

Grace Bible Church
Pastor Robert R. McLaughlin
Tree Of Life
Week Ending 7-18-21

“Rebuild The Gates And Prepare Yourself For Spiritual Combat!”

In this lesson, we will examine

- Nehemiah and the 10 city gates as an analogy to the spiritual life
- What each gate represents by analogy
- How to rebuild the gates when they are damaged by sin or neglect
- Self-examination – the mirror of the word of God
- Intro to new study – Christian Soldier Prep!
- Definition of spiritual death
- Two categories of spiritual death
- Christ’s substitutionary spiritual death: IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN US.
- How we can live as spiritual zombies even after salvation!
- Intro to crisis evangelism

Last week, we wrapped up the prophecy study and reviewed what we learned from those messages, as we saw many doctrines throughout Our Lord’s exact fulfillments of the events surrounding the Cross. The subject we ended with on Sunday we are going to review again, turn to Phi 1:29 We talked about Dying to self or the OSN, to live in the new creature that the Lord has prepared for us.

Php 1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

Another good one:

Php 2:3-5 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.

All the events leading up to the Cross and even when He was on the Cross, showed us that HE was in control being laser focused on the Father’s plan.

Your Mental attitude matters, since your attitude determines your whole reality, and you must have the same laser-focus on the Truth; that point of reference by which PMA of Bible doctrine can circulate in your soul, that is the Truth, divine viewpoint thinking...this is what sustained our Lord as He endured the shame of the cross, for the joy set before Him (Php 2:3-5 – does it click?)

1Th 5:6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober.

1 Pet 4:7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.

See also - **2Ti 4:5, 1Pe 1:13, 4:7**

The word “sober” = ‘*nēphō*’ = (nay'-fo) to abstain from wine, keep sober, that is, be discreet: - be sober, watchful.

‘*Sōphroneō*’ = (so-fron-eh'-o) = to be of sound mind, sane, - be in right mind frame, of reference.

We know how much He suffered for us, voluntarily, seeing the details of the fulfilled prophecies of the Cross ... but so must we suffer; which is why I said you YOU MUST DIE to yourself, daily, if want to proclaim the Victory in Jesus. Cross before the crown.

1Co 15:31 I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

Joh 15:20 Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

2Ti 3:12 And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

1Pe 5:10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

It is in the Spiritual realm were the battle lays, the invisible Angelic conflict, we are being called to be *alert and ready*, and to have the right frame of reference – divine viewpoint from Bible doctrine – to be prepared for this spiritual warfare! We will get there soon, just wait and stay tuned, stay in formation. Let’s be excited about where this is leading us!

So, to live this Spiritual life and go through the stages and advance all the way to maturity and then to the Super-grace life, should be our goal. Col. R.B. Thieme, Jr, Pastor’s Pastor, said that the maximum glorification of God is the execution of the PPOG in time and the conveyance of the rewards and blessings of super-grace, “exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we can ask or think.” This proves that our adversary the devil is wrong and that God is everything He says He is.

In God’s perfect plan, we must do the right thing in the right way. That means we have to have the right motivation. If I do something nice for you, but I do it out of a desire to butter you up or buy favor with you, then it’s not so nice, is it? Motivation counts. When we are motivated by personal love for God and a genuine desire to serve Him more than our own ends and desires, then we have the right motivation. As we grow spiritually, our drive and motivation will increase as our capacity to love God increases. As our love for God increases, our impersonal love toward mankind (loving based on our virtue and love for God rather than the merit of the object) which is the 8th PSD will increase.

God has provided everything we need to carry out His plan in eternity past (**2Pe 1:3**). If we fail – and we will - so what? God has provided **1Jo 1:9** as a part of the above verse, so apply it, pick up

the pieces, and move forward. We have plenty of examples in the Bible of failures, believers that have gotten knocked down. However, the true facts are most of them kept getting back up. Never quit, To have that inner strengthen and love, that only comes from Him, to want to Glorify God.

Php 3:13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.

Mat 5:16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Do not be discouraged by an enemy - Satan and the kingdom of darkness - who has already been defeated. Satan lost, **GOD WINS!** Live by doctrine rather than sight (empirical experience)(**1Co 5:7**), and you will be able to stand firm against the appearance of victory on their part. IT is a temporary illusion which they are fooled by – don't let it fool you!

Now, we are studying Nehemiah, as the Spirit directs Pastor and Deacon Jason, to learn from this great account of the rebuilding of the neglected and destroyed gates by means of the analogy of the gates as elements of the spiritual life. When we fail, it demonstrates a failure on our FLOT line, or the defense of our command post of the soul. The FLOT line is manned by the 10 PSD's. When we fail to utilize those, and instead panic and stress out (Remember the disciples on the boat on the Sea of Galilee during the storm?), a gate is destroyed and our command post is overrun (stress in the soul). So what do we do? Rebound and recover fellowship, isolate the sin by forgetting it, and recover stability by getting back to our daily PMABD. This is how we rebuild the gates! Keep learning under a prepared Pastor-Teacher and the ministry of the filling of the Holy Spirit and through repetition until you can't forget. Your basic training pays off when instead of short-circuiting to emotional reaction and sin when under outside pressure of adversity or inside pressure of temptation, you will learn to stop, relax, faith-rest and let God handle the outcome.

Let's look at this in depth.

Nehemiah, was a Cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, and returned to Jerusalem with the King's decree to repair Jerusalem's walls and gates. These walls and gates had remained in disrepair and ruin since the time of the Babylonian exile. Although the people had returned and the Temple had been rebuilt, the unwallled city of Jerusalem was not safe because of the hostility of Israel's neighbors. And the exposure was not allowing them to live securely.

These gates were not only integral in the rebuilding of Jerusalem physically, but contained within the Scriptures of Nehemiah, are spiritual messages about the PPOG and how to live your individual Spiritual life; also tells God's plan of redemption for mankind.

As we will see, Nehemiah will teach us from the natural viewpoint, of re-building the walls and gates, that in the spiritual building of the church and future bride of Christ, we must each begin with our own home and neighborhood. There are many applications to this study so it should be useful to us in daily life.

REV 3:2 Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.

God gives you grace every day you wake up and have a breath, and if the walls of your life are broken or this has happened to you in any way, then this message may be for you. I encourage you

to go back and study in depth Pastor's Doctrine of the walls of Nehemiah, available on this site. The word of God is amazing, pay close attention to the process of reconstruction set forth in the book of Nehemiah, as an analogous to your Spiritual life.

There are 4 ways that Nehemiah's Christ like attitude is revealed to us:

1. Nehemiah cared enough to ask what was going on in Jerusalem; (Neh 1:1-3)

– Sometimes we pretend not to notice what's happening because we don't want to take responsibility. When we avoid or choose not to do something that we know that we should, or ignore God's calling, we commit a sin of omission per James:

Jam 4:17 "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin"

2. Nehemiah also cared enough to be compassionate and weep. (NEH 1:4)

Sometimes weeping is a sign of weakness; but with Nehemiah, Weeping was a sign of strength, as it was with Jeremiah (JER 9:1), Paul (Act 20:19), and the Lord Jesus Christ (Lk 19:41).

3. Nehemiah also cared enough to give it to the Supreme Court of Heaven through prayer. (NEH 1:5-10)

4. Nehemiah cared enough to volunteer. (NEH 1:11)

While Nehemiah was praying, his burden for Jerusalem became greater and his vision of what needed to be done became clearer. Nehemiah planned to volunteer to go to Jerusalem to supervise the rebuilding of the walls. Nehemiah did not pray for God to send somebody else, He simply said, "Here am I – send me!"

Php 2:5 "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus"

Now let us review the re-building of the Gates in Jerusalem by Nehemiah. The order of the gates is intentional and it represents our advancement in the spiritual life, following in a counter-clockwise direction around the city walls. **Please see diagram available on the site for a visual aid)*

In order as mentioned in the text and according to the sequence in our growth:

1. Sheep Gate
2. Fish Gate
3. Old Gate
4. Valley Gate
5. Dung Gate
6. Fountain Gate
7. Water Gate
8. Horse Gate
9. East Gate

10. Inspection Gate

Notice how everyone was willing to work, even those who had no experience with such work. They had the right motivation. Something that is in short supply in America today!

The Sheep Gate is the 1st Gate mentioned in Nehemiah 3. People would bring their lambs and sheep to the Temple for the sacrifices through this gate.

1. The Sheep Gate represents the starting point for every Believer. Everything begins with the Cross and an offering of the Lamb of God.

Jesus Christ is the beginning of our spiritual journey; through faith and by grace we are able to enter into a relationship with God and granted an opportunity for maximum blessing through glorification of Him in this life. Many believers think Salvation is the totality of being a Christian, or Salvation and morality, but we know that it is just the swearing in ceremony – our training has only begun! We begin as infants – or as sheep – hapless, fearful, ignorant creatures. Now we need to grow up!

NOTE: The Sheep Gate is the only gate that was consecrated (**Neh 3:1**)

The 2nd Gate mentioned in Nehemiah is the Fish Gate. The Fish Gate was a gate in the north wall, just a little to the east of the modern Damascus gate. It was the closest gate to the fish market, and it is believed that fishermen from the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River, Jewish and Syrian alike, used this gate to bring fish to market.

2. The Fish Gate – the spiritual meaning of the Fish Gate is that after our redemption we begin to follow Jesus, making us, his disciples and witnesses, ‘fishers of men’. MAT 4:19

We are responsible to carry the Gospel message to the lost and dying world as His ambassadors. We are His witnesses, and witnesses for the prosecution in the appeal trial of satan. The Lord Jesus Christ said that everyone is to be a witness for Him. Go fish!

Act 22:15 For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard

If this wall is broken down, you will find that through this the enemy will enter again and again. The enemy will continually cast doubt and fear so you will never say a word for Christ to anyone.

Rev 12:10b for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

If you find no opportunities and there is never any witness in your life, then this wall is broken, and the Fish Gate needs to be built again. You will not have the ability to glorify God and fulfill His command.

3. The Old Gate speaks to us of the old ways of truth.

God is immutable. The Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow (**He 13:8**). A young Believer having experienced the sheep gate, then the fish gate, soon sees the need for

experiencing the old gate. This means learning the old ways of Truth, the Word of God, that NEVER changes.

JER 6:16 'Thus says the Lord, Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is and walk in it; And you will find rest for your souls.'

It speaks of the past, which is solid and unchangeable like that of our foundation. Jesus Christ is the Rock! Believers need to master the basics of Bible doctrine and not look for some new revelation, the Spirit will give it to them in time. Build on The Truth, Bible Doctrine, if not the wall crumbles and the enemies outside gain access to our soul.

The 4th Gate, is the Valley Gate. There were several valleys surrounding Jerusalem and this gate apparently opened out to the valley of Hinnom. Although a new Believer may experience a "honeymoon period", that zeal for the Lord JC, sooner or later the valley gate must come.

4. The Valley Gate speaks to us of humbling (either being humbled by a situation or humbling oneself) and trials (suffering for blessing , deserved or undeserved).

The valley type experiences used by the Lord Jesus Christ is for our personal growth. He looks for the lowly, the humble and those who have learned that they are not indispensable. Here we must learn to leave behind schemes and plans of youth, plans for exaltation and satisfaction of self, and pick up our cross, or God's plan for our lives.

Joh 30:30 "He must increase, but I must decrease"

Mat 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

These experiences certainly are never easy, but the positive believer needs to remember that in the natural nothing really grows on the mountain tops, but abundant growth does down in the valleys. Likewise, the believer must understand that this will come for his-her benefit, to increase the maturity level. The Lord will do some pruning to bring forth fruit. But this depends on our positive or negative volition, which during this time will be tested and challenged endlessly. Consistent, daily PMABD and maximum time in fellowship with God the Holy Spirit (GTHS rather than the sin nature in control of the soul) is the key to steady growth!

5. The Dung Gate - This is where the rubbish is removed from our soul and replaced with the bible doctrine and evidence of truth.

All of Jerusalem's refuse and rubbish was taken out through the dung gate, down to the valley of Hinnom, where it would be burned. After we complete our valley experience, the result is clearly seen in this next gate – the dung gate.

2Co 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The refuse or waste, referring to worldly things in your life, is accumulated and it will make you smell to high heaven in the sight of God and man. And if this gate is broken down so none of the

rubbish can be cleansed away, that is the only thing that take up the space, this needs to be repaired. This is what must happen in our own life. Take out the paper and the trash through rebound (keeping short accounts) and being transformed by the renewing of your mind (**Rom 12:2**). Clear away the rubbish so that true faith, pistis or doctrine, refined by the fire (tested), can come forth and produce fruit (**Php 3:8**).

Next, The Fountain gate is located near the pool of Siloam and was often used by the people for cleaning before proceeding on to the temple. In other words, after a valley type experience where rubbish in our lives is cleared out through the dung gate, true faith comes forth and the fountains begin to flow quite quickly!

6. The Fountain Gate speaks to us of the living waters of the Holy Spirit that cleanse our lives and empower us for our Spiritual life, which is the river of life in us.

The fountain of living water is a type, or symbol of the Holy Spirit who indwells all believers. It enables us, by power, and teaches us to obey His will and His word.

Eph 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

This is something that in the spiritual sense, can overflow to others, as the Spirit takes control of the believer and uses him for the Lord's glory, then the believer can become a vessel of refreshment to others. Like David said "my cup runneth over"

John 7:38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'

The interesting thing about this Water Gate is that it did not need to be repaired. Evidently, it was the only part of the wall that was still standing. Nehemiah mentions the people who lived by it, but it does not mention its needing repair. The word of God never breaks down. It does not need to be repaired. It simply needs to be revisited.

Just like the gate needing no repair with Nehemiah's time, no revisions are needed in Truth and the promises contained are sure because they are God's word, and He will make them come to pass. It is no coincidence that this gate was located next to the fountain gate as the two often go together.

The Horse gate was close to the King's stables and the men of Jerusalem would ride their horses out of this gate to war.

8. The Horse Gate speaks to us of warfare as horses were used in battle and became a symbol of war.

Rev 19:11 'I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness does He judge and make war.'

Every Believer is in a Spiritual war whether we know it or not and in this case, the need to do battle against the forces of darkness. We are on the battlefield and going to be under attack.

Eph 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

This is the battle! We all are enlisted, we have an enemy, And we need to stay alert, the Believer is equipped daily with the full armor of God **Eph 6:10-18**.

The Eastern Gate of Jerusalem is also called the Golden Gate or the Beautiful Gate (**Acts 3:2**). In Hebrew, it is Sha'ar Harahamim, the "Gate of Mercy".

The Eastern Gate was sealed shut in AD 1540–41 by order of Suleiman the Magnificent, a sultan of the Ottoman Empire (**Ez 44:1-2**)

Ez 46:12 "When the prince provides a freewill offering to the LORD . . . the gate facing east is to be opened for him. . . . Then he shall go out, and after he has gone out, the gate will be shut."

The glory of the Lord coming into the temple (**Ez. 44:1-2**) is seen as the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ (**Ez 43:2; Mt 21:1–11**). The command to permanently shut the gate because the Lord Jesus Christ has entered it (**Ez 44:2**) is seen as a prediction of the walling-up of the Eastern Gate by the Muslims in AD 1540. And, finally, the "prince" to whom the gate will be opened (**Ez 46:12**) is seen as Christ Himself at the second coming—the Prince of Peace will return to the Mount of Olives (**Zec 14:4**) and enter Jerusalem by way of the re-opened Eastern Gate.

9. The East Gate faced the rising sun and is the gate of hope.

It is the gate of anticipation of what is yet to come when all the trials of life and all the struggles of earth will end and the glorious new sun will rise on the new day of God. For the believer's life today, the Eastern Gate shows us of our need to live with this hope, In Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection, and to long for His return.

A specific crown is even given to those who do this (**2Ti 4:8**). This gate needs to be rebuilt, in many believers lives who fall under the pessimistic spirit of this age, and are crushed by the hopelessness of our time, because they allow others and circumstances to remove their focus. Keep your eye on Jesus Christ our Hope!

The final gate is the Inspection gate, also known as the Miphkad gate. The word in Hebrew has a military connection, literally, the "examination gate" meaning assignment, numbering, or appointment. And according to tradition it was at this gate that David would meet his troops to inspect them.

10. The Inspection Gate (Miphkad Gate)- This was evidently the place where judgment was conducted.

1Co 11:31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

We need to sit and take a look at ourselves in the mirror every now and then -- to stop and re-evaluate what we are doing, where we are in His Plan. How is our walk going, are there any places that require repair? Do we have the means or strength to make the repairs? Take it to Him in prayer. This gate also speaks to us as the examination of our lives by the Lord. This occurs in this life as indicated by the apostle Paul (**1Co 4:4**).

The ultimate fulfillment of this is at the Bema seat of Christ (as spoken of in **1Co 3:10-15, 2Co 5:10**), where our lives are inspected and rewarded appropriately.

We are called, Royal Family Members to live our lives for others with eternity in view. We should be caring more for edifying others, winning souls, and growing up to Spiritual maturity. If you are great if not you need to repair those things and *strengthen that which remains*. The fact of Glorifying God in our bodies, not forsaking ourselves from gathering together and reach for the things of eternity, which is found in Unity, rather than the temporal worldly things that we see around us every day, for they will fade away with "moth and rust". When you evaluate and start to rebuild, the strength of your life will return.

However, you must be prepared to live the spiritual life because you will find when you are starting to advance, that the forces of darkness immediately revolt against you. The battle intensifies (the heat is turned up) both within yourself (compliments of the OSN and arrogance complex of the soul) and outside yourself (pressure and pleasures), and that resists God's work in your life with every influence that can be used against you.

Let us here take time to give thanks to God for Deacon Jason for his excellent study on Nehemiah, and his positive volition and sacrifice of time talent and treasure to stand in the gap during Pastor's recovery. Great work! Thanks also for Samantha and Deacon John, as well as Deacon Robert, Charles and JJ and all behind the scenes keeping the doctrine flowing.

Jason's study and the previous study on the 29 prophecies are all a build-up to our new study which will focus on Christian soldier prep, based on Pastor McLaughlin's book and given as a preparation (it is highly recommended that you acquire the book for free through this website and study it on your own).

It is the job of the Pastor to edify and prepare the members of the body for spiritual combat as well as for genuine Christian service, and under our Pastor's guidance, we endeavor to do just that.

Eph 4:11-13 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

We are now ready to look at our new subject concerning how our Lord used the sword of the Spirit (the Sword of the Spirit is a term used in the Christian soldier book for the Word of God). So our new subject concerns how our Lord used the sword of the Spirit as manifested in one phrase that many of us don't fully understand -- until after salvation and that is:

"The Doctrine of the Substitutionary Spiritual Death of Jesus Christ."

We are dealing with why He had to be our substitute, and one thing to keep in mind while dealing with these studies that involve our Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry is that:

While Jesus Christ came to be our substitute, but He also told us to imitate Him.

So here we have a unique doctrine – here is a doctrine that we, as church age believers, will never ever have to imitate, because He did it for us, and He did it fully and complete, tetelestai – it is finished – paid in full.

Its also important to note that our Lord did Not die for us as a sinner, He died for us as a *sin offering*. Just like the animal was innocent, i.e. the animal did nothing wrong in the physical realm to deserve having its throat cut, so also the Lord Jesus Christ did nothing wrong to have His throat cut - in the spiritual realm. And so the substitutionary spiritual death is important for us to understand.

Point 1. Deals with the Categories of Spiritual Death. There are basically two categories of spiritual death that do exist.

The first simply deals with real spiritual death (RSD), which is separation from God in a state of sin, which applies to every member of the human race with the exception of TLJC.

We were all born physically alive - but spiritually dead. We all receive the genetically formed sin nature carried in the male chromosome (remember this for a little later), and we receive the imputation of Adam's original sin at the moment of birth from God the Father's justice. We haven't done anything yet at that time to deserve condemnation, so this seems unfair to the human mind, but God has a plan and we will see this.

The 2nd category of spiritual death refers to substitutionary spiritual death (SSD). It is separation from God while being in a state of perfection and impeccability and it applies to only One person ever – Jesus Christ.

These are two deaths in opposite states – RSD – is in a state of sin, and SSD – is in a state of perfection ... and what we are going to see is how these two relate to us. I want to present you with two questions at this point and ask you to keep in mind these two principles during this study:

1. Did Adam have an earthly father? - **No**
2. Did Jesus have an earthly father? – **No**

Jesus is often referred to in theology as the “second Adam”, which in part is in reference a verse in Romans:

Rom 5:12-13 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned— for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

One thing they shared in common is that they had no earthly father. The reason is that as stated above the sin nature is passed genetically through the male sperm, because while Eve was deceived, Adam sinned knowingly. This is why Jesus had to be born of a virgin, without the male sperm, or else He would have inherited the sin nature from Joseph.

PS 51:5 says **Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity.** (notice he was brought forth from the womb) **And in sin my mother conceived me.**

“In sin” doesn’t refer to the act of copulation here, it refers to the sin nature. When the word ‘sin’ is in the singular, it refers to the sin nature. In Gen 1, we read

Gen 1:26a **Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;**

Notice – Adam was made in GOD’s image and likeness. This means that he was made with an immortal soul, volition, self-awareness, and conscience, and that he was perfect. But after he sinned and fell in the garden and became physically alive but spiritually dead (RSD), 130 years later, he bore a son. Adam’s son was not made in God’s image, but rather

Gen 3:5 **When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son, in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.**

Seth was created in *Adam’s* image and likeness, not God’s. This is important – it means that he was made fallen, i.e. possessing a sin nature, because his father was fallen at the time he was conceived. He was not made perfect like Adam originally was. God can not make imperfection, so in order for the imperfect and fallen human race to continue, they had to reproduce through procreation and ***imperfection can only produce imperfection!*** Man can not perfect himself or his environment. So, Seth was not created perfect, but born fallen – physically alive but spiritually dead. This also shows us that the sin nature is passed on genetically through the male.

And since we are in the book of Genesis let’s see this principle being brought out again in **Gen 8:21**, (and Pastor loves how this is brought out for us- and I’m just going to quote one part of it where we read:) **“for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth:”**

“Youth” here is the Hebrew noun ‘*na’uwr*’ (no-uwr) meaning from his childhood or as a babe. So we could say: -- From his childhood, or as a babe, he was reared in sin. I’m not calling your precious little baby boy or baby girl evil.... GOD IS.... that’s what the bible says. It is challenging, but we must approach the word of God with humility and under the filling of the Spirit for this reason. Sometimes we must be flexible and remember that our understanding is infinitesimal. Gods thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are His ways our ways (**Isa 55:8**). We need to have humility toward God and our PT to receive God’s word (**Jam 1:21**), otherwise when we encounter something challenging or convicting we will react emotionally (arrogance) and cultivate negative volition, as well as getting out of fellowship with mental attitude sins, preventing epignosis. Everyone loves babies, as a symbol of innocence and purity, but God does not see as man sees, He sees the sin nature living in every cell.

It is the job of the Pastor to help you with what we call “epistemological rehabilitation”, per Romans 12:2, as much as your volition will accept, and to tell you what the Bible says, “in season and out of season” (**2Ti 4:2**), even when it makes him your enemy (**Gal 4:16**). A true friend is the

one who tells you when you are out of line, not the one who tells you you're wonderful and lets you ruin your life with a smile! Often the truth is challenging to our notions and our perception, but, this is why we read in **Rom 12:2** "**And do not be conformed to the world standards, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind** [through consistent PMA of BD!]." We must replace human thinking and perceptions with God's if we want to conform to the image of Christ (and quit causing ourselves a truckload of problems and stress while we're at it!). Job put it like this:

Job 15:14 "**What is man, that he should be pure, or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?**"

Can mankind be pure in our natural fleshly state and power? No...

We need a Savior to provide a way out of our depravity. Fortunately, God provided one! If you continue to study the word of God, God the Holy Spirit – through the PT - will explain it to you, in the teachers's own unique style and frame of reference, that is, if we have the humility to listen...and the faith to believe...

What we need to really grasp in this study is the fact that we go back to that very same principle we saw above: One man's sin made us a sinner, so that One Man's righteousness could make us righteous, that is if we accept our need for TLJC as our Savior. Another principle:

Condemnation must precede salvation. Isn't it better to be born condemned and end up free than to be born free and end up condemned? Those born into freedom can never understand or appreciate it like one who was born a slave but was set free – by GRACE! I guess God is pretty smart!

So, we were all born physically alive, but at the same time *spiritually* dead. This is what John 3 teaches. Remember - If we are ever going to understand why our Lord had to die a spiritual death upon the cross, which means separation from God, then we need to understand what spiritual death means to us. This is the story behind that famous passage in John 3 that teaches what it means that we must be born again.

We need to understand that being born again - means that we have a problem. And our problem is not our personal sin. Our problem is our birth. We being born physically, our bodies produced by our parent's chromosomes and our mother's body carry the sin nature and many of the heritable genetic traits, beneficial and not so much...

The only way to overcome that is to have a new birth; that's what people, just like Nicodemus the Pharisee, don't understand about John 3. Naturally minded people (people without a human spirit or the ministry of the Holy spirit) who see only physical matter and possess only empirical/sensory and rational perception can't accept spiritual concepts, it all just sounds like absurd fairy tales to them (**1Co 2:14**). But Jesus tries to get Nicodemus to see that he is lacking something which is necessary to see the Kingdom of God – a human spirit.

Joh 3:1 **Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;**

Remember - Nicodemus was a very devout and religious man. He was a typical Pharisee.

Fat-headed, religious, self-righteous, proud, and vain -- but I guarantee you he was sweet and he was nice. He was polite too and respectful – though not to yucky sinners of course! Gross!

Joh 3:2 this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

Notice, Nicodemus is confused - and now because he was confused - notice our how our Lord – in His grace- interrupts him in verse 3. Do you know how many times we are on the wrong track and the Lord brings in situations to interrupt us, so we don't continue to go in the wrong track? That is the grace of God. So Nicodemus came to Him by night and the Lord made this statement in verse 3:

Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, (point of doctrine – listen up) I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

The interruption was well timed; the Lord Jesus Christ came right to the point and He pulled no punches. He said "You will never see the kingdom of God unless you are born again." -- Unless you change your birth. You won't even see it never mind enter it. Remember – our Lord is talking to a man who is very proud of all his accomplishments, his righteous deeds, his title and respectable reputation – his many human merit badges - and yet Jesus discounts all of it by saying this. This is quite a shock to the religious person who thinks they have been so good AND that their personal goodness is surely impressing God and buying them salvation.

But in reality, just like us, Nicodemus had been born in sin, spiritually dead, so that all his righteous deeds were like filthy rags in the sight of the Lord (**Isa 64:6**). His problem was not his sin or his deeds, but his recognition of his genetic state of total depravity, and from that, his need for a Savior – the one and only legitimate and perfect sin offering – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember as the apostle Paul stated in

1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, (spiritual death) so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

In Adam we are spiritually dead.

In Christ we will be made spiritually alive.

How this happens is the core of this study: Jesus Christ was judged and died spiritual death, *substitutionary* spiritual death (SSD), as in He dies spiritually *as a substitute* for us, or in our place. It should have been us. When the Levitical priests killed the innocent lambs, when their blood spilled out onto the altar, the priest should be thinking "this should be me, not this innocent lamb!"

Jesus took our sentence, He took our punishment on Himself so that we might be set free from condemnation! This is the greatest act of self-sacrifice of all time. The innocent Lamb was cut off for our sake, He was bruised for our transgressions, pierced for our iniquity. **IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN US.** That is the basis for personal love for God and genuine appreciation for God's matchless grace! We live suspended in it!

Don't ever forget the principle of what He has done for you and for me... "for us". That's what the word substitutionary is all about.

ROM 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Note: Not when we were good, not when we repented, but while we were yet sinners – Christ died for us.

While we are in the book of Romans – Look at **ROM 8:32** and never get familiar with what He has done for us:

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

He delivered Him up to be judged in our place. **IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN US.**

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, (He took us away from that curse - we were all under a curse because none of us could fulfill the law as commanded in the bible, HOW? How did He do that?) **having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"**

Eph 5:2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us,(there it is again- for us-) **an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.**

The fact of the matter is that when we have truth that sets us free – we experience that freedom in our lives from the inside and then we represent that freedom on the outside as well. You just know when someone is really living *IN* Christ, in full knowledge of positional truth but living in it as an experiential reality – its almost like when a woman is pregnant – there is a glow to the Christian soldier that is walking in the plan of God...

Unfortunately, like the Pharisees in Jesus' day, religious unbelievers are blinded by their own good deeds. The religious unbeliever has no concept, or a wrong concept, of the doctrine of total depravity, and rarely if ever understands the filling of the Spirit. Total depravity means that we are all totally depraved without Him, we are totally corrupt, wicked and perverted without God. Jesus said without Him we could do NOTHING. How much? Zip! Zero! Zilch! Nada! Nein! You get the picture. The filling of the Spirit only comes through regeneration by faith in Christ. No Christ, no gold silver and precious stones, only wood hay and stubble, which is burned up. But these people think they are "buying the stairway to heaven" with their works.

The religious Christian isn't much better. Though they may be born again and saved if they are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, they don't understand "after salvation, what?" They think outward behavior is what it's all about. They've taken hold of one aspect of the Christian way of life and ran with it, but it is empty without the correct motivation and means, so they're missing out on the rest of God's plan and even the true inner mechanics of the production of genuine divine good (gold, silver, precious stones **1Co 3:12-13**). They don't understand what God's word says about their good deeds vs the fruit of the Spirit.

As we stated earlier, Nicodemus was a religious unbeliever, and a very important person according to human standards. And, although his life was filled with good deeds and outward righteousness and pious behavior and strict adherence to the Law of Moses, and he was trying to earn his way into heaven, -- he did have some concern that he needed help.

Many have speculated why Nicodemus came to Jesus by night because of the fact that he didn't want the other Pharisees to see him doing so. Some say he was embarrassed, and others say he was so busy in doing good deeds in the day time that he simply did not have the time until night. Scripture does not reveal this. However, we do know that even though he (Nicodemus) was not born again, he said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God" - his mistake was he said "as a teacher" because He came from God as the Son of God - "for no one can **do** these signs that You do unless God is with him."

Notice the emphasis on what Jesus **does**, not on what He says. A subtle demonstration of the legalistic mindset of the Pharisee.

Also notice his comment, "we know."

This reveals that Nicodemus was tremendously impressed with the knowledge of the Pharisees - "We Pharisees know"... big deal Jesus could say...

Whether he had heard of the miracles or witnessed them personally, he was more fascinated and attracted by the deeds of Jesus than by His words or His teaching - even though he ceremoniously calls Him "Rabbi" which means "teacher". Remember that the true purpose of miracles was to gain focus -- and attention on the message. Jesus did not heal everyone in the world, He was not interested in the temporal safety of people. He was and is -- interested in the eternal safety of the soul --more than the physical healing of the body.

He was Not focused on the physical healing of the body, but the spiritual healing, and that's why when you find people that use that verse in ISA 53 - "by His stripes we are healed" to teach that if you're sick physically, that's because you don't have enough faith... NO --- by His stripes we are healed in the spiritual realm, the eternal realm, because every one of us die physically eventually. We are getting closer to death every day.

By His stripes we are healed - *spiritually* - and we will only understand that once we understand what Jesus went through on the cross so that we can have that spiritual healing - that He died spiritually as our SUBSTITUTE.

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN US.

Nicodemus did not understand his real problem.

Now, if we don't stick with the plan of God, we too will fall right back into this same vomit again and the dog does return to the vomit, and the sow, having washed, returns to wallowing in the mire. We could be born again and saved on our way to heaven but still living in a state of spiritual death in time. We become like spiritual zombies!

And if you're that person I want to gently remind you - that you are that dog and you can get out of that vomit and all you have to do is rebound and recover and move forward in God's plan! You must recognize the fact that we are saved by the grace of God not by works of righteousness, and recognize that we are to live for Him, to grow spiritually and become mature, operation in occupation with Christ, like Paul who said so beautifully - "for me to live is Christ, and to die is profit."

Learn to be focused on things above and live in our new nature more and more!

2Co 4:16-18 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

These are really difficult times, not just for America but for the whole world. It is harder than ever before in most of our lives to stay focused on things above because there is so much evil and injustice and violence and instability/uncertainty, everything seems to be shaking and quaking and institutions are collapsing. But, this means that we are being given an opportunity for rapid, accelerated advancement. Think of it like like a gym - if you are in times of peace and prosperity, there are only a few treadmills and some dumbbells laying around. Enough for you to get a light workout, but it's going to take a while to really get ripped in there! Times like we are in today are like a full-sized Bally's with every kind of equipment and weight imaginable so that you can work every muscle in your body and even hit the sauna and grab a shower before you leave!

God has given us all the exercise equipment to practice our spiritual skills. Also this is a time for crisis evangelism. There is never a better time for witnessing and evangelism than times of upheaval and national disaster. People feel strong in their unbelief as long as things are going well and their many props and hedges are secure and intact. But when those things fail and the false idols they have put their trust in fail, they will start to rethink their positions and start being open to thinking about God and faith again. As the saying goes, "there are no atheists in a fox hole." Let's not waste this opportunity to **BE BOLD!**

See you next time RF!!!