

Building the Gates

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Preacher: Brother Stephenson

[0:00] Okay, is that on?

Yeah. All right. Thank you so much for having us up. We've been looking forward to it. My name is Josh Stevenson, and this is my lovely wife, Shannon. We have been married now for 22 years, I believe, almost 22 years, in December.

We have three kids, and our oldest is 20 years old. We have a son, a daughter, and then a younger son. We both went down to PBI, graduated, and then moved out to San Diego two days after graduation.

I don't recommend that everybody does that, but that's what we did. And I ended up starting, I was in a Spanish church that had an English ministry.

Most of the times, it's the other way around, where you have an English church and a Spanish ministry, but that's how it was set up, and the people were very gracious. That was the first church that I pastored.

[1:15] And after about four years of that, the senior pastor stepped down. I took over the whole church. It was about 400 people. It's a little challenging, though, to do services bilingual.

I don't want to make you think I speak Spanish. I had a translator, so I don't speak Spanish. And we did that for about nine months. And they wanted a Spanish pastor, and so there were some Spanish pastors that were going to candidate for the church.

But they kind of didn't want to, out of respect for me being there. So the church, I got together. I said, well, hey, listen, I've always wanted to go to El Cajon, which is where I am now. Why don't you guys have a good sending out for us?

And then you guys can have a Spanish pastor. I'll be in El Cajon, where the Lord's called me. And we had a great Sunday. They sent us out. And our first Sunday at the church we're at now, Bible Believers Baptist Church, was in our apartment.

So you could imagine how that is, having to set up, especially when you have three little ones. And my pulpit was an ironing board.

[2:19] That was my pulpit. Oh, there. That was. That was. And we were there for about two months. And then the Lord eventually moved us on. Now we're renting a building. It's not as nice as this.

This is a really nice building that you guys have here. But we rent a building, believe it or not, from a unity church is who we rent from. Could you imagine that? So we're going to sing a song for you here.

And I hope it's a blessing to you. I have decided to follow Jesus.

I have decided to follow Jesus. I have decided to follow Jesus.

I'll stand for Jesus.

[3:24] And let the world go by. I'll claim his promise. He will supply.

We'll walk together. Just the Lord and I. I'll stand for Jesus.

And let the world go by. In a world filled with pleasure. We're tempted and tried.

The more that we have here on this earth. The less we're satisfied. The only thing that's lasting.

Comes from on high. I'll stand for Jesus. And let the world go by. I'll stand for Jesus.

[4:24] And let the world go by. I'll claim his promise. He will supply.

We'll walk together. Just the Lord and I. I'll stand for Jesus. And let the world go by.

When it's time to depart. This old body of mine. I don't want to have one thing.

I can't leave behind. I want to be free. To sail through the sky. That's why I'm standing for Jesus.

And let the world go by. I'll stand for Jesus. I'll stand for Jesus. And let the world go by.

[5:28] I'll claim his promise. He will supply. We'll walk together. Just the Lord and I.

I'll stand for Jesus. I'll stand for Jesus. And let the world go by. I'll stand for Jesus. I'll stand for Jesus.

I'll stand for Jesus. And let the world go by. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Yeah, you don't mind. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. It's good to be saved. Here you are in church on a Friday night.

That is a blessing. That is a real blessing. I imagine some of you could look back and look at what it was in your BC days as before Christ. And you look at some of the things that you were doing.

[6:34] And now you're doing something that has eternal value to it. And so if you would take your Bible and go to the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah chapter 2.

Nehemiah chapter 2. So like I said, I've been a pastor for 21 years. And I don't get out and preach too often in other places.

I appreciate the opportunity to come and preach up here. And I understand the great responsibility that any man has when he stands behind a pulpit. And so I prayed and I said, Lord, what exactly do these folks need?

I mean, I don't know you, but I know that the Lord knows you. And I believe that the same Holy Spirit of God that's living inside of me, if you're saved, he's living inside of you.

And so as the brother prayed earlier, Lord, may something happen between the preacher and the people that only he can do. And so I'm going to preach a message about building.

[7:40] I want to be a help to you. I want to build you up. And I know that the only one that can do that is the Lord. And the Bible says that his book is able to build us up.

And so I'd like to look together in Nehemiah chapter 2 and verse 18. Nehemiah 2 verse 18. Then I, that's Nehemiah, told them of the hand of my God, which was good upon me, as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me.

And they said, let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. So if you've ever read the book of Nehemiah, you know that he had a burden for his city, Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a very special place. That is the place where God said that he would put his name. It's in a very important place. God put his name there. And at the time Nehemiah shows up, it is in absolute ruins.

And if you've read the book of Nehemiah, you know that he goes and he scouts out the city. He sees the terrible condition that it's in. And he has this great burden that's on him.

[9:02] He tells the people that people hear about it. And they say, hey, we are behind you, Nehemiah. Let's rise up and build. Notice it's called a good work at the end of verse 18.

Now, if you look at chapter 3 of Nehemiah, you'll notice that in this chapter, it tells everyone who's building. They're building this wall that's in shambles.

In verse 1, it says, Then Eliashib, the high priest, rose up with his brother and the priests, and they builded the sheep gate. They sanctified it and set up the doors of it, even under the tower of Mia. They sanctified it under the tower of Hananel. Now, they're building a wall. And a wall is built. You build a wall to keep things out, to protect the things that are in.

They had to build this wall. It was torn down. It needed to be built. If not, people were going to come in. And they were vulnerable. They were vulnerable to attack. And so they needed to build this wall.

[10:05] Now, as they were building the wall in this particular chapter, you're going to notice that they mention gates. The very first gate that's mentioned is found in our first verse there. Chapter 3, verse 1.

It's the sheep gate. And there's different gates that are mentioned throughout this city. All around that they're building around the wall. And each person builds at different sections of the wall.

And certain people have certain gates to build. Now, the gate is there. The purpose of a gate, it opens and it closes. It lets certain things in that you want to let them in. But then it's there.

You lock it up because you want to keep certain things out. There are things you want to come in. But there are other things you don't want to come in. And so you need to have a gate there to help

keep that thing out.

Now, tonight, as we look into this passage about building the Christian, building you. You and I are building. And the Bible tells us that we're supposed to build.

[11:00] And as a matter of fact, the Bible says that there is a foundation that we're building upon. And that foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ. Right? 1 Corinthians chapter 3. Now, if any man build upon this foundation, then it goes on and it tells you the rest of what's going to happen at the judgment seat of Christ.

And so tonight, very simple message. I'd like to look at these gates. Because I think there are certain things that a Christian ought to learn throughout his Christian life.

The things he can build in his life. And I don't think this is an exhaustive list. But I'd like to look at these gates here tonight. I think we can draw some really good lessons on some things that a Christian ought to learn in their Christian life.

As they're building and preparing to get to the judgment seat of Christ. So, let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, I want to thank you for the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Thank you for the opportunity to be able to preach your word here tonight. Lord, you know what these people need.

Father, I don't. Lord, this is the message that you've laid upon my heart. Father, I will mess it up. If I'm left to my own devices, my own flesh, my own way of doing things, my own thinking, my own talents.

[12:16] Father, this message will flop. And so, Lord, I plead the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I ask for forgiveness of my sins. I pray for a filling of the Holy Spirit of God. May you bless your word now.

And may it help your people. As we learn some things that a Christian ought to learn in their life. We love you and ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Now, notice here the first gate is found in verse 1.

Now, the first gate is the sheep gate. So, I started looking at that gate. And I said, well, what in the world is that sheep gate? I noticed that it's mentioned first here in the text.

And you have a sheep gate. That is the first gate that is mentioned. And I thought, I know what that has to do with. That has to do with salvation. And the first thing you've got to get established is your salvation.

So, I would like to say, if you're not saved here tonight, that's step one. You need to get saved. But then, folks, did you realize that if you are saved, that the Lord did a whole bunch of things to you? There's a lot of transactions that took place the moment you got saved that you ought to learn about.

[13:18] So, for example, when I got saved, all I knew is I did not want to go to hell. I was five years old. And my parents were sitting in the living room. And I'll never forget it because my mom was sitting here.

My dad was sitting here. I was sitting in my mom's lap. My mom at the time was lost. She was a good Roman Catholic all her life. My little sister, my kid sister was up at the table.

And she was playing with whatever she was doing. I don't know if she was doing, but she was playing with something. And so, my dad didn't know how to witness. He had gotten saved as a 20-year-old Navy man over in Honolulu, Hawaii.

You could imagine here a 20-year-old man. He's single. He has everything life has to offer. He's away in a foreign land. He has freedom. He has wine, women, and song.

But he was missing something. He grew up in a Methodist church. He was a good young man. He calls up his mom on the telephone and he says to his mom, he says, Mom, there has to be something else in this life.

[14:17] She was lost herself. She had grown up Methodist. She was a good woman. She was a religious woman. But you and I both know religion doesn't save you. Salvation is not in a religion.

It's not in a creed. It's not in something you do. Salvation is in a person. It's in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, my dad, my grandma talked to him and said, Well, son, it's going to be all right.

You'll be okay. You'll figure it out. So, he hung up the phone with my mom. He starts walking down the street and he hears this loud-mouthed street preacher. And he's in a park and he's preaching, you know.

For God so loved the world. I don't know exactly what he's preaching, but he's preaching, you know. You've seen a street player. You've done that before. He's preaching, right? And my dad heard it and the guy said to him, the guy was preaching and he said, If you want to get saved, you come down here and we will show you how to get saved.

My dad was up there. He was the furthest one away. He ran all the way down there and he got saved. Now, you know, a lot of times when people get saved, they don't get plugged into a church and they don't really grow.

[15:17] And that's what happened to him. He didn't really grow. Finally, he came back here to the mainland here. And we were in San Diego, California. And my dad got a hold of a gospel track.

And he knew he wanted a witness to his son. That's me. And he wanted to tell me how to be saved. So we're sitting there on the floor and cross-legged in the living room. My dad's reading me that track. And he's explaining it to me the best way he can.

And I only knew one thing. I knew I didn't want to go to hell. And that day I bowed my head and trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. Now, a few years later, you know, sometimes what happens when you get saved young.

I don't know if this ever happens if some of you got saved young. A few years later, I was around 12 years old. My mom's saved by this time. And I'll tell you her story, another message. My mom gets saved, and she's teaching a Sunday school class on hell.

I was 12 years old, and I'm like, I do not want to go to hell. I got to make sure I'm not going to hell. And so I re-upped, you know. You know, I made sure.

[16:17] I got to be sure. Well, I tell you, all I knew, all I knew when I got saved is I wouldn't go into hell. That's all I knew. I didn't know anything else.

I didn't know that at the moment I did that, that I called upon the Lord and asked the Lord Jesus Christ to save me. I put my faith and trust in what Jesus Christ said. I didn't know all the transactions that took place.

I didn't know I was redeemed instantaneously like that. I didn't know I was adopted into a new family. I didn't know I was sanctified. I didn't know that Christ was made my propitiation.

He made peace with God on my behalf. I didn't know that I had the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, that spiritual circumcision had taken place, that I was placed in Christ, that I was complete in Him, that I was reconciled to God, and the list goes on.

Aren't you glad of the things that you have learned since then? What took place the moment you got saved? You didn't even know that at the time. You know, I want to tell you, if you don't know about these things, some of these things sound foreign to you, why don't you start there?

[17:21] Learn about the things that happened to you, then you got saved, because I'll tell you what, it'll make you appreciate the Lord even more. It'll make you realize you cannot lose your salvation. You don't have to keep trying to hang on.

The Lord's got you. You're going to be all right. And then go forward and live for Him. So the first thing is the sheep gate. By the way, did you notice who was building the sheep gate?

It says in verse 1, Then Eliashib the high priest. I thought that was interesting, that the high priest was the one there at the sheep gate, and you know that the Lord Jesus Christ is our high priest. Now let's look at the next gate. The next gate. So what else should a Christian learn as they're building and preparing for the judgment seat of Christ? What else should we learn? Well, the next gate is found down in verse 3. Found in verse 3.

That's the next gate. The next gate is the fish gate. You guys see it there? The fish gate. So I thought, ah, fish gate. I know what that is. Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men.

[18:20] Ah, that has to do with soul winning. I know what that fish gate's all about. So you know what you ought to learn how to do? You ought to learn how to tell other people about Jesus Christ. That ought to be one of the first things a Christian ought to do.

Go tell somebody how you got saved. You know, it's blessing to watch young Christians when they first get saved and see that zeal. Boy, that sure is a blessing. We were out in the streets, street preaching this past Saturday.

And we have a lot of liberty. We can do that almost year-round in our town. Not a lot of towns, we can do that almost year-round in our town. And we were out street preaching on the street corner. And I was holding this sign.

And I looked over and one of my men was talking to this guy. He was all tatted up, you know. But it looked like it was a friendly conversation. And the guy turns around and he comes walking over and he was smiling from ear to ear.

Just smiling from ear to ear. And he was going to cross the street, but then he stopped and he walked over to us and he shook our hand. He goes, man, I am so excited to see you guys out here. This is absolutely amazing.

[19:18] Do you guys do this all the time? We talked to him a little bit. Come to find out, his name is Justin. He's been saved for 11 months. Now get this, this guy, before he got saved, was a cross-dressing bisexual and that close to getting transgender surgery.

And God saved that man. Man, he was standing there with a big old grin on his face and just looking around. And he had been in his Bible for 11 months.

You could tell he was just talking Bible. And he goes to a church in our town whose name is actually not found in their Bible. They use the NIV. Calvary and they don't have the word Calvary in their Bible.

I won't tell you the name of the church. But anyway, they don't have that in there. So anyway, so this guy, he's standing there, but he got a hold of a King James Bible. Man, he was reading that thing and he was eating that thing up.

And he was standing there and he goes, man, this is kind of cool. I said, Justin, you want to hang out with us? And he goes, yeah. I said, you want to hold a sign? Yeah.

[20:20] So I handed him my sign. And so he's standing there, he's holding there. I have one of Dr. Ruckman's big old sign. I have it there and he's holding one of these signs. And he goes, I need to call my mom and let her know that I was on my way home.

I need to let her know what I was doing. So he calls up his mom and he goes, hey mom, yeah, I'm not going to be there. I'm street evangelizing. Yeah. He was all excited.

And one of my guys steps up and he preaches. And this guy's going, amen. Man, that's good.

That's good. And he goes, man, I can't remember all that stuff. He had done drugs and things. I can't remember all that stuff.

And I'm glad you guys can memorize it and preach it. I said, you know, sometimes what we do, Justin, is I have some of my guys read from the Bible. They'll read it out loud. And Justin goes, I wish I could do that.

I said, Justin, would you like to read a verse of Scripture out loud? Yeah. Yeah. Here's this guy he took and he stood up and he just, I said, read this past. I gave him Romans chapter 10 verses 9 through 13.

[21:19] I said, read that out loud. He read that two times through out loud to the crowd there. Man, he was just beaming. You know what he wanted to do? He just wanted to tell people what had happened to him. And he didn't have all the answers.

He didn't have all the answers. He didn't know all the, you know, the ins and outs. He couldn't rightly divide nothing, man. He didn't know. He already knew anything. But he knew he was saved. He knew he wasn't going to hell. And he knew he wanted other people to know about it.

You know, I'll tell you what. I'm not really good fisherman. I'm actually terrible at it. If you want to catch fish, don't take me. I'm terrible at it.

But every once in a while, because I go every once in a while, every once in a while when I go out fishing, I catch a fish. Not all the time, but every once in a while. You know what the Lord said?

Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men. You may not always lead somebody to the Lord Jesus Christ, but if you'll try, eventually you'll catch someone.

[22:15] We have a young lady in our church. Her name is Bernice. Bernice has only been with us now for maybe four months, maybe. She's been saved about that long. She came out of a church where it's prosperity gospel.

You can lose your salvation. She didn't know nothing. She's very, a lot of trauma in her life. Man, she got into church and she got excited. And she's, you guys know who Gene Kim is? Okay, so she's watching some of his stuff and watching how to witness. And I gave her some stuff here. This is what you use. Watch this. Learn how to witness. You'll be all right. So she's studying. She's learning. She's preaching. I don't know if I can witness. I don't know if I can do it. But she prepared herself in the event that she could have a chance to witness that she would be able to witness in the event.

So she was ready. Well, she had a loved one die in the family. And she was parking her car and she accidentally locked her keys in the car.

[23:17] And so when she locked her keys in the car, she had to call somebody for help. While she was calling somebody for help, a couple of her little niece and nephew came walking up. They're about, what, 11 and 12, I think, or two nieces.

They're about 11 or 12 years old. And they come walking up and start talking to Bernice. And they look at Bernice and they said, Man, I'm really sad. I think it was Grandma. I'm really sorry that Grandma went home to be with Grandma died.

And Bernice said, Well, the nice thing is, as Grandma was saved, we know we'll see her in heaven one day. And you know what those little girls said to her? They said, Well, we're scared of dying. We don't want to go to hell.

We want to go to heaven. And Bernice said, You know, you can know how to go to heaven. And they went, Oh, because you've got to be a good person and go to church. She says, Oh, no. No, no, no. That's not how you do it. Well, then, how do you go to heaven, the nieces said. And she said, Well, let me tell you. And a few minutes later, after the keys had accidentally got locked in the car, Bernice got to lead her two nieces to the Lord.

[24:19] You see, sometimes you just try. Just prepare. Just have some tracks. Just start learning. Maybe you'll be like me when it comes to fishing. Maybe every once in a while you'll catch fish.

Maybe you'll catch one. All right, so the second gate that you need to learn is the fish gate. The fish gate. Now, notice the next gate that I like to point out is down in verse 6.

In verse 6, the next gate is the old gate. It's the old gate. Now, here's what it says about the old gate. It says in verse 6, Moreover, the old gate repaired Jehoiada, the son of Paseah.

I don't know how to pronounce his name. Hopefully give the Lord a good laugh because I pronounced it weird. Now, this is the old gate. So I thought, what in the world is the old gate? So I know if I'm going to learn my Bible, I've got to compare Scripture with Scripture.

So I'm going to turn over to Jeremiah 6, if you'd like to go with me. Jeremiah chapter 6. Jeremiah chapter 6 and verse 16.

[25:32] Thus saith the Lord, Stand in the ways and see and ask for the old paths. Where is the good way?

And walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. You know what that old gate reminds me of?

That old gate reminds me of those old paths. Some of the old ways of doing things that the Lord called them good. They're good. You know what I've noticed? I've noticed there's a departure from the old ways of doing things.

There's a departure from it. You see, nowadays, there's a departure from that old King James Bible. That book that has started many revivals. That book that has borne so much fruit.

There's a departure from this book. Some people want something else. They want something that's more palatable. Why is it that we have to have a Bible that brings God down to our level?

[26:33] Did you notice that about a lot of these Bibles? It's like they want to bring God down to our level. I don't want God coming down to my level. Man, I want to go up to His. As a matter of fact, you can just take me right now.

Take me all the way. You know what? There are some old paths that are good. This is an old path that's good.

I like these old hymns. I was talking to my church about this the other day. And I told my church, I said, you know what? I like the hymns. And every once in a while, I don't know if you've ever gotten

this pressure. But over the years, I've gotten pressure.

And I've had people leave because we sang the hymns. And they didn't like it. They're like, preacher, why can't we sing some of the other stuff? Why can't we do some of the other songs? And I said, no, I want to stick with this.

I'm going to stick with this. And I'm not going to switch over to the other songs. And I said, people say, well, preacher, I don't want to stay then. And they left. And they left because of that. And that's between them and the Lord.

[27:32] If that's what they wanted to do, that's fine. But you know what? I decided somewhere along the lines, I just put my stake in the sand. And I said, OK, for me, for me, this is my stake in the sand.

For me, this is my stake in the sand. And here's what I've noticed. I heard, I borrowed this illustration from others. You've probably heard other preachers use it.

But what has happened over the years is you have the world and you have the church. And then the world would move. And then the church would shift.

Now, there was still a gap between the world and the church. But over time, the church ended up being in the place that the world used to be years ago. And then time would move.

And then the church would move. World would move. Church would move. But it seems like nowadays. It seems like the world has moved. And the church just overlaps it. And I'll never forget my son and I, we were invited to a church one day.

[28:33] It's a big church in our town. We were invited to it. They have, I don't know if you have anything like this, but they have campuses around town. You have that. And so, like, the main pastor will be in a location.

And they kind of broadcast. So, this was the type of church we were going. We were invited for an Easter. It was on a Saturday night. I told my son, I said, let's go just so we can see what some of the other churches in town do.

I'm telling you something. We were sitting there and it was a full-on rock concert. They had Jesus Christ come in. Now, I don't know how you feel about Jesus. But I like these songs we're singing about Jesus.

And we're singing about how he died for us. He rose. I like all that stuff. I like magnifying him. I didn't like seeing Jesus coming out. And he had, he was dressed all in white.

But it was all leather. Leather jacket. Leather pants. They were ripped, you know. They had, I'm sorry, white jean pants. They were ripped. He had a white handkerchief coming out of his pocket. When he's doing the Last Supper, a scene of the Last Supper, he's high-fiving all the disciples coming down.

[29:41] What is this? I didn't know if I was in a church or if it was in the world. You know what? There's a reason for the old paths. There's a reason for doing some of the things that we do.

There's a reason for standards. There's a reason for these things. You ought to learn them. You ought to learn those things. You know, I'll give you this. There's one church in the book of Revelation that the Lord didn't have anything bad to say about.

And that was the church at Philadelphia. You want to know why? Because they kept his word. And that's the age that we need to try to model. Even though we live in the Laodicea and church age, where I'm telling you, if you want to get them in, it seems like you've got to do some type of gimmick to get them in.

Back in the day, you guys know, you've read church history. You know that just the preaching of the word of God was enough. I've read stories, man, and I wish I could have been there. I wish I could have been there when there's 10,000 people inside of a tabernacle.

And the preaching is done. People are wailing. They're crying out to God. The altars are filling up. You can feel the Holy Spirit of God moving throughout the congregation. And I think about those things.

[30:51] And then they would dismiss. But when they dismiss, they have to dismiss them out these doors because there was another 10,000 waiting out there to come in. I think to myself, oh, man, that must have been something.

I sure would love to be back then. But then one day I was coming across a passage. And it has to do with when they're building the temple in Ezra. Do you remember when they laid the foundation of the temple?

And do you remember when everybody, when there was two groups of people there, right? The old guys who remembered what it used to be like. And the young guys who didn't know anything different.

Do you remember? Do you remember the reactions? Now, the old guys were like, oh, this is nothing like Solomon's Day.

This is nothing like the temple that we used to have. And the young guys were over here. And they were like, woo-hoo-hoo-hoo! Glory to God! Hallelujah!

[31:50] I mean, they were having a good time. I'm sorry. Let me get dignified. Man, they were excited. And what did it tell you? It said you couldn't tell the difference between the people crying or the people rejoicing.

And then I thought. I thought, you know, I remember growing up even in the 70s and 80s. I remember hearing some of the adults talking about the way things used to be.

But I want to tell you. I want to tell you the same God that was there at Solomon's Temple is the same God that was there when they laid that foundation.

Is the same God that was there in the Philadelphia church age? Is the same God that was there when the big bus ministries were happening? One of the big Sunday schools that happened is the same God that's here now.

And we can have the same God be with us. And I said, man, we may not have a big crowd. I got a small church. We may not have a big crowd.

[32:49] But what is a big crowd if the Lord's not there in the middle of it? I'd rather have the Lord show up. I want the old pass.

I want the old pass. Now let's look at the next gate. Now, the next gate is a tough one. The next gate is found down in verse 13. It's called the valley gate.

The valley gate. Now, that shouldn't be too hard. Most of us have heard and read about valleys in the Christian life. And usually, a valley, we type that as going through trouble or going through some type of suffering or going through a dark time.

That's where we liken that valley to. I thought about that and I said, you know what? What do I need to learn from this? What is it that a Christian should learn from a valley?

Since we typically connect it with suffering, I believe a Christian ought to learn the benefits of suffering and the reason for it. We've been taught in our day and age that we live in that everything has to be just right.

[33:59] Everything has to be so. I mean, if our Wi-Fi goes out, we lose our minds. That's the day and age we live in. We can't handle any trouble, no toughness at all.

We live in a very soft society. But you know what the Lord will do every once in a while? Every once in a while, he'll bring suffering into a Christian's life. A little bit about myself.

When my wife and I, we went down to PBI. And we went down there. I went down with my whole family. My dad, my mom, myself, and my two sisters moved together to go to PBI.

My dad talked his best friend into moving his family and nine children to PBI. The oldest was their daughter, which is now my wife.

So that worked out for me. We're down there. Man, my dad loved the Lord. I wish you guys could have met my dad. My dad is a hundred times better man than I'll ever be.

[34:56] My dad was a good man. He loved his wife. He loved us kids. He's a good man. We're a year into Bible school. My dad starts getting sick. We go to the doctor.

You know how it goes to go to the doctor and they tell you it's gas? It was one of those. And they're like, oh, just take some Tums. It's going to be all right. So we took my dad. We go for months.

I'll never forget one night. My mom woke me up. Said, Josh, get out of bed. Dad's hurting. I went out in the living room and I found my dad, army sergeant, balled up on the floor in pain.

I got down on the floor and I didn't know what to do. And I just wrapped my arms around him. My mom and my sister got in the car and I went down to the store to find Tums because that's what

they told us. I just rocked my dad on the floor. I didn't know what to do.

Finally, we got the diagnosis. Somebody finally diagnosed him. He had pancreatic cancer. And if any of you know I hear the reactions, you know that that's pretty much a life sentence.

[35:57] Usually you only go a couple of months. My dad, the Lord, allowed my dad to go for an entire year, which is absolutely unheard of. They did a Whipple's procedure on him where they cut out a bunch of stuff in my dad.

I'll never forget we were there. We were around the, we were at the home there. My dad was, they had hospice come in. My dad was laying there on the bed. And you know how that is when it's time to go.

I'll never forget we were around and I watched as we sang hymns. Some of the people came up from the church. We sang hymns. The tears started rolling down my dad's cheek.

The last thing he said before he went into a coma, the morning he went to a coma, he was sitting with my mom. And he looks up and he goes, hey, hon, who is that?

My mom looked up and she said, there's no one there. And he went, oh. Man, my dad slipped off home to glory.

[36:57] I'm going to see my dad one day. You know what that was? That was a valley. My dad was my best friend. Some of you have been through valleys. I remember all I could do was get down on my knees.

And my prayer, I didn't know what to pray. And all I could pray was, oh God. Oh God! I didn't know what to say.

That was a valley. And God snatched the man that I was going to be, his associate. The guy who was going to be the best man at my wedding. The guy who would have made the best grandfather in the world.

And he took my friend, my counselor. And he yanked him out. And I'll tell you, there are some other folks. I don't know if you've ever done this.

But have you ever gone to the Lord and said, now Lord. I could have given you some options of who to take. But did you have to take him?

[37:59] But I know this. Whatever he does is right. The apostle Paul talks to the Lord. And he says, Lord, I got this thorn in the flesh. Well, you just take it away.

And they asked him three times. And the Lord told him, no. And he told him, my grace is sufficient for thee. So you know what Paul said?

Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities. That the power of Christ may rest upon me. Somehow, American Christianity has been taught that valleys are due to some sin in your life. Some suffering may be due to sin in the life. But sometimes God brings suffering along for the sake of giving him glory and making you a better Christian. And doing something that's going to have eternal value to it.

There's a story in the Bible where the disciples walk along and they see this guy. He's born blind. And they look at Jesus and they say, Jesus, who sinned?

[39:06] This man or his parents that he was born blind? That question has stumped me. And maybe you guys know the answer to it. But why would that guy's sin be the reason he was born blind?

Wouldn't that be like the Lord punishing him in advance? I always wondered why they asked that question. You know the Lord correcting me. He says, no, neither. So that God's glory can be shown.

Suffering. The Lord does it for a reason. Now the Bible says, the Lord says, my grace is sufficient for thee. Have you ever needed grace? You ever needed grace? There is only one verse in the Bible where the two words help and need show up.

So if you need help. So if you need help, I'll show you the verse. Go to Hebrews chapter 4.

Hebrews 4. And notice what you get to help.

Hebrews 4 verse 15. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

[40:17] Here's where the two words help and need show up. Verse 16. Let us therefore come boldly under the throne of grace that we may obtain

mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

If you need grace, you need help, time of need, the Lord said you can go and get it. You can get it just like that. Instantaneously. I'll never forget watching my dad and he would be there and he would be and get the surges of pain.

And if you've ever been around a cancer patient, you know these surges of pain come on them. And I remember him crying out in pain. And you know what he was doing? He was praying for another brother who had cancer.

The guy's name was Brother Samples. And he goes, Oh God, help Brother Samples. Lord, be with him. I know he's hurting. While he's in pain.

Boy, that stuck with me. You know what the Lord did? The Lord brought my dad through that. He brought him through it. Took him home to glory. Now, let's look at the next gate. I'm going to go ahead and hurry up here.

[41:22] Notice verse 14. I don't want to keep you all night. I want to get some of that dessert. All right, notice verse 14. Now, the next one is called the dung gate. Do you need a more modern translation?

You know exactly what that means, right? The dung gate. The dung gate. So, comparing scripture with scripture. I found a verse over in Philippians chapter 3, verse 8. It says, Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

So, you know what I like to liken this dung gate to? It's to learning how to give things up for the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul gave things up for the Lord.

You need to learn how to give things up for Him. You know, not everything that you give up is going to be sin. There might be some things that the Lord might ask you to give up that are not sins at all. But yet, the Lord asks you to give it up. You know, a lot of times, He just wants to know if you're willing to give it up. But, that's the key. I'll give you an example. How many remember Abraham and Isaac?

[42:33] Are you with me on that? Abraham and Isaac. God told Abraham to kill his son. Sacrifice your son. Was Abraham willing to do it? He got that knife up in the air.

He was ready to plunge it down into his son until a voice said, Abraham, Abraham! You know a relief fell over Abraham when he heard that voice. I could imagine tears coming down that old man's face.

He had to tell Isaac somewhere along the line. I mean, he had to say, buddy. I mean, after he asked him, where's the sacrifice? Where's the lamb? Where is it? Don't worry, son. God will provide Himself a lamb.

They get up there and there's no lamb there. And finally, Abraham says, you're it, boy. So, Isaac, you know, he had to lay his life down. Being a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's not going to, an old man not going to be able to fight with that teenager.

So, he takes him and he ties him up there and he puts him up there on that altar. And he takes that old knife and he raises up in the air. Because God's asking him to give up the one thing that he loves most.

[43:39] He loves his son. And God says, will you give up the thing you love the most when you do it because I asked you to do it? That's hard.

You know what the Lord might be asking? Will you give up your Isaac? Will you be willing to give it up to the Lord?

I promise you this, the Lord will never take anything from you for the purpose of simply hurting you. He doesn't do that. He's not that kind of God. He's a good God.

He's a good God. Now, the next one I want to look at is found in verse 15. The next one is the gate of the fountain. The gate of the fountain.

So, I looked up the word fountain in the Bible and found out that fountain seems to have something to do with life. It says this in Proverbs 13, 14. The law of the wise is a fountain of life.

[44:39] Proverbs 14, 27 says the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life. Ecclesiastes 12, 6 says when talking poetically about someone dying, it says, Or ever the silver cord be loosed or a golden bowl be broken or the pitcher be broken at the fountain.

A fountain is a source where people come to get water. Jeremiah 6, verse 7, it says, As a fountain casteth out her waters. Then, of course, in Revelation 21, in verse 6, it says, I will give unto him that is a thirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

So, I thought about that fountain. That fountain has to do something with life. Now, maybe you make another connection, but in my Bible tells me in the book of James that there is something that you have that death and life are both found in it.

And that thing is the tongue. Bible says death and life are in the power of the tongue. If you're anything like me, I seem to be the kind of guy who opens mouth, inserts foot, and chews vigorously. I'm the kind of guy that when I'm digging a hole and see that I'm digging a hole, I continue to dig the hole. That seems to be my modus operandi.

[46:04] Is there anyone in here just for sake of comforting me? Is there anyone here who's ever said anything foolish? Who has ever had their mouth get them into trouble? Can I get an amen? Thank you.

You have helped this preacher feel good. Misery loves company. Boy, the destruction that our tongue can do. It is really easy to tear down, but it's harder to build up.

It's really easy to tear down somebody or tear down a child, tear down a spouse, tear down whatever.

That's easy. Doesn't take a lot of thought. Doesn't even take a lot of effort. And I've got to be honest. Sometimes, and I'll just, confession's good for the soul. Sometimes my flesh enjoys it. I enjoy saying some things that, you know, that's not very nice. But you know what takes effort? What takes effort is building up. You know what it says about that Proverbs 31 woman?

[47:05] It says that in her tongue is the law of kindness. It's more effort to say a kind word than it is an unkind word. It takes effort.

And sometimes you've got to think about it. And sometimes you've got to put your pride down. And sometimes you've got to say, I don't want to be kind to them. I just don't want to be.

But you know what comes to my mind? What comes to my mind is the verse that we teach our kids in the Sunday school class. Sometimes I have to remember.

Man, I'm preaching to myself big time on this point. Sometimes I've got to remember. You know what? I ain't all that in a bag of chips. Sometimes my way is not always the right way. You know what I'm talking about?

You ever found somebody that their way is always the right way? And the way everybody else is doing is the wrong way. They know the right way. Well, sometimes my way is not the right way. And sometimes I've got to be careful what I say.

[48:05] And I find my biggest enemy. My biggest enemy is not the person that I'm lashing out at. It's actually this guy right here and the pride that's in my heart.

Because I know I've got to put down my pride to say something nice. All right, Lord, he is handsome. Okay, all right, say something. You know, if you want to get control of what you say, I'll tell you where to start.

The Bible says it starts in the heart. Because it says, for of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaketh. Let's move on quickly.

Notice now the next gate is found in verse 26. It's the water gate. There's only 53 more gates, so we'll get out of here quickly. The water gate.

The water gate. Well, I know what water is good for. Water is good for several things. Water is good for drinking. Water is good for cleaning. It's good for generating electricity, putting out fires. In large quantities and with the right amount of wind, it can become a powerful destructive force.

[49:13] And you know what water is also good for? It's good for enjoyment. You ever just been on a hot day and get yourself some water and enjoy it. You know what my Bible is likened unto? It's likened unto water.

It's likened unto water. And so may I remind you a couple of things about this book. It's not meant to just sit on a shelf. That's not where it's meant at all. It's meant to quench your thirst when you're thirsty.

It's meant to keep you clean by daily rinsing in it. It's where the power is from because the Bible says where the word of a king is, there is power. It's for putting out fires.

In one day, God might allow you to use the word of God to destroy some arguments that the enemy throws at Christianity. May I also remind you that this book right here, like water is good simply for enjoyment.

Sometimes this book is just enjoyable. You know, I think a lot of times we fall into a trap in our Bible reading. I'm saying us. We fall into this trap.

[50:14] I'm very well acquainted with this because I do it all the time. I'm reading. And then I wake up and realize I've read a paragraph and I didn't even know what I read.

Anybody ever had that before? Like, what happened? So I say to myself, I say, I started doing this. I started saying, aha, I see what you're doing, flesh. There was something in there that you knew the Lord was going to give me.

I know you, you rotten guy. And so I go back where I started daydreaming. And then I start and almost nine times out of 10, I find something like, aha, I knew it. I knew it was there. But, you know, sometimes I think we get to read in this book and it becomes a checklist.

I'll read my whatever pages. I don't know. Maybe you read. Maybe you're super spiritual. Maybe we like 50 pages a day. All right. So I'm going to read 50 pages a day. That's great, man. I wish I could do that. I can't do that. So I'm going to read my 50 pages a day.

Check that thing off. Maybe it's five pages a day, whatever it is. Don't forget that this book is also for your enjoyment. You sit there and enjoy this day and read and say, man, you're a good writer.

[51:17] Look at that word that you used. Wow. That is amazing. You write a good book. You're on my bestseller.

You know, use it for enjoyment. Get enjoyment out of it. All right. Take your Bible. Well, here, I won't turn. That's that habit. You know, as preachers, sometimes we'll say, take your Bible.

I just slipped into one of those habits. Look now at verse 28. And notice the next gate. The next gate is the horse gate. The horse gate. Now, you got to turn over to Job to see this one.

Job. The horse gate. What is this horse gate about? Job 39. I guess I should tell you the chapter. Job 39. Job 39 and verse 19.

Notice he says, Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?

[52:18] The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He pawth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength. He goeth on to meet the armed man.

You know what this horse is doing? This horse is getting ready to go into battle. That horse is standing there in battle and he pawth at the valley. Lester Olaf preached a message years ago that my dad loved. And the message was, have you lost your paw?

He said, I didn't say, have you lost your paw? I said, have you lost your paw? And that horse pawing in the valley, it's doing this. It wants to charge.

It wants to go into battle. I read about some horses one time that they had, I think it was during World War I, and they had brought them back and they were going to have to put the horses down. They had served in the military, but this guy didn't want to do that and wanted to let the horses out to pasture and take care of the horses.

And so he did. He took the horses out to pasture and they were wounded. They had all sorts of scrapes and they were just wounded. They were hurting. They were hurt horses. He got there one morning. It was early in the morning and he watched those horses and all of a sudden they did something really strange.

[53:22] They all got together and these horses lined up in a line and then they took off running across the pasture all the way to the other side and then stopped and then went out and started grazing.

You know what those horses were doing? They were charging like they were charging into battle. I'd like to liken this horse gate to the battle. And I want to ask you, have you lost your paw?

Remember when you used to be in the battle? Remember when you used to be in the fight?

Remember when you just were itching to do something for the Lord? I want to encourage you.

The fight's not over. The trumpet hasn't sounded. You can still do something for the Lord. I got this lady who comes to my church. Sister, she is in a wheelchair. She comes to my church.

She's an older lady. She can't do anything. She used to be able to go out and do so. She can't do anything anymore. So somebody started, right about this time she started coming to church,

somebody said, Preacher, we want to start a ministry to the shut-ins.

[54:26] I said, man, that's a great ministry and we're just getting this thing started off the ground. And this woman came up to me and she says, Pastor, she said, I can't do much. She said, but I got these little paintings that I do and I write a little poem and I write a little prayer.

Father, do you know anything I can do with this? I said, sis, I know exactly what you can do. We got some shut-ins that would love to have that picture and that poem and that prayer.

Man, her face lit up. You know why? She realized there was still something for her to do. If you're still kicking, there's something for you to do. You can still be in the fight.

You can still do something for the Lord. If you say, I don't know what I can do, well, here's what you do. Why don't tonight, if you're able to, why don't you come down to an altar? Say, Lord, show me what I can do.

You say, I can't make it down to an altar. Can you make it there in your seat? The question is, are you willing? The fight's not over. It'll be over soon.

[55:34] Don't quit. Don't quit. Now in verse, same chapter of Nehemiah, we have two gates left. We have the east gate. The east gate found in verse 29.

The end of the verse there. This guy is the keeper of the east gate. Now this east gate is found over in Ezekiel 44. This east gate has to do with the Lord's return.

So I'd like to remind you, Christian, tonight, you see the way things are going on around us, lift up your eyes. Your redemption draweth nigh. One day we're going to see the Lord, and we are going to get out of here.

It may be soon. And I feel like it's going to be soon. I mean, the temperature just feels like it's right there. But don't quit. Don't quit. Keep going. But, I mean, wouldn't it be a blessing if all of a sudden here you were, and you're out there, you're just doing whatever you can do.

I don't know what it is. Maybe you're cleaning the bathrooms. That's a good thing. Somebody needs to clean the bathrooms. Maybe you're vacuuming. Maybe you're handing out a tract. Maybe all you can do is pray. Maybe all you can do is lift up your preacher in prayer and say, God bless him.

[56:38] Help his family. Lord, help our church. Maybe that's all you can do. But wouldn't it be something if you're just doing what you can do just because you don't want to quit.

I don't want to give the devil what he wants and that is make us ineffective. I want to go down fighting. I want to go. If all I got left is just a... I just want to...

I just want to do something. If all I can do is slap him. I just want to do something. If all I can do is hand out of track. If all I can do is breathe. Whatever.

I want to do something. But one day when the Lord comes back, wouldn't it be great for him to find you doing what he wanted you to do? Now, last gate I want to look at is found in verse 31.

It's the gate of Mifkad. Mifkad. Mifkad. I looked at that and I said, wow, I don't know where else to find that in the Bible. What is Mifkad? Mifkad. So I grabbed my Smith's Bible dictionary and I looked for a definition.

[57:42] And the definition that it gave was the appointed place. And I said, oh, well, if that's what it means, the appointed place, I know what an appointment is.

My Bible tells me, and as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this, the judgment. So I thought about that and I said, you know what?

I need to learn to do. You know what Christians need to learn to do? They need to learn to die. You know, there's a daily dying where you die to self. But one day you and I are going to kick the bucket. We are going to be pushing up daisies, whatever you want to say it. We are going to die if the Lord tarries. Don't make this life where all your attention and focus is.

I've seen so many Christians who have wasted so many years because they made it all about this life. But one day when we get home to glory, 1,000, 2,000, 10,000 years in, this will be just a blip in time.

[58:52] Man, you won't even remember half the stuff here. You'll be enjoying eternity. That is where it is. The Bible tells us to lay up for

ourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt and where thieves do not break through or steal.

I would like to tell you, heaven is not a consolation prize. Heaven is our home. If you're not saved, though, heaven is not your home.

And if you die, you will go to a place called hell. So you don't have to go. I hope that tonight will be the night that you make sure of that. So in conclusion, there are three things I'd like to put before you to learn about the people that are building.

Notice in verse 1, there's a priest. Notice in verse 8, there's goldsmiths and an apothecary. In verse 12, there's a man with his daughter. In verse 15, there's a ruler.

That's a government official. Also found in verse 18 and 19. And God knew each of their names and where they were working for him. So the first thing I would like to tell you about building in conclusion is God knows that there's all kind of people building.

[60:12] We all build differently. The second challenge I'd like to give you is that some people were too good to work. In verse 5, the rulers would not put their necks to the work.

They were too good to work. I don't want to be that guy. The last thing that I want to leave with you is found in verse 20. Notice out of all the guys, there's one word God uses.

And he says about this guy, his name is Baruch. Do you see how it says he built? What's the word it uses? Earnestly.

I don't know if you put yourself into your Bible reading when you read. I don't know if you imagine it. But I often imagine what would that be like. Here's this guy and he's building. And he's getting this stone here.

And he's getting this stone here. I imagine somebody comes up and brings him another stone. And he goes, no, no, no, that's not a good stone. No, no, we don't. I want the best stone. This is my portion of the wall. I want this to be the best thing. I imagine somebody walking by looking at him and saying, man, that guy's a fanatic.

[61:16] Man, look at the way he is building. He is just all in. There is no stopping this guy. He's just all in on building that wall. But God noticed it.

And God said he earnestly built the wall. God notices how you build. God notices that. How is your building here tonight, my friend?

Let's all stand, head bowed and eyes are closed. If I could get the pianist to please play something softly on the piano. I'd like to offer you a chance to come and use an old-fashioned altar tonight.

Father, I want to thank you for your word. Thank you for the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Thank you, Lord, that you saved us and gave us something to do for you. Now, Lord, I really believe this is the message that you had for tonight.

But you know these people and we've already prayed that you would do what only you could do.

That is from the preacher to the people that you administer to hearts. So, Lord, I realize I've gone lengthy tonight.

[62:22] These people are so gracious. They paid attention. They were very attentive. So, Father, if you have dealt with someone's heart, may they move tonight and deal with you about that thing specifically.

Lord, if someone in here, maybe they have something that, some Isaac, something that you are asking them to be willing to give up for you.

May they be willing, Lord. Father, if someone has withdrawn from the fight, they're just getting tired, just don't want to put in any more effort, Lord, I don't fault them.

I ask that you give them strength, that you would encourage them. I know there have been times where I didn't want to go anymore. But your word says you give more grace.

Give these people grace. Lord, if someone's suffering, Lord, may they get grace to help in time of need. May they realize that every time you do something, it's always the right thing.

[63:33] You never do the wrong thing. That verse, we know all things work together for good. To them that love God, to them while they're called according to His purpose, that verse is still true. Sometimes we can't see it, we're in the middle of something.

Lord, we just trust You. We're not going to tarry long tonight. But if the Lord touched your heart about something here during a service, why don't you do business with Him?
This is your meeting. Some we've been praying together about for a few months now, asking the Lord to get in on it. I trust He worked in hearts tonight.
Brother, you want to lead us in this song? Let's pray about it. Let's pray about it.
Let's pray about it. Let's pray about it.