

I. The Church and the Gates of Jerusalem

The church is only going to be as strong as the people that are in it. Just like any wall, it is only going to be as strong as the bricks tied together, or any chain as strong as its weakest link. When you come to the book of Nehemiah, that is what they are doing. They are building the wall around Jerusalem. Jerusalem, as we know, was the center of the religious activity that God was doing during that period of time, and everything was going out from Jerusalem. The temple was there.

The walls represent the protection on the inside, and around those walls were nine gates. Those nine gates are the way you got into that city. Each one of them represents something. As we look at it in the context of building a church, we said last time that a church is nothing more than individuals with the power of God in their lives and the light of God in their lives. The more people you have, the brighter the light.

As the Bible says in the book of Matthew, a city cannot be hid on a hill.

Matthew 5:14

A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

That is what this church is. This church here, this group of people, is nothing more than a bunch of us with our lights turned on for God, allowing people in a dark world to see the Lord Jesus Christ. But this church needs to understand these gates, because people are going to come into this church. People are going to be part of this church. The reason why churches fail today is the reason why Jerusalem failed as being part of God's program, not Jerusalem itself, but the religious leaders of the nation of Israel. They failed to understand this. Jerusalem is lying in waste, just as the church is in waste today, in a mess. They begin to put these gates on, and we're going to talk about these gates, because our church needs to have these gates also.

We need to understand that historically, they were literal gates that were on the wall, and they all had a function. Each one had a name, and each one had a function. Yet in a spiritual sense, it's a picture of us building a church, and we need to have these nine gates.

II. The Significance of the Number Nine

Now, I don't know what you know about the Bible, but there are certain numbers in the Bible that mean certain things. They call it Bible numerology. The number seven, for instance, always represents the perfection of God. When God does something, He does it by sevens. The number three, which we'll look at here in a little while, it deals with the order of completion. Everything that God does, it'll have three parts to it, three being the complete order of it. But number nine in the Bible is a number of fruitfulness.

You're going to find that the first time it shows up is in Genesis chapter 9, where Noah is told to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.

Genesis 9:1

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

If you want to study fruitfulness in the Bible, you look for that number nine, because that number nine will always be associated with it wherever you find it. Now, I know this: I know that when Abraham was barren, he didn't have any kids. He wanted kids. What happened when he was... and that kid that he did have was in the Promised Seed. What happened? When he was 99 years old, he bore fruit, and he had that kid.

Do you know that there's nine fruits of the Holy Spirit of God found in the book of Galatians?

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Galatians just happens to be the ninth book in the New Testament when you count them up. The word Galatians has nine letters in it. Those nine fruits of the Spirit are found in verses 22 and 23. You add those numbers up, it's nine. Without a doubt, nine is the number of fruit bearing. Nine is the number of fruit bearing. Now, I have a Bible here. It says, "Holy Bible," nine letters. I have a King James Bible. Count them up. Nine letters. I have a King James 1611. Six and three is what? Nine. You want to bear fruit? That's the Bible to use.

III. The Sheep Gate: The Gate of Sacrifice

Just as I said that, there are nine gates around Jerusalem in this passage. We want to have a fruitful church; get those nine gates in operation. What they're doing back in the Old Testament is they're building, putting those gates back on. What we're doing on Sunday morning, Thursday night, and any time we can spend together, even Friday out there at Jan's place, we're rebuilding the gates. We're putting them on. You bring people, you invite people, you bring people to Bible study on Thursday night. You bring people to Jan's place out there on 4th of July. You bring people to church on Sunday morning. And what we do is we minister to them, and in the process of time, we are putting on the gates. They're going to come in with all kinds of problems, all kinds of circumstances. In time, all of you, if you feel that that's what you want to do—I don't push anybody to do anything—but in time, many of you will be working with people along those lines and helping them. But this church has to have these gates in operation.

What we're going to go through is we're going to talk about the gates. The first one we're going to talk about here is found in Nehemiah chapter 3, verse 1.

Nehemiah 3:1

Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.

Now the first gate that we're going to talk about is called the Sheep Gate. I want you to notice something about this gate that is not mentioned about the rest of them. You'll see it in time as we go through. As He comes down to this chapter, He talks about each gate. Each gate has a different name. Each gate represents something different for us spiritually speaking. But the bottom line is about the Sheep Gate, He said they sanctified it.

I want you to notice something else. It was the high priest that rose up with his brethren, the priests. This is the only gate that all the priests alone worked on. Not only that, but they sanctified this gate. That means they set it apart. That means that this gate is different than all the other gates that we're going to talk about. It's the Sheep Gate. Do you know what that gate is? That's where they brought in the lambs for the sacrifice. This gate is the gate of sacrifice. It's the first one mentioned in the Bible. And it's sanctified. It's set apart from the rest of them. Because I want to tell you something. There's no greater concept that you and I can learn as a child of God. There's no greater concept that you and I can learn as a church than the concept of sacrifice.

IV. Understanding True Sacrifice

Most pastors are so hung up on getting all the money they can, because I understand that money. Church has to run. You have to have money. You have to pay the pastor. You have to pay this. You have to pay the bills. You have to pay the rent. You have to pay the lights. All of those things. I'm not taking away from that. But that doesn't need to... When you start to deal with people's lives, that's usually all where preachers go. All my life I've known preachers that just have pounded people on the aspect of just giving. And I've heard them say it. And it's true in a sense. I've heard them say, "Well, the character of God is giving. For God so loved the world that He gave." And I agree with that. And they talk about a Christian, how to give. And they do that because they want you to accept your responsibility of financially supporting the work of God, the ministry of God, and whatever else. I agree with all of that.

But I know this: I know that if you get a Christian to understand the concept of sacrifice, and sacrifice, really understanding sacrifice, has nothing to do with money. It really doesn't. I'm not going to get up here and say, "You need to not just give 10 percent. You need to give 99 percent and live on 10 percent and really understand sacrifice." That's stupid. That's ridiculous. I'm not going to get up here and browbeat you to the place where I say, "Well, that's why when somebody comes in here that's not a member of this church, they don't have to give a dime." The bottom line is if you're a member of this church, then you have to recognize what your responsibility is. But the bottom line is, I would rather in time have you grow to the place that you understand in your life what sacrifice means. And when you get to that point, the money is a non-issue. But we always focus, we always major in the ministry on the minors and miss the major thing. This church in time is going to have to come to the place where it understands the concept of sacrifice.

Now, I'm not saying that some of you don't have a glimpse of it, but I want you to know the Bible, when it talks about sacrifice in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, says:

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

God has always required a sacrifice. In the Old Testament, it was a dead sacrifice. They had to kill a lamb. In the New Testament, we don't go around killing lambs. The Lamb died on the cross. That was the last dead sacrifice it was, and He didn't stay dead. The sacrifice today in the church age is a living sacrifice. Understanding that. He says, "And be not conformed to this world," stay out of the world, "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove"—you have something to prove as a Christian—"what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Now he says in there, "which is your reasonable service." That's key, because you and I are going to have to grow as a church. This church will only grow as you grow. That's why my job is to teach you the Bible. That's my job is to love you. My job is to not put any undue burdens on you. My job is to sort out all the worthless stuff in Christianity and only give you the good stuff. Why? So we can grow to the most effective point in our lives as quickly as God will allow us to.

When you understand what this living sacrifice is, I think when you go back to the book of 2 Corinthians, and we're not going to take time to turn to all these today, but you can go back and I suggest that you take the notes and when you go back home the rest of the week, then you go back and look these up and kind of recant the sermon and see if I'm telling you the truth and keep me honest and keep yourself honest. But in the book of 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9, Paul talks about the Macedonian Christians and he says about them. He says that he was bragging about their giving and their sacrificial giving. But he says this:

2 Corinthians 8:5

And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

That's where the sacrifice really begins. It doesn't begin with your money. If there's anything God doesn't need, God doesn't need our money, but I'll tell you what God does need. God needs us because God's plan is for you and me to impact the world. God could have chosen to do any way He wanted to do it. The little birds out there, they're the most melodious things you've ever heard in your life. God could have fixed those birds to sing the gospel instead of chirping. God could have fixed the frogs instead of croaking, to croak out John 3:16. Come on, let's face it. God could have chosen to get the gospel out any way that He wanted to. Do you know how He chose to do it? He chose to do it with you and me, men and women who recognize that in life there is a sacrifice, a sacrifice for putting out the ministry and the work of God and then doing it, being willing of a willing mind and giving of our own selves first. That's what sacrifice is. And when

you have that and you understand it, let me tell you something, everything else falls in line. Everything else falls in line.

I've heard people say that the mark of a true Christian is his prayer life. You see somebody that prays a hundred hours a day, and they say, "Well, that's the mark of a real strong Christian." I've heard somebody else say, "Well, the mark of a strong Christian is how much he reads his Bible and how much he knows about the Bible." I've heard guys say, "Well, the mark of a real strong Christian is how they witness and all of that." Well, let me tell you something. Those are important, but that's not taking it far enough. Just like we say the character of God is giving, "For God so loved the world," that isn't taking it far enough. The mark of you and me as a Christian is not what we do or what we know and we don't know. The mark for you and me as a Christian is the same mark of the character of God: what do we understand about sacrifice? That's the mark. Just finish the verse: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." It was a sacrifice. It was a sacrifice.

V. The Three Levels of Christian Growth

Now I don't expect you to understand everything about sacrifice this morning. I wish we did. I don't understand everything about it, but I want you to know this. A church has to go through three levels. A Christian has to go through three levels to be complete. And you're going to find as you come down through here, you're going to find in this chapter, I told you that three in the Bible is the order of completion. God is three: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Man is three: he has a body, soul, and spirit. The Bible is a three: Old Testament, New Testament, and Christ is a living word, three. All the way through the Bible, Paul talked about being caught up to the third heaven. All the way through there, God's building, He builds a kingdom, He builds a church, He builds the kingdom.

When you come in this chapter here and start to read it, you're going to find out there's three types of people in any church. And he lays them out. We're going to study in time. We won't get there today. You're going to find when you come down through here, there's three things you have to know about building the church. You're going to come down here and find out that there's three types of opposition that come when you build a church. And you're going to find out that there's three levels that a church has to go through. And there's three levels as we as Christians have to go through. And that's what it's all about. That's our job. That's what we're to do. God gives it all to you so that there's absolutely no illusions about where we're at and what we need to do.

He talked about these Macedonian Christians. He said that they had a readiness. They gave their own selves. He says in 2 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 12, that they had a willing mind.

2 Corinthians 8:12

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

This church, as each one in here, has to come to the point in your life where we understand sacrifice. That's the first gate, the Sheep Gate, the gate that was put on there, that they brought the sacrificial lambs through, that were to go to the altar of God to be offered to God. It was only to be put together by the priests and they sanctified it, showing us that there's something special about this gate. And the very fact that it's the first gate that he talks about tells us that it has to be the premier thing as we as Christians need to understand in our lives. And maybe you're not there today, but we need to get there. I'm going to show you how you get there. And I'm going to show you how you get there by a man's life.

VI. Abraham: A Pattern of Sacrificial Growth

Now, I'm not going to have you turn back this morning because we're going to take communion this morning and this message is going to be a little lengthy. And I know some of you have to get to work today. And like I said, it gives you good to go home and do it. But I want to tell you something. I want to tell you a story. In fact, somebody in our Thursday night Bible study, somebody asked a question about this. And it really was a great question about the life of Abraham. The life of Abraham, Abraham is probably before the law, he is probably the greatest example of your life and my life. The one after the law, during the law, would be Moses. And then the one after the New Testament would be Paul. And there are all kinds of examples. But Abraham was an incredible example.

You realize that Abraham, when you study his life, he goes through the exact three things, three levels that we all have to go through. And you're going to find that in his life there, you can measure how Abraham gets to the point where he understands sacrifice. It's the most incredible study that you have ever went through in your life. And I would say sometime that based on what I'm going to give you today, if you want a kind of a little study to go through this week, you can take where I start, where I am and go through his life. And I'll give you enough insight in between and you can put it together. And then come back Thursday night Bible study if you have some questions and I'll help you put it together. Come and see me on a one-on-one. I don't care.

But when you go back to Genesis chapter 12, here's what you got. God calls Abraham out. Abraham is out there in the Ur of the Chaldees, a picture of the world. Do you know where the Ur of the Chaldees is? Over there where Babylon is right now, where Saddam Hussein and all those guys were. A picture of the world. And the wickedness that was going on there was unparalleled. Do you know what God did? God said, "Abraham, come on out of there. I want to take you someplace that it's going to be pure and yours and it's going to be a place where you and I can fellowship." Do you know what that's a picture of? That's a picture that God, the day He called you and I out of the world.

Now Abraham had to go on a journey and that journey was a literal journey. And in that literal journey was all kinds of things that he had to face and had to deal with. When God called you and I out, we started on a spiritual journey. But it's the same place. Abraham was going to a land. When God saved me, he put me on a course and I'm headed for a land and a city. And someday I'm going to be there in the land with God and it's going to be a great time and it's called New Jerusalem. The Bible says that he looked for a city and builder whose maker was God. That's me,

buddy. That's what I'm looking for. He went on a literal journey. I'm on a spiritual journey, but you know what? We both face the same kind of obstacles. Mine's spiritual. Here's his physical.

I'll give you, and this was the question I think that Christa asked for Thursday night. Abraham goes down into Egypt and down there is Abimelech and he's afraid. Now God's calling him out and God says, "I'm going to take care of you and I'm going to give you everything you need." And he's down there and he goes into the land and he says to Sarai his wife, he says, "Hey look, when we get down here, you're really a good looking lady. Tell them you're my sister. Because if you say that you're my wife, they're going to come in and maybe somebody's going to want you for their wife and this is a wild place. They're going to come in and kill me and take you. And if you say they're my sister, they won't kill me, but maybe we can work some stuff out that we can keep them from taking you." And he had to lie. Now that's just a lapse of faith. He's just a young Christian, to use the phrase, he was just a young guy called out by God. He hadn't learned to trust God yet.

Do you know how God was working behind that? Oh, Abimelech, he's looking at Sarai saying, "Whoa, that's a pretty good looking woman." He's had all kinds of ideas for her. "Oh, that's Abraham's sister. Yeah, she'd fit good." My head, I'm over here. I'm just going to think about that. Now I'm going to, yeah, she's good looking, good looking check. Who went to bed that night? God tapped on his brain to dream. So, "You know what? Yeah, she's good looking. I'll just give you the quick cut. You touch her, you're dead." Okay, no problem. Well, you know what? And the whole thing came around that Abraham didn't have to lie. God was taking care of it. But you know what? The day you got saved, God started taking care of every problem you've got in life. You just don't know it yet. And I don't care how spiritual you get, how far you grow, we still make mistakes. And we still have lapses of faith.

And you go through Abraham's life, he makes some mistakes. God said, "I'm going to give you the promised seed. Someday your stars are going to be like the stars of heaven." "Do you believe that?" He said, "I believe it, Lord." And then his wife doesn't have a baby for a while afterwards. And he gets discouraged and she comes to him and says, "Well, take Hagar, my handmaid, and bring a seed through that. Maybe that's what God meant." They just couldn't wait on God. And so what happened? He takes Hagar, has Ishmael, and that's why this mess in the Middle East is going on right now. All the Arabs over there are descendants of Ishmael. Those boys have never gotten along in the Bible. They're not going to get along now. That old issue over there in the Middle East, that isn't a political deal. That's a Bible issue. Until you see it as that, you're wasting your time. All this peace stuff in the Middle East, trying to get the ceasefire. Those two boys have been ceased fire for 6,000 years. They aren't going to cease fire till God comes down and says, "Cease fire." Then they're going to cease fire. All these things you've written down in these peace proposals, they're getting together, getting all these guys out of fat and all these guys together over there working out. You are wasting your time. Go to Arthur Bryant's and eat some good barbecue. You'll get more accomplished. There's going to be no peace over there. Jason will go with you in here. There's no peace going to be over there. He loves Arthur Bryant's, me and him. There's no peace going to be over there. There isn't going to be any. The Bible tells me that.

But Abraham, he had a lapse of faith. But the beautiful thing about this whole thing, God protected him in Abimelech and God still gave him the promised seed even though he failed. Now that's what I love about God. God comes through for me even when I don't know. If that don't get you to love God more just knowing that, I can't help you. I can't help you. That's just a basic truth that if you see that thing, it'll make you warm and tingly inside and you don't even have to be charismatic. You can just speak in tongues, be in a Baptist. It'll fire you up. But that's a true statement. It's a true statement and he goes through life and yet I watch him come for those three concepts.

I watch him down there in Genesis chapter 14, verse 18. This is talked about in Hebrews chapter 7, verse 2, that he sees a man coming called Melchizedek, great mystery man in the Bible so to speak.

Hebrews 7:2

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

This is early on. He sees Melchizedek. He goes out to Melchizedek and the Bible says that he gives him 10 percent of all that he has. So he understood the basic concept of tithing. Somebody said tithing's an Old Testament concept during under the law. Well, it's just not after the law. We live in a New Testament. Well, here's a guy that's tithing before the law. What do you do with that? Now he wasn't giving money. He was giving everything he had. But he understood the basic concept of giving.

A little bit later on as he grows and he comes to Genesis chapter 18. That's in Genesis 14. In Genesis chapter 18, we come to the place where he's down there in a tent and the Lord comes to be with him and the Lord comes to fellowship with him. What does he do? He goes out and he says, "Kill all the animals, get a great, get a kill this, get that, get the fatted calf, get the this, get the gravy, get the mashed potatoes, get the watermelon, get the fried chicken, get everything together." Costco, Didi on the phone and getting some chicken over here and hit this whole thing together and having thrown in some tacos because now they're doing that too and he can bring all that stuff together. And he laid it out before the Lord and he didn't even eat it himself. Sometimes you just get real pleasure out of doing something for God and just standing back and not being a partaker of it. There's been times just to make a spiritual point. I've had a great deal with some of God's people, and we have food for them. I let them eat first and let them, I just stand on the ground, I just wait for someone to go, "Aren't you going to eat?" And I say, "No, I'm just like Abraham. I'm just standing by." The point is there's times in your life when you give without getting anything out of it. You just give of yourself, your time, of the abilities without expecting anything back. And he was happy with that. Now that shows me that he's moving through the process.

He doesn't always do what's right. You're not going to always do what's right. I thank God that God loves me just as much when I don't do what's right. It's not a license not to do what's right and you ought to try to do right every day. But I'm going to tell you, there wasn't anybody in the Bible who always did right except one man and that was the Lord Jesus Christ. And I don't think

any of us are in that position. But Abraham comes to the place where he first, he gives that 10% to Melchizedek. Then he comes along in Genesis chapter 18, the Lord shows up and he puts on it. Now the counter of that is the two angels go over to Lot and he unlocks the carnal guy. Lot is his nephew who is worthless. And to study those two passages is great. Abraham puts on this great feast and then he says, "It's just a little morsel of bread." He gives him a little unleavened bread, the ugliest stuff like this we're going to take in a little bit for communion, the most terrible stuff in the world. And he says, "We're having a great feast." Do you see the difference in attitude?

And then Abraham comes to the point and the crowning thing. My goodness. Greatest chapter probably in the Bible outside maybe the crucifixion in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Genesis chapter 22. In Genesis chapter 22, he takes little Isaac up to that hill, puts him on an altar. Little Isaac looks up and says, "Daddy, where's the lamb? Here's the wood, here's the fire." But God had told him, "Offer up your son." That's an offering to me. You know, sometimes, I'm going to tell you right now, God had no intention letting him kill his son. I know that. But sometimes God asks you to do the possibilities to see if you're willing to do it, and then God will stop you short of making the biggest mess in your life. Do you know that? Sometimes God tests us. God doesn't do anything to hurt us. But sometimes God tests us. Sometimes God wants to put things in our lives just to see how we'll respond. We'll trust him all the way to the end.

And I'll tell you what, it's such a beautiful parallel to Calvary. I don't have time. Sometime in Bible study, I'm sure somebody will ask the question, we'll get into it. But when God told him that, God didn't tell him in 15 minutes, "You're going to have to do this." God told him, and then he had three days he had to think about it. They went a three-day journey with Abraham, loving that boy who he'd waited for forever, who God had told him with him. Suddenly now, God who told him everything had seemingly contradicted everything that he said. God said, "I'm going to make your seed, Isaac, like the stars of heaven. I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that." Abraham was happy with it. Now God has suddenly turned the tables and said, "Three days from now, you're going to offer that boy as a sacrifice on the altar." How contradictive that must have been in his spirit. How many times in our lives have we got something from God and suddenly God changed the plans on us or something changed and then we start to question God a little bit. Sometimes God just wants to see if we'll just stay true to him. And he just varies the plan a little bit, even though in God's mind, and you see, this is why you need to know things like this, because maybe God will never ask you to put your son or daughter on the altar, in that sense. But I'm telling you right now, there will be something coming to your life that you're going to have to look at this passage and you're going to grow strength from it. You're going to see how God did it for him and recognize that God will do it for you.

But he's growing. There's never a time in this thing. It wasn't a time, even in the beginning. Abraham made some stupid mistakes. So have we, but it wasn't a time where Abraham in any of these levels ever balked at God. He didn't say to Melchizedek, "Well, I'll just give you 5%." It was 10%. He didn't come a little later out and he didn't hold anything back when he showed up. He gave him everything that he had. And when it came to this point, he didn't question God. He didn't fight with God. He didn't even say, "God, this is not what you told me. What is going on

here?" By this time he had learned some things. He had learned something. He had learned that through the process of making mistakes, through the process of growing, through the process of growing through level one, his tithe, through the process of level two, his giving over and above for people to the point where he came to the place now that he understands sacrifice. And there's no question in God, even though his heart, and don't you know, don't you know in those three days, the devil worked him over. Hasn't the devil ever worked you over? I promise you the devil wasn't out on some zenith planet someplace sunbathing on an aisle of galactic, saying, "Oh yeah, we're going to..." He was there. And I'll tell you what, when they made camp the first night around that fire and Abraham isn't saying anything. He looked at that boy. He knows two days from now, he's going to have to... the next night. And that boy snuggled up next to him, and it was cold and Abraham. He just, he didn't sleep, man. The devil just worked on him. "So that's your God. So that's your God. So that's your God. He lied to you, Abraham. He told you one thing, now he's doing something else." We've all been there, man. We all know where it comes from.

But that's why as Christians, you need to get to those three levels. That's why as a church, we need to get to those three levels. We aren't going to get there today. We won't get there tomorrow. I don't know when we'll get there. We'll get there as fast as we get there. But we need through Abraham's life, you see steady progress. I'm not asking you to be there today. I'm preaching to you about a gate that we need to have in our church. That we need to have a process in life that we all endeavor to get there. And he takes him up the next day and puts him on that altar, reaches down and takes that knife. The boy looks around and says, "Daddy, there's the fire. Here's the wood. Where's the lamb?" Do you know what Abraham says? What a prophetic statement. He says, "God himself will provide a lamb." Oh, what a prophetic statement. God, some 4,000 years later, God himself did provide a lamb. He did. It was a true statement. That old knife went up and that old hand started to come down and God said, "Abraham, Abraham, over there is the lamb just happened to be caught in the thicket by its horns." God always comes through. But it's a test for us to get to that point as a church to grow to the point where we understand that in this church there has to be a sacrifice gate, a Sheep Gate where we understand and get to that third level. Because if we don't, we'll be like every other church out there. We'll just wind up giving to God what is convenient. And I don't ever want to do that. I don't ever want to do that. Not in my life, not in my ability to minister. And there's no reason for us to ever get to that point. We have Bible teaching with the men that are in here, the men that know it, that understand the Bible, that we can get everything that we need. There's no excuse for us. No excuse for us. Sacrifice. We see in the life of Abraham everything that God, everything that we need to understand how we as Christians need to get there, how we as a church need to get there.

VII. Building on the Foundation: Gold, Silver, and Precious Stones

Now, let me just say in closing here, let me just say this to you. How do we do that? Now, I could give you all the spiritual formulas, but stay with the Bible. We've been with the Bible here for the last 40 minutes. So just stay with it here. Turn over to 1 Corinthians chapter 3. I want you to turn

here. How do we do that? Maddie knows. She's telling you right now. She's already figured it out.

1 Corinthians 3:9-13

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Three things you build on this foundation. And you need to remember this. When you go here today, this is how you get to where Abraham was. You got saved, you laid a foundation for the rest of your life. You're building three things on it. Forget the wood, hay, stubble. That's the wrong things. Those are dead things. He says, first of all, gold. Gold in the Bible represents the deity of Christ. So the first thing you find that you're to build that foundation is getting to know God, getting to know God, spending time, getting to know God and who God is. You spend time to get to know God and building that thing in your life of laying on that foundation, just understanding who God is.

Then the second thing he says down there, he says silver. All through the Bible, silver was the price of redemption. Christ was sold for 30 pieces of silver. Back in the Old Testament, it was the silver that was the redemption money. You see, once you get to understand about God, then you understand what God did for you. The redemption, the price that was paid. And the third thing that's on there is precious stones. Malachi chapter 3 very clearly lays out the precious stones or people. And you see, when you build upon this foundation, gold, you get to know God. And then you build upon that silver. You get to know what God did. You can't help but take and tell somebody else. And there's the precious stones.

Three, three, three, three, three things, three levels for a Christian, three things we need to have in our lives on that foundation. You either have three things for God or you have three things for the world. But that's how you do it. You get to know who God is. You get to know what God did for you. And then you tell somebody else what he did. That's what Abraham's doing. He got to know God. And you can't help to get to know God without understanding the price that was paid.

2 Corinthians 8:9

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

There it is. The key there is "for ye know." Do you know that? And maybe you don't. It's okay. The goal is in time you need to. And that's where we're going. And that's what we need to

accomplish. And that's why these gates are absolutely vital in this church. That's why they're absolutely vital that you understand it. That gate number one is the Sheep Gate. That we begin a sacrifice, a journey to learn the concept of sacrifice. When you do that, everything else will take care of itself. I'll never have to preach a message on giving. I'll never have to preach a message on service. Everybody will understand what Christ has done for them and you will spend the rest of your life giving your body a living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service. That you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.