is just that simple.

During this time, the priest in the tabernacle, they had no permanent home. Yes, they were homeless. You see, that is the problem with some of you today. The reason why you do not see the value of the homeless ministry or restart, and very frankly, some of you think it is stupid. The reason why you feel that way and think that way is simply because you have never realized as a child of God, you are homeless too. This whole world is not your home.

I pulled over down there last week and was talking to an old boy down there and gave him some food and was witnessing to him and talking to him. He says, "Well, you do not know what it is like to be homeless." I said, "Yes, I do." He says, "How could you know that?" I said, "Because, pal, this whole world is not my home. I am an ambassador for Jesus Christ. I am a pilgrim in this

strange land. I know exactly what you feel inside. I know exactly the anxiety you have. I know exactly the helplessness you feel because I am in a world that is against everything I love and believe. I am in a world that wants to do everything to hurt everybody around me, including my family and my friends. This whole world is no friend to me, and this whole world is not my home." The quicker you figure out you are homeless and you are just a pilgrim passing through this thing, the better off you will be in understanding your job within that tabernacle. We are homeless. You just have never figured it out. Your home is this world with all its trinkets.

The concept of the priesthood of the believer is the greatest single thing. I love our kids today, and I enjoy our kids. I want all of you kids to grow up working with me in ministry. But I watch something with you kids, and this is not a criticism. It is very cute. But what I see in you, you are a great, the Bible says, "out of the mouths of babes," my word has been perfected. We do not have one of these things at Jason's Deli, but remember when we used to go to the pizza place, and then we went to a fun house, and then we went to the place we go now, it has got the good catfish. Yes, whatever. There is always a second room with all these game things. I always take a whole bunch of dollar bills because I see kids not getting to play because I always give them a dollar. I just blew that. I will have to have \$200 when I go to play ball this year. Not the thing to say on Kid Sunday. That was stupid, Bob. I used to take money with me to go to those places. I do not do it anymore.

But I love to watch them because it costs 50 cents, two tokens, to play one of those games. The favorite game I like to watch is the one that has the big lever, and you control it, and it drops down and closes on something and picks it up and then brings it over to the deal and drops it. I watch these kids put in thousands of dollars. Both of my grandkids have spent all of their college money. I watch them, and it is just, and the games are rigged. You have to be an engineering genius to figure it out. They go over there, and they will put money in, they will come down, they will drop it, they will pick it up, and it will fall right before it goes down. They will give them that, put more money in, come back around again, try something else. They want to, they put things in there to really bait you. Watches. They do not work, but they look great. Radios, CD player. You are never going to pick one of them up. But that is how they get you in there. Those kids just kept putting their quarters in, and then I watched it. My own kid, not Maisie, but Kenzie was great at it. She got this thing, and she got whatever it was, a doll or something, and she brought her over, and it fell down in her chute and came out the thing. She was the happiest person in the world. I thought to myself at that point, "Boy, if that is not a picture of most of God's people today." She spent \$4.58 and 45 minutes of her time to get something that she could have gone to Toys R Us and bought a box of them for a buck. But that is what we do. We put so much energy and time and money in the things that absolutely have no value.

VIII. The Proof of Obedience: Forgiveness

The great doctrine of the priesthood of the believer, which now you have been introduced to, is the single fundamental doctrine of the Bible that forms the foundation and the platform by which you learn to forgive and to forget. How could heaven ever reconcile? How could heaven ever be reconciled with you and me as a priest and a believer who does not follow the character qualities

of the High Priest? How can heaven ever be reconciled with a priesthood that will not execute the only thing the priesthood was in place for, and that was to bring about forgiveness in every circumstance and situation? You will never do it in other people's lives, ladies and gentlemen, until you first learn to do it in your own.

Because bottom line, being good at what you do with people or the Bible or anything else simply comes back. I tell married couples all this all the time. I tell them that your marriage together will be only as strong as your individual relationship with Christ will be individually. I say that to you as an individual Christian: your ministry and all that you do will only be as valuable and as worth anything as the value that you put on it in your own personal relationship with Christ. It has to be first and foremost understanding the doctrine of the priesthood. You are a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Our job in this tabernacle of life is to execute the functions of a priest, and God has given us the authority and the power through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God inside us to carry it out. Yes, we are homeless. This old world is not our home. You should look at life and everything in it from a totally different perspective after today, but you will not because I still see you over there at that machine putting in quarters buying stuff that does not mean anything.

Let us pray. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus.