

I. The Importance of Remembering God's Faithfulness

It helps you sometimes to take God for granted. Then you take the Word of God for granted, and you take His grace and His love. Then you take the people that God has put in your life for granted, and the whole thing becomes a breakdown.

I talked to you last week, and we have mentioned this many, many times. It came up on a Thursday Night Bible study originally. There are three infirmities in the Word of God that are solicited that you and I have to deal with. We talked about this last week: prayer, your flesh, and then, of course, forgetting—not remembering the things that God has done for you.

Last week, you remember, I took you back to 2 Timothy 2 and the first five verses there. I really went back to an early message that I preached that I really wanted to just kind of pull some things and reconfirm some things about this month. It was the aspect of taking what God has given to you and then committing that to faithful men—the unbroken chain of Bible doctrine down through the Bible.

I have heard all my life, and it is a very true statement, "Hindsight is always 20/20," and that is so very true. In reality, one of the greatest ways to learn about God and to learn God is to look back. If you want to really understand the concept of history, you have got to look back and see what God has done down through history. If you want to look at how you have grown spiritually, I always talk about the fact that you ought to look back at the end of every year or sometime in your life, and you ought to see where you were and where you are at now.

The Bible is infallible when it comes to that cycle of history, and certainly the book of Ecclesiastes shows us that all history runs into a cycle. It is true in your own life; it is true in my life. The basis for understanding and applying faith in your life is run on this concept. We get the idea that faith is just unseen and unproven. You are going to get into discussions with people and they will say, "Why do you accept the Bible by faith? All you Christians, you accept God by faith." By their terminology, it just simply means that we have no proof of God, we have no proof of the Bible. Therefore, we just blindly want to believe something that absolutely cannot be proven.

First of all, I can prove to you scientifically, if you want to step outside the realm of the Bible with me, I can prove to you scientifically that there is a God and there is a Bible. I can also prove to you that the God that I serve and the Bible that I have is the right Bible. If you want to get out of religion or Christianity and you want to go one-on-one about God and the Bible, and you are a scientist, then I will step into your world and I will still whip you.

The bottom line is this: you can prove there is no blind faith to it. The reason why I know I can trust God tomorrow is because I have been saved now for some 30 or so years, and He has never failed me. I have a track record of absolute perfection that He has always been there for 30 some years. Do you think He is not going to be there tomorrow? My faith is not based on blind

stupidity. It is based on the fact that He has come through for me for 30 years. It is like the sun. Do you think I am going to worry tonight that the sun is not going to come up in the morning? For 6,000 years, it has been up every morning. On its proven track record, it will be up tomorrow. If it does not, it is okay anyhow because I know where I will be, but that is all right.

It is the basis for my faith. I know that there is a God because you cannot look at history and know even a fingernail about the Bible and not know that God is true and the Bible is true. You have to be an imbecile not to see that.

II. The Biblical Model for Church Building

Today, again, I want to go back to a passage in the Bible that, if you remember, it really was the first series. I teach the Bible different ways sometimes, and you should learn to be able to do that. They have what they call expository preaching. Expository preaching is where you take a verse in the Bible and you detail it out in great detail, running it everywhere it goes. You do not have much of that today. It is more of a suppository preaching today than it is expository.

You have a situation where you will take maybe a book of the Bible and then you will detail out that book. Then you have what we call topical preaching. You will take a subject in the Bible or a character in a book of the Bible or something that happens in the book of the Bible, and then you will preach on that. Then you have what we call a series. A series is where you take a concept and you break it down so that you examine all of the pieces of it. When you are done with a series, you will take one section of the Word of God and everybody will understand how it applies and how it goes into your own life.

This really was the first series that I ever preached to you, and it was in the book of Nehemiah chapter 2. So if you have your Bibles, you want to go to Nehemiah chapter 2. That is where we are going to be here in just a moment.

When we started our church four years ago, I said, of course, I gave you folks a complete plan and outline. I had some reasons for doing that. One of the reasons is I do not want you to ever come to the place where you become like most Christians today. You find a lot of Christians who believe a lot of things, and they will argue with you about what you believe. But the truth of the matter is they do not know why they believe what they believe.

I think the funniest thing in all the world is a Christian who shoots their mouth off about what they do not believe that you believe, but they could not defend what they believe if their life depended on it. I think that is absolutely hilarious. It goes to show you how shallow God's people really are. I do not want you to be shallow people. I do not want anybody in this church ever to just believe something because I said it was true. You need to understand it for yourself. So I take very great pains to tell you why I am doing what I am doing, how this fits into everything.

When we started our church some four years ago, I was very careful to show you that this is one of the great models in the Bible of how to build a church. You get all kinds of ideas about that today. I have found very few pastors in my world travels over the last 30 some years that ever really understand this concept. I found some; a lot of this information I got from some of those

guys. I am not standing up here and saying that this is just me and I saw this. But I am saying today, we have a problem in the world today of Christianity. That is that we do not know how to build the things the way we should.

Today, this message will mean probably more to you if you have been around here for two or three years, even if you did not hear the original series. It is going to make more sense to you now than it probably did when I preached it. If you were here three or four years ago when we came through this, you are going to definitely see how you have grown in that. It is going to be able to show how it is working now, and it is just following the biblical pattern.

I do not have any original ideas how to build a church. I never claimed to. I do not claim to be somebody who has a great charisma that people just want to flock to him. I do not claim to be somebody that has this great ability. I just follow the simple, basic, fundamental guidelines that the scriptures lay out that if you want success, this is how you do it. I am not a very creative person. I eat the same thing every day of the week. On Monday, it is this. On Tuesday, it is this. On Thursday, I am not very creative. Somebody says, "Where do you want to go out to eat?" I could just go to McDonald's and it would be fine with me.

The only fights my wife and I have, the only fights we have that we will talk about, the only fights we have is on our night, then we go out and we try to do them as much as we can. We will say to each other, I will say to her, "Where do you want to go to eat?" Oh, I see there is more than one that has this problem. And she will say, "You pick." I pick. She says, "I do not want to go there." Fine. Before this thing escalates from a cold war to a hot war, tell me where you want to go. She will say, "Well, you pick." No, we tried that. "You pick." "Well, I will eat anything." Okay. Now I am a little perturbed. So I already know what the place is that she hates to go. So I am pulling those cards out now. She hates Burger King. So I will say, "Let us go to Burger King." Now she knows I know that. So now we are on our way down the primrose path of getting a divorce.

I am telling you, you have got to come to the place where, and I have now completely lost my original thought and I do not care. My job is to help you understand everything that I do. Someday, some of you are going to be positions of crucial leadership. Someday, if the Lord tarries His coming, one of you will probably pastor this church. Certainly, many of you will rise to the area of leadership within this church that you take major responsibilities. You have to learn now, not only what you believe, but why I do the things that we do here and the way that we do them. You have to realize that there is a model in the Bible. I am a very simple person. You just follow the basic simplistic models that are laid out for you in the Bible. You do not get very creative.

III. Historical Context and Doctrinal Foundation

Now, the book of Ezra, the book of Nehemiah, and the book of Esther, as far as I am concerned, it is my own personal opinion, they are three of the greatest books in the Bible that as a collection, those three books, help you understand the whole concept of what we need to do. I wish I had time today to go into the great detail the way I would like to. We did it when we came

through it. I do not have time today, but it would be, and I do not know that we are going to get through all of this today. We will finish it up the next time. But I do not know through greater books.

If you ever find yourself as a young pastor, and you find yourself in a position now where you have been given charge of God's people, and you have the responsibility to building a church, what I am about to give you, you will find in no Bible college on planet earth. You will not find in any book, other than a book that God wrote. I will also go ahead and tell you this: any other approach you approach will be the wrong approach, or be the long route approach. If you want to do it God's way and do it right, then this is how you do it. It does not take a genius just to believe that God knew what He was talking about when He wrote His Bible.

When you start to look at this, you are going to see that obviously all three of these books, doctrinally, historically, and inspirationally, they are incredible. Not only do they form the basis of the Jew going back to the land, which brings us all the way up to the Zionist movement of 1900, right up through the Balfour Declaration of 1918, and then right up through the establishment of the Nation of Israel in 1948, seeing God's hand behind the scenes. But it also lays down the doctrinal, foundational position, which we believe as Christians, on the pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If somebody would say to you, "Well, I believe in..." If you would say to somebody, somebody would ask you, "What do you believe about the second coming of Christ?" And they would say to you, "Well, I do not believe that." And they would say back, "Why do you believe that?" See, they expect you to say, "Well, I read so-and-so's book," or "When I went to church here, I went to Bible college here," or "So-and-so taught me here," and that is what they expect you, because that is what they are going to say. What I would say is the reason why I believe the pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ is because of three books in the Bible that by their order show you that. I do not have to read anybody's book on it. God, in His own book, by design, wrote everything in it the way He was going to do it, and all you and I have to do is just follow it through and put it together.

Historically, when that Jew goes back, and this is an interesting notation, when that Jew goes into captivity with Babylon, there are three deportations when he goes back. One is in 606 BC, one is in 597 BC, and then again in 586 BC, the last deportation of people go down. Babylon falls, is conquered by Persia in October of 539 BC. This is where Cyrus, Persia now has become a nation. This is all found in Daniel 2, just like I laid out for you on Thursday night, a couple of weeks ago, and we have talked about on Sunday morning when we were coming through the Book of Revelation. Daniel's image of the Gentile nations, it started with Babylon, then the next one was Persia. Persia defeats Babylon, and then Persia becomes the world power.

Just as there are three deportations to Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar, there are three returns to Jerusalem under Persia.

1. The first one is in 538 BC, just one year after the fall, under Zerubbabel. This is found in Ezra 1:6.
2. The second one is in 457 BC, and that is under Ezra. This is found in Ezra 7-10.

3. Then finally we come to the Book of Nehemiah. In Nehemiah, around 444 BC to about 425 BC, they go back again under the decree of Artaxerxes. You will find that in the book where we are at right now, in the Book of Nehemiah.

IV. Practical Application: Temple and City

Here is the interesting thing. That is history, that is historical. There is a doctrinal side to it; we do not have time to get into that today, but it deals with the second coming of Christ. But it is the practical side that I want to draw your attention to today, because that is what we did when we came through it a number of years ago when we started our church.

In the Book of Ezra, you know what you have? In the Book of Ezra, that book talks about them rebuilding the temple. In the Book of Ezra, you are going to find that they go back and they start first to build the temple. We know from 1 Corinthians 6:19 what that must be a picture of then, because the Bible says in that great verse:

1 Corinthians 6:19

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

So when we look at it from a practical standpoint, and we see in Ezra where they rebuild the temple, I just want to double guarantee you, if you want to find out as a Christian how to become a strong Christian, and you want to find out what the opposition is going to be before it comes, what you are going to struggle with, and what you are going to have to focus on to make your body God's temple, it is the Book of Ezra. Because in that chapter, they go back to build that temple and they get opposition to it, and you see everything in that thing historically, what it takes for you and me to build my body, this temple for God, to be a strong soldier for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then we come to the Book of Nehemiah. In Nehemiah, they do not rebuild the temple. In Nehemiah, they rebuild the city. When they rebuild the city, you are going to find that that is a picture of your church. Matthew 5:14 says this:

Matthew 5:14

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

You see, this church is like a city. It will only be as bright as the individual light bulbs in this church. I heard a story one time of a contractor that wanted to build a church. He wanted to do something for the church, and he wanted to build them a building because they were in dire need of the building. So he told the church, he said, "I am going to do the work, I am going to pay for everything, and I am going to do it." So he built them a great building. When I first came there the first Sunday, everybody was amazed at what he did, but everybody suddenly realized that there was no electricity in the building. Yet when you went around the walls of the church, you found a candelabra or a candlestick that had each family's name on it. When somebody asked him what was the point why he did not put electricity in the church or any lights in the church, he

simply said, "Because I wanted to build this church as biblically as I could." He said, "The Bible says that ye are the light of the world, and this church will only be as bright as the individual people." Then he passed out a candle to every family. He said, "I did that for an illustration, is that the Sunday that you do not show up, it will not be as bright where it should have been because your light is not there." I read that and I thought to myself, now there is a man that has some incredible wisdom, because this church will only be as bright as the individual lights that are in it.

As an individual, the Bible says, "Let your light shine." You are all buildings, you are all temples, you are all God's building. So when we all come together, you know what this church is? It is a city. What makes this church shine in the darkness of this world, it is not just one light. It is the contingency of everybody's light shining, and this city being able to be seen from a mile's distance because of the fact that everybody has got the light turned on. Everybody is the light that shines in darkness.

I am telling you, when you look at those two books, they are incredible books. The teaching is easy. If you are ever going to build a church, if you are ever going to be a pastor, it is simply this: you cannot build a church until you build the temple first.

On the 8th of July, when we have our anniversary Sunday, we are going to install our first deacons. We have got 13 or 14 men now that over the last four or five years have risen up in this church. They have taken major responsibility. They are here on Thursday night. They are discipling people. They are basically, in a way, beginning to take over the responsibility of this church. You see, most churches, when they start, the pastor right off the bat has to say, "Well, you have got to have deacons. You have got to have deacons." So you just go get a bunch of people who know nothing about the Bible. We are going to take a Sunday, and I am going to bring you through the process of what a Biblical structure is in a church. I want to walk you through the deacons, the elders, and the whole nine yards of showing you how the structure works so you better understand it before we get to that point.

In most churches, it just gets some deacons. The pastor, he picks the deacons because of the fact that he gets the guys because he has a political agenda. So he wants to have some guys who will support his agenda. Then he puts in a little clause, and that little clause is that you are a deacon for a term of three years. That simply means, let me interpret it for you, that means that if you do not go along in my program, I have got to put up with you for three years at the max, and then I can put somebody else in at will. You do not find those things in the Bible. A deacon in the Bible has no political power. The office of a deacon is for one thing, and that is to wait on the tables of the congregation of teaching them the Word of God.

I will never pick deacons. I will never go down the list and say, "It is you, it is you, it is you, it is you." You will reveal who you are. Everybody that has been picked has been doing the work already. It is just that simple. I am not in the position of picking anybody. I do not want you to be... I do not pick you because I maybe like you. I like you, but I mean, it does not matter. You do not have to agree with me on everything to be a deacon. You just have to be the model by which the Bible lays the thing out, that you already have done what the Bible says. That is what a

church does. You are going to find that you cannot build a church until you build the temple first. That is why it took three and a half years, four years, building men and women in the Word of God, building some core leadership by your choice. You have, like I said, a couple of weeks ago, some gathered more, some gathered less. It is your choice. I did not force these people to do what is right with the Word of God any more than I can force you. You have to choose and prioritize your life to say, "God saved me for a purpose. He put me into a church for a purpose. I am going to fulfill that purpose." That is your choice, not mine.

V. The Gates of Ministry: Sacrifice and Evangelism

When I come down here in Nehemiah 3:1, the first gate I find is a gate called the Sheep Gate. The Sheep Gate was a place where they brought in the sacrificial sheep into the city that was going to be used for sacrifices by the priest. It is one of those things that when you begin to see it, it just begins to open up all of the aspects. Because the concept is this: all my life, all my life, I have seen situations in churches where you just get into the situations where it all becomes political.

Let me tell you something. The first gate he puts in there is the Sheep Gate, which represents sacrifice. This church is only going to accomplish whatever God wants it to accomplish if God's people are willing to make the sacrifices they have to make. I learned a long time ago. There is no church, no ministry that is ever built by one man or somebody with a million dollars.

I was listening, I was telling somebody about Billy Graham a couple of weeks ago, and it was one of the most impressive things that I ever saw in my life. They opened up the Billy Graham Museum down in North Carolina, South Carolina, wherever it was. It is kind of like a walk-through of the ministry of Billy Graham. I watched it on television. It had about a 20-minute special on it. I wish it was not so far away. I would love to go through it. It showed excerpts of Billy Graham back in the 50s and the 60s. Let me tell you something. Preaching. I am telling you what. He was flat taking the paint off the wall. He was calling a spade a spade. He was calling sin sin. He was not mincing any words. He was right on the money. I mean, he was spitting and sweating. A couple of times you could see spit coming out of his mouth. He was shaking his Bible. He was beating the pulpit. His hair was flying back. He looked like that prison picture of Nick Nolte. He was a wild man. Of course, when he started, he still believed that book. When he started, he was a Baptist.

Somebody said, "Wow, Billy, you can preach." I will show you how it works. "Wow, Billy, you can preach. You know what? You need to reach the masses. You know what, Billy? We have got four or five men here that represent about, oh, \$60 million. And we want to save you worldwide. We want to open up the doors to you that you can accomplish your purpose to reach the world, because you have the message. And I have got Daddy Warbucks back here. Grandpa Warbucks. Hey, I know some of those families. And they said, 'We have got millions of dollars that we want to pour into your evangelistic ministry. You just do not need to be a little hillbilly evangelist anymore. You need to become the worldwide evangelist. And we have got the money to get you into the places. We have got the political pull, the churches to get you in every church. But, Billy, you need to tone down your message just a little bit. You offend too many people. Well, we have

got the money and we have got the politics, but you know what? You cannot go into some of these churches and say some of the things you say. We have got people down there that they have got more money on their fingers and rings and their hat pins than most people have in their bank. And they are going to sit in the front row. You cannot spit on them. These people are dignified people. They wear \$700 suits. You buy yours at Walmart, Kmart, and Sears. You know, your suit is a Sears sucker. Sears had a sale and you were the sucker.' You cannot do that. You have got to be more refined."

So you know what happened somewhere along the line? He looked at the truth and the power of God of getting you a place to preach and Daddy Warbucks getting you. Let me tell you something. Whenever they want to shell in a lot of money in your ministry, there are always strings attached. They have got an agenda. You know why? Because no ministry is ever built with one person. No ministry, it takes a sacrifice of everybody to do what God wants us to do.

Somebody asked me, "Well, we need this or we need that or this church needs this. Why do not, if we are doing the work for God, if we are doing a job, why do not God just come down and just give us what we need?" You know why? Because we would quit in two weeks. God does not give it to you because He wants you to buy the cost and sacrifice and get involved with everything you have got. Sacrifice is where it started at Calvary. It is where you are at in your life and it is where it ends. God knows the great truth that most of God's people have never learned. Taught in 2 Samuel 24:24. If it is a sacrifice, it has to cost you something. You want a church? You want this thing for your kids? You want this church for your kids' kids? Then it is going to cost you something. It is going to be your sacrifice. I am not even talking about money. It is you saying, "This is God's place. And I am going to be the lamb on this sacrificial altar for God to make this work what God wants it to be." That just cannot be me. It has to be everybody. It has to be everybody.

Then the second gate down here in Nehemiah 3:3 is the Fish Gate. We talked about some of this. I did not get into this part, but if you were here a couple of, a couple of, 30 nights ago, somebody asked a question about repentance. I basically laid out for you that the job has two functions, or the church has two functions. Here we find the Fish Gate. We find the first function, and that is to bring men and women to a place of repentance. That is my job. That is our job. Find the lost. Be a witness to them. Be everything to them that they need to be. You need to be. Let God use you. Win the people to Christ.

Matthew 4:19

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Proverbs 11:30

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

1 Peter 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Everything we do has to be viewed in that concept of the Fish Gate. The place where men and women repent of their sins and become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and we win them to Christ. I do not care if it is softball. I do not care if it is volleyball. I do not care if it is Memorial Day. I do not care if it is Sunday morning. I do not care if it is Thursday night. I do not care if it is whatever we do. The bottom line is seeing men and women restored in the image of Jesus Christ through repentance of Christ's death on Calvary's cross.

A number of years ago, I was in New York City, and I remember driving down through Manhattan, and there on a big billboard was a slogan put out by one of the campus groups, Campus Crusade or something, and it was their theme slogan for many, many years. It was simply a big old sign that says, "Christ is the answer." In New York City, there is more spray paint there than any other place in the world. The graffiti is everywhere. Somebody, and I do not know how they did it, somebody had climbed up, and this thing was high, like 600 feet, over the freeway, and somebody had written underneath that in big bold letters. They said, "Christ is the answer." Somebody wrote underneath, "What was the question?" I looked at that point and thought to myself, you know what? That is the problem with churches today. The churches are simply, you know what the problem is with churches? They are answering questions nobody is asking. They are missing the point of what the real need is today.

So when you build a church, you have got to have a Sheep Gate. You have got to understand the concept of sacrifice. Then you have got to have a Fish Gate. You have got to have the church's function as winning men and women to Christ. That is the only real purpose whereby we exist. They will fulfill the fallen image of Adam by the preaching and the teaching of the Word of God, and everything wraps around that concept. You know why I preach so hard to you about this? I will tell you why. You all work with people. You all have people in your life. You probably maybe will never get them to come to church. But let me tell you why it is so important. You may be the only Bible that they ever read. They may never see Christ in any form or fashion other than how they see Him through you. Your inconsistencies, your downright disobedience, your out-and-out sin, your out-and-out arrogance, your out-and-out lifestyle. It is probably going to damn more of your friends to hell for eternity than all the booze in this world. You know why? Because God wants you to be the right man in the right place at the right time, and you just do not have the courage to do it. You will be the only Bible they read. You may be the only person they see Christ in all of their life. Your inconsistencies, your being able to be manipulated so easily, just serve to reinforce that what you have, they do not want because it is not really real. What a tragedy. What a tragedy. He says, "Be ready to answer any man who asks us the reason of the hope that is in you." You know what the problem is? Most people do not see any hope in us. They do not see any difference between you and me in the world, because in most cases there is not any difference.

VI. The Gates of Ministry: Heritage and Compassion

Then the next thing, Nehemiah 3:6, the Old Gate. The Old Gate represents the historical side of things. I want to tell you something. I watch people all the time. I have been around pastors, Christian leaders, the better part of my life, my adult life. I have learned a few things, and I do

not profess to know it all, and I never have and never will claim to. My claim to fame is not to be the smartest man in the world. My claim to fame is just to be the fastest one in the slow class. That is all. I am just dumb enough to believe what the Word of God said, but there are some things I do not understand. There are some things I do not get. How in the world, how in the world can you be dedicated to the Word of God, claim you know the Bible, claim you can preach the Bible, how in the world can you come to the point, and I give everybody a break. I say it again. Have you been here five years or less? You know, I mean, you just cannot apply this to yourself.

I have met Christian workers, pastors, missionaries, people who were leaders in churches all my life, and they did not have a clue. They did not have a clue of where in the world they came from. They did not have a clue of any historical thing in their life of where they have come from. You know what? The majority of you are Baptists this morning, and yet if I put you on the spot and put you down here and had you write out without your Bible a detailed account of bringing me back through each century, telling me where the Baptist came from, you could not do it. Oh, you blow the air around and talking about throwing this little tidbit out. You know what? You do not want to feel froggy with me spiritually. I will show you how to leap. Just come over to my house and I will sit you down. I will give you a pencil, paper, and I will give you some questions to answer without your Bible. You can find out where you are at. It is real easy. It is a real easy test.

I get sick and tired of people saved 5, 10, 15, 20 years, and they do not know anything about where they have come from. I have been with pastors, went in to teach church history in their churches, and the pastors acted like it was something that was brand new. I am going to tell you something. To me, to me, to me in this church, I cannot speak about somebody else's church, but in this church, if you do not know where you have come from and you cannot detail it out, you are worthless to me. Do you think I am going to trust you with something or somebody on any great level when you do not even know where you came from, that you do not have a clue how it got into your life, that you cannot walk your own heritage back? You are an orphan. No wonder you cannot figure out what God wants you to do. You are walking around saying, "Who am I? Who am I? Where am I from?" You do not even know your own heritage. There are two landmarks in that Bible in Proverbs 22 and 23. In time, you need to know your heritage and know where you have come from.

Somebody says, "Are you an independent? Are you an independent Baptist?" You know what I always ask them? I said, "Explain to me where the independence came from. Are you an independent or independent? Good. Where did the independence movement start?" "Well, brother, it started in the Bible." "All right, where?" "Well, it is a movement, a movement." "Where? Where did the movement start? Movement, movement has to start moving to be a movement. Hello? Where did the movement, kind of like Moses, where did the movement start to move? Do not give me a lot of your Baptist clap-trap about, 'Oh, hey, where did you come from?'"

You know what the problem the children of Israel had? Steve asked me the question this morning about a missionary down there. He asked me a question. "Why when the children of Israel went

into Joshua, why did God tell them to circumcise the kids all over again? He told them in Exodus, why in Joshua did He say, 'Circumcise them all over again?'" The answer is so simple. If you look at Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy, "Deutero," "Duo," "II," second giving of the law. You know what he does in Deuteronomy? He goes through everything in Exodus again that he did in Deuteronomy. Why? Because the parents of those children who are now taking over the Promised Land have no idea where they have come from, because their parents did not tell them. Now here they are, the new generation, going to take over God's program, and they do not even know who God is. We have church after church after generation of Christians who take over things that just do not know where it all started.

I could talk, bless your hearts, I love you to death, but I could clock most of you out of your salvation in 15 minutes. I could put on my Jehovah Witness suit and have you over at the Kingdom Hall this afternoon. I could put on my Mormon outfit and have you over there hanging off the spiral. I could put on my Church of Christ outfit and I could have you being baptized tomorrow, because you do not know where we came from. What is even worse, we do not care where we came from. Then we wonder why we cannot be productive. You wonder why your kids are going to grow up, and they are not going to know. I am going to tell you something, you might as well get this down. I know we have not got the child training yet, but I say to myself, "What is the point? You have not learned what I have given you so far. Why should I just spend another eight, nine weeks going through something that you are going to do like you did with the marriage stuff? Just throw it in the corner someplace and go on doing your own thing." But I am going to tell you something. Whatever you are, your kids will be less than you are. The generation does not get better, it gets worse. You think, "Oh, they are fine, they are this." They will be, you better watch it. They will be less than you are. That is why you have got to be more than you need to be so they are on an even par. Brother, if you do not learn that lesson, you are in for some real heartache. Knowing where you come from forms the basis for what you believe and why you believe it. I cannot fathom somebody saved 10, 15 years, claims to be a pastor, has the ordination papers, has this, has that. The pastor of the church works as the head of the deacons, works this, works that, has tremendous responsibility in ministry and cannot even tell you where they come from. "Well, you Baptist, well, I am a northern Baptist, well, I am a southern Baptist, well, I am an independent Baptist, well, I am a fundamental Baptist." They all have their start and they are all stupid. Add the next one, "I am an I-don't-know Baptist," because that is where we are at. The unbroken chain, ladies and gentlemen, that is the job of the church. The unbroken chain of taking what God has given to a pastor, finding faithful men and then giving it to them with a challenge to pass it off to unfaithful men.

The fourth one, Nehemiah 3:13, the Valley Gate. We are going to start this coming fall, Lord willing, still up in the air if we are ready to do it or not. That was my plan, do not know if we will make it or not, but we talked about starting a bona fide counseling ministry, having men and women that were on call, they will be able to take any certain scenario, any circumstance where we would go online, we would put a counseling service online, that people could call in and then we would have people that could work with them. I do not know if we are going to make it this fall or not, I would like to. This remains yet to be seen. But I know this, the first aspect of this

church has to be bringing men and women to repentance. The second aspect of this has to be able to be healed and restore men and women to the fellowship of Christ.

Compassion, the Valley Gate, you are going to find people who are in the valley. You are going to find people who are down in all kinds of trouble. You are going to find people many times through their own fault, their own stupidity. It is not a week goes by that I do not deal with somebody in some scenario that they got themselves into the mess that they are in. They cannot blame anybody else for it. But you know what? When a man or a woman, when they come to that point that they want to dig themselves out of it, the job of the church is to help them get to where they need to get. That is the Valley Gate.

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

You need to mark two things in that verse. First of all, "ye which are spiritual," and the second one is "in meekness and fear." The churches today, for the most part, they could care less. You have got a problem. You will never get in to see the pastor. You will get handed off and handed off and handed off 28 times down the line. You get somebody out there that does not even know what he is doing. The job of the church for the first part is to restore the image of fallen man through salvation and repentance. Then the second job is to restore the fellowship of God's people and helping them lift up the fallen. You know what? At the end of the day, the greatest doctrine in the Bible is this: Adam fell, and then God sent His own Son down to restore and lift up man that fell. That is the key. That is the key. That is the key.

VII. The Gates of Ministry: Self-Sufficiency, Sustaining, and Cleaning

Then number five, and then we are going to hold up with this one today. Every church, in my mind anyhow, now I know we do not like the word "self," because the word "self" carries a bad connotation. The word "self" gives the opinion or the idea that God is not in it, that we are doing it. We always say, "Get self out of the way." "Me, me, me, me, me, me, me, me." "Self, self, self, self, self, self." Self-centered, self-serving. The whole thing goes. But in that concept, there is a right word of the word "self." Just like every other word in the Bible. Because I believe that every church ought to be three things. When you put these gates in here, they become these three things.

- Self-Sufficient I believe that every church ought to be self-sufficient. By that I mean this: we do not look outside the congregation for money. We do not spend an hour, 20 minutes, what we have in our service, we do not spend an hour asking for money in 20 minutes giving you the sermon. The bottom line is this. That is a non-functional thing for me. It is the most absolute asinine thing in the world and the most rebuke to God I can think of to get up here in front of God's people and say, "This is your church, you need to support it." Man, if you have not got that one figured out, you need to go back to square one. I refuse to do it. I refuse to do

it. I refuse to do it. This church is going to be a church because you are going to decide it is mine. This is where my family is raised. This is where our protection is. This is where we have, it is our city, the walls around it, and you know what? Cities have upkeep. It is our responsibility through our sacrifice and offerings and tithes, whatever the case, that I am going to support that thing and I am going to make it work. That is the bottom line, self-sufficient. I do not look anywhere. We do not have our kids out selling candy bars so they can go here or go there. We do not have anybody out there saying, "Well, would you buy a brick? We will put your grandma's name on the brick. Oh, by the way, the brick is \$10,000, but it is a nice brick." We do not do that. We will never do that. I have told you before, the day we cannot pay the bills, hey, we will go do something else. I do not care. I learned, when I learned anything about anything, I learned about the grace of God and because of the Word of God, I can go anywhere and build a church. That is not my concern. If they do not want one here, maybe they will want one someplace else. I am not saying that because of any, I am just telling you, this is the way it works. Every church ought to be self-sufficient.

- Self-Sustaining I will tell you the second thing. Every church ought to be self-sustaining. By that I mean this: the leadership of this church needs to come up from the inside. It needs to come up from the inside. If I die today or something happens to me today, there is a letter that will be given to Jason and Chris. There is a letter that they will have that will be simply this: "Here are my instructions upon my death." Right now there are two men that I want to take this church and those two men will lead this church through this tough time. This time may take six months, may take seven months, may take eight months, but they will lead the church through it. At the end of that time, the church will decide based on the New Testament principles, if they are going to be the pastor or you are going to raise somebody else up to be the pastor. That is how it has to be because this church does not need to look around the world and call BBF down in Springfield and say, "Do you have a pastor that can take over this church?" But at the same time, let me tell you something. You will never pastor this church if you do not know the book. You never will. Not while I am alive and hopefully after I am dead because you will make the biggest mistake you ever make in your life. Hopefully, you know what? Those two names can change as time goes on. But my biggest fear and my biggest concern, you know, I know all things by faith, I should not, it is in God's hands. I know that, but I am human like you. I mean, do not you ever cuss at people when they get over in front lane in front of you? How many do? Let me see your hands. Notice I got both hands up. But I have learned I do not do it anymore. I just write them down and my wife yells them out the window. This church needs to be self-sustaining. The leadership needs to come from within. It needs to be men and women who rise up, just like the deacons. It needs to be men and women who stand up and say, "Yes, I will do whatever it takes to get to the point where I can take a part of this ministry." This church is fast. If Jesus carries this government, it is fast coming out of the room. It is fast coming out of the reaches of one person being able to do it all. God has to raise up that leadership. So self-sufficient, self-sustaining.
- Self-Cleaning Then the third thing every church needs to be, self-cleaning. I know from day one, and I told you this from day one, we got the Dung Gate. The Dung Gate was not where something came in, it is where something came out. It is where, to put it politely and nicely

and in a gentleman way, what they took out the trash. You notice we do not have a visitation program here. Almost in every Baptist church in this city on Saturday morning or some night during the week, they are out knocking on doors. They are trying to chase people who do not want to get caught. I learned years and years ago that what a waste of time that is. If you come to this church, you notice we do not ask you to sign anything so we can get your name under the pretense to, what would you find on a visitor card? Let me tell you, so if you ever go to another church, you do not fill one out. You know what that is? That is a trap play up the middle. They want, they pretend like they just want you to sign so they can read your name. They are going to hand it off somebody and sometime this week, they are going to come knocking on your door. "See, did you like it? Are you going to come back? We would love to have you." Hey, you know what? One, I do not like you. I do not ever care if you come back and I do not care if you like me or you did not. How is that? But do not take that wrong. That is just the way it is. I do not care whether you like it or not because you know what? This church is not for everybody. I know that. I do not want it to be a bad experience for you but I do not want it to be a bad one for me either. So you know what? When I get up in that pulpit, I just preach the Bible as straight and as hot and as true as I know how to do it and let the Holy Spirit of God deal with you on it because this church is self-cleaning. There are people that come and hear one sermon from me and say, "Whoop, ho ho, that is not the place I want to be." There are other people that come here and say, "That is exactly what I am looking for." Oh, shut up. I learned a great lesson many years ago and I got a great education of watching some of the greatest, phoniest preachers the world has ever seen. I watched a guy one time had a situation where a girl was going to a Bible college. She suddenly came home. I was the youth college and career director at that time. This girl suddenly popped up not going to college anymore. That Sunday, she is up before the whole congregation. She had a beautiful voice. She is singing like the angels off the banisters of heaven. Well, I, you know, what goes around comes around and sooner or later it got into my ear from somebody that she got kicked out of Bible college for drug use. So me, stupid me, duh, being up in front of people and drug use does not really match. So I called the college and I said, "Hey, I am pastor so and so and I know you are the dean of women or woman dean or dean, Miss Dean, woman or whatever you are." I said, "Let me ask, tell you my situation." I said, and I explained to him, I said, "Is so and so, so and so, does she get kicked out of your college?" I said, "I am a pastor." I said, "She is in our church now. And I want to help her all true." I said, "Did she get kicked out of the church for a problem?" Did not even ask what the problem was. The lady said, "Yes, I am sorry to say that she was involved in a situation." I said, "Well, may I ask, you know, what the situation was? I mean, I am going to have to deal with it at some point up here, duh." She said, "Yeah, well, she was involved in a drug situation and we thought eight or nine students got expelled and she was expelled and will not be able to come back." So duh, me go to the pastor. I said, "Preacher, see, this is before I shot the white horse. Remember that story? This is before I shot the white horse. He still, you can, if you listen carefully, you can hear the steel hooves galloping on the tarmac coming down to the pastor's office." I said, "Now I said, pastor, I said, we got a situation." Did not say anything. Now, that should have been my first clue. But I am still young and green. I said, "We got a problem." "Okay, here is the problem." Say, I mean, I am expecting to say, "Oh really, what is

the problem?" Did not say anything. Now, if I would go into that same situation and say, "Pastor, we got a problem," he just looked at me and say, "You know what, I was a headache, but I feel better now, I am going to go." I said, "Do you know so and so that sang Sunday was kicked out of Bible college for drugs?" He says, "No, I did not know that." I said, "Yeah, and I said, I will tell you what, I said, it is a bad testimony for her being kicked out on drugs." I said, "You know the problems I have had with this music situation here. It is a bad deal. She got kicked out on drugs in that down and now she is singing up there for everybody." I said, "It is wrong, it is wrong." He says to me, "I will take care of it." You know how he took care of it? He called the Bible college, found out who the woman that told me was and got her fired. You know the second thing he did? He called me back in and he told me. He said, "The bottom line is this, Bob." He says, "Do not ever mess with a family like that in our church." He is a deacon in this church. And he has got a lot of influence. Let me translate that for you. He is a heavy giver in this church and he has got a lot of political clout and I need him. So whether his daughter did what was right or wrong is not the issue here, stay out of it. Then he said to me, "And I got that teacher down there or that fired from her job and I want you to know that." Well, I felt terrible. I tried to call the thing, she hung up on me because you know whose fault it is now? It is my fault. But I learned a great lesson. I learned a great lesson. Now later on that same guy turned on him and just about killed him. But I learned a great lesson. You can never build a church on one family. You cannot. There is never one person that you are going to wrap the church around. Never one family you are going to say, "Oh, we have got to have them." Boy, I learned that lesson quick, man. Learned that lesson quick. I am telling you, this church is not for everybody. I mean, I will be very honest with you. If you can find, those things do not bother you. If you can find a better pastor, that will be a better pastor to you than me. If you can find a better church, that will be a better church for you, you need to be out of here and get there tomorrow. That is your job and responsibility. I want no loyalty from you to me. I want loyalty from you to the book. If you get the loyalty to the book, I will have it in all the right areas that I need to have it. If you know that your job is to protect in a doctrine of this church, then you know what? Then that is where we will lie right down the bottom line and it does not make a difference. But I have been in too many scenarios over the years. Too many scenarios over the years. And where you see a pastor for political reasons or for monetary gains. I have seen him, I have seen him kiss the rear ends of judges. I have seen him bootlick politicians. I have seen him invite this person in or this person in. I have seen him give them positions all based on the fact of who they are and how much money they make a year. Let me tell you something, it is just wrong. It is just wrong. If you are going to build a church, yes, it needs to be self-sustaining. No question about it. Yes, it needs to be self-sufficient, but it needs to be self-cleaning. You never alter what you preach to please somebody out there that may not like what you are going to say. The moment you do, you need to go get a car job doing something else. In my Bible, we will add in 3 John. There are two men in 3 John. One's name is Gaius, one of them is Diotrephes. One is a good man, one is an evil man. There is a great lesson in that because in building a church, gentlemen, you are going to find that you have Gaiuses and you are going to find Diotrephes. Gaiuses are men that are faithful. The Diotrephes are men who grow up in your ministry, who are going to circumvent what you do. In my Bible, if you ever get a chance to look at it,

and I suggest you do not, you will find all 10 or 11 names in there over the years of my Diotrephes in life. Men who have come to the place that come up into my ministry, thought they knew more about it than I did, come to the place that they wanted a pastor but did not want to do it the way they needed to do, and then try to come to the place where they caused some kind of problems in your ministry and try to come to the place where they behind a deal, they try to steal people out. They go over there and they will say things like this, "Well, you know, Bob used to be a really good preacher, but God showed me, I got a guy right now that, you know what, he has been in the ministry for nine years, nine years, he is meeting a little hotel room. After nine years, he has got 12 people. And if you met with him today, here is what he would tell you. He has told my other pastor guys this, and I love it. I think it is great."