

Grace Bible Church
Pastor Robert R. McLaughlin
Tree Of Life
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“Repair The Gates, And, Watch Out For Snakes!”

In this week’s synopsis we will examine the following:

- Finishing up (for now) on our study of Nehemiah
- Power of prayer – and it’s a mandate!
- The importance of understanding typology in the Bible
- Religion and the mystery of the water
- Nicodemus revisited
- The natural mind cannot accept the things of God (1Co 2:14)
- The Son of man must be lifted up
- There are serpents, and there are serpents...
- The cosmic deception of “one-ism”
- Bronze is beautiful!

Before we begin our study of the word of God, the true infinite genius which God in His matchless grace condescends to share with us lowly fools for our benefit, let us take a moment to thank Him for providing everything pertaining to earthly life and eusebeia (spiritual life)(2Pe 1:3) and for the technology to allow the transmission of divine wisdom to every corner of the earth in mere moments, and acknowledge our sins to God the Father, agreeing with Him, so that we may have fellowship with the Holy Spirit, which is our teacher.

You’ve been hearing it a lot: -- Don’t ever become familiar with the

principles of the word of God, - consider the principle of rebound – when we put ourselves in a situation and become familiar with rebound and then we end up a mechanical robot –turning it into a ritual... and miss out on preparing my own self for the most important thing I will ever do being filled with the HS by means of grace and honoring God’s system that He has designed for us in the New Testament.

This week at Grace Bible Church we finish up (for now, Jason will revisit it and reveal some more principles from the book when he returns from some well-earned time off) Deacon Jason’s phenomenal study of the book of Nehemiah and the analogy of the repairing of the gates to the spiritual life and continue with our Christian Soldier Prep series. A lot of (or most of) churches and pulpits tell you *what* to do, but they don’t tell you *how* to do it, or only in vague terms. This is why so many believers think that we are just supposed to “try” to be like Christ by using our own human power and sheer force of will to transform ourselves. “How else would we do it?” they may ask.

But at Grace Bible Church we are so blessed to be taught systematic theology, which outlines the actual power options, invisible assets (per **2Pe 1:3**), and the PPOG, the actual day-to-day, moment-to-moment **HOW**. Armed with this gnosis knowledge, we have to volitional choice to believe it, turning it into epignosis knowledge which is a part of our soul structure, and then apply it, resulting in spiritual growth. Let’s take a moment to clear away all filthiness (known sins) and what remains of wickedness (unknown or forgotten sins) by utilizing **1Jo 1:9** and give thanks and praise to our amazing heavenly Father for blessing us with such a fantastic church, Pastor-Teacher, and our hard working Deacons, and also Samantha for their service in

providing for us all.

The many repairs by the Jewish people of Jerusalem, to the walls and gates under Nehemiah's leadership, show us how they worked in Unity to get the job done.

They did this regardless of whether they liked each other or not, so as we saw on Sunday that it takes Virtue love in the individual 's soul (proper thinking) or operation of virtue love by the whole, to allow the unity of the people (or The Spiritual Church) to occur.

They were able to accomplish the goal of the physical building and repairs needed that were carried out by putting their differences aside and focusing on the tasks at hand.

Now just like in the spiritual realm, we need to focus on the task at hand, which is glorification of God, by means of advancement in the Spiritual way of life. Follow the PPOG set by God and performed by TLJC as an example. Jesus was our prototype in His earthly ministry.

As we saw in chapter 4, the Jews' enemies who had destroyed the city gates saw the unity that happened and the result of it, and became alarmed, fearing that they might become strong again and become a threat to them (insecurity is the companion of the lost!). They recognized the power of God in it because they thought it impossible or them to repair the gates so quickly without supernatural help. This distressed them all the more, but oddly, didn't compel them to give up the unwinnable fight. They began to scheme a way they could disrupt this and keep the Jews from building up their defenses and prosperity to where it was before. The cosmic system will always attack individual believers or church organizations whenever we repair our gates and begin to build up our 10 battalions (10 PSD's), when they see us growing spiritually and glorifying God. They will scheme and plot just like in the scripture and seek to exploit any weakness or opportunity to knock us

down and discourage us from carrying on. We must expect this, but we have the opportunity to be prepared via maximum Bible doctrine resident in the soul.

One of the main ways they, in the book, and our cosmic adversaries in our modern-day lives, will do this is to destroy the unity we have built and set us against one another. The cosmic system always uses the “divide and conquer” strategy, because it is always effective. The devil even used the Jewish leaders and bankers against them, charging interest on the loans the workers took out to cover the loss of wages as they volunteered their services in the rebuilding. This is what is referred to today as “loan-sharking.” Opportunism is as old as the devil! Fortunately for them, they had a good leader in Nehemiah, who went to the chief priests and took care of that problem as soon as he heard of it.

So just like in our spiritual life, we also will go through the different types of suffering. Self-induced misery, unfair treatment, or consequences of our own negative choices, etc.... These sufferings can sometime make us sick through the afflictions and Pastor once said that the problem of the early Church was, they had lots of sickness (mental and physical). Prayer is a big factor in the spiritual life.

Jm 5:13-15 Is anyone among you afflicted? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

The word afflicted here in verse 13 is the Greek word: *kakopatheō* = (kak-op-ath-eh'-o)

1. to suffer (endure) evils (hardship, troubles);
2. to undergo hardship: - be afflicted, endure afflictions (hardness), suffer trouble.

And the word in verse 14, sick is *astheneō* = (as-then-eh'-o) From a negative participle = to be feeble (in any sense), (be) sick, (be made) weak.

This tells us you will or ask the question in James, are you suffering adversity? And of course, James gives us the solution, to pray. Just like Nehemiah prayed. It shows in the context of the scripture, that this is referring to a mature or super-grace believer. Overcoming the problems of life, which means you are using the tools that God designed for you to repair those weak spots in life in order to steady the course, not letting them take you down and keep advancing. This is a positive response from a mature believer.

Do not let the people or things of this world take you away from the blessings that await you. As I've said before, do not let the petty things distract you, because if you do there will be a stall in your engine. Meaning your momentum will be taken away and you will need to start up the spiritual engine again, maybe even having to return to basic doctrine again. Scar tissue from reversionism, meaning prolonged time out of fellowship (not practicing **1Joh 1:9**) and out of God's plan, spiritually AWOL, which is seen in **Heb 6:1**. Instead, follow the instructions of the apostle Paul:

1Co 4:12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure;

2Ti 4:5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

God wants reparations to take place at this time: pray for one another, help each other edifying, keep your eyes on the goal or prize. Just like in repairing of the walls of Nehemiah, He wants to show that it can be done. And to the mature or super grace believer He shows him how to do it remaining happy through the sufferings or adversity, by fervent prayer. Remember that in the Church Age every believer is a priest, which is shown in that we have a high priest in TLJC. As priests, we have the privilege of praying directly to God the Father, as our high priest prays for us. In Prayer, you have that ability to take whatever you need, directly to the throne room of God (**Rv 1:6, Eph 2:6**). Prayer is the most effectual weapon in the spiritual realm. Paul describes it this way:

Eph 6:18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

Neh 1:6 let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father's house have sinned.

Neh 2:4 I prayed to the God of Heaven.

Neh 4:9 We prayed to our God

Neh 1:4 praying before the God of Heaven

Nehemiah's area of strength was his prayer life and seen as a mature way to deal with the situation.

Now, Sunday we did review a few principles of unity. We saw that unity was described as:

- The state of being one; oneness
- Oneness of mind, as among a number of persons; concord, harmony, or agreement
- The state or fact of being united or combined into one, as of the parts of a whole; unification.

And the unity we see in Nehemiah and in our spiritual life are compared, and we have 5 different ways this is shown to us in this study.

1. The status of being combined with others to form a greater whole.

The Jews become victorious and go back to following the plan of God and even work with people they didn't like; to rebuild the walls for the whole city's protection. Unity among the people, they all benefited from the complete work. We the Church, as a whole, have been combined together to form a body of Believers through The Baptism of the Holy Spirit at the moment of Salvation,

1Co 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

2. The status of being harmonious with other members of the royal family of God.

Ecc 4:12 And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.

3. The state of being complete, which means a maximum number of believers execute the protocol plan of God and become invisible heroes in the angelic conflict.

Eph 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

4. Complete accord among believers regarding divine viewpoint in the mystery doctrine of the Church Age.

Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

5. Complete Oneness of Sharing the Happiness of God – Occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pr 3:13 How blessed is the man who finds wisdom. And the man who gains understanding.

Joh 17:23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

This is maximizing Bible doctrine resident in the soul, operating with the filling of the Holy Spirit, and applying the use of MBD (Metabolized, i.e. believed and assimilated, Bible Doctrine), which ultimately give you personal love for Christ, an intimate relationship.



Now we will return to the study of the substitutional spiritual death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our look at John chapter 3, with it's religious character study in Nicodemus, and how it relates to the doctrine. This is a part of the Christian Soldier Prep course. It is critical that we understand this doctrine before we continue, and you will see why as we go along, if you stick with this. Please refer to previous editions of the Tree Of Life for more info if you missed them, or check out the archived videos of the original live streamed lessons on our YouTube channel listed on this site.

Last time, we studied the fact and it is a very important fact because many denominations are deceived today because they don't understand the principle that water doesn't always refer to baptism. There are seven baptisms in the word of God, (that we noted last week) four which are dry and three which are wet. We explained in detail the different baptisms and the etymology of the Greek word from which we get "Baptism", and it's true meaning of "identification". Water is only one way of identification.

So we saw that water sometimes represents the Word of God, other times it represents identification - like what we saw with Moses and the baptism of Moses, so we have to understand which way the word is being used by examining the context, by looking at the original language and word usage, and by comparing scripture with scripture. We should never

assume what something in the scripture means, especially when we are new to studying the Bible, or according to any presumptions or any non-biblical (worldly or humanistic or secular) contexts. The Bible should be interpreted according to the Bible, because if you try to understand it in the context of the world system, you're going to distort and corrupt it. This is how we get some of the really out there cults that people say comes from the Bible, such as the JW's or heaven's gate, Branch Davidianism (remember WACO?), or the many strains of replacement theology. You can read the Bible and interpret it almost any way you want, you can make it say whatever you want if you're crafty with words and imaginative. Many believers have no idea of the temptation that exist in ministry because of mis-interpretations of the Word of God.

How do we avoid this? There must be a system, a regular, well-defined, scientific (in the sense of following a precise objective procedure) and repeatable method which is proven to be sound. Fortunately, there is! It's called Hermeneutics, or textual criticism. It is used in other academic settings now, but it was originally developed as a way to study biblical texts, and it is aimed at trying to determine, with as much accuracy as possible, the intended meaning which the author meant to convey or communicate.

Many believers have no idea of the temptation that exist in ministry because of misinterpretations of the Word of God. This is because most teachers and preachers do not use the principles of hermaneutics and do not know the original languages. They either interpret it for themselves from the English or other translations (in their native language), or they take it from various commentaries, according to what they already think or like, rather than digging into what is there and accepting it whether they like it or not. They don't know the languages, so they can't tell *how* or *why* a passage means what it means.

When they read “love” or “forgiveness” they interpret that according to their pre-existing concept of what love is, which is either humanistic, or religious, and generally always emotional or sentimental. They don’t know that there are several different words in the Greek that all refer to different qualities or applications of love, and depending on the word – in the original – the meaning is different. See? Same for forgiveness. There are different kinds of forgiveness, and different words, i.e. ‘*charizomai*’ – or grace forgiveness (charis means grace), or ‘*aphiemi*’, which means to pardon or cancel, as in a debt that is owed for an offense. The latter is used for post-salvation sins, where the restitution or consequences are in view, and are being canceled (as in when we rebound – while the sins are judged and forgiven at the cross, there are consequences to them, such as scar tissue, and loss of the filling of the Spirit. These are canceled in aphiemi). It is shocking how many things are obscured or lost altogether in the translations, because there is either no way to convey them, or doing so would require so many more words, and the Bible be three times the size it is! If you’ve ever seen an amplified text, you see what I mean.

These men are most often religious people who don’t take the time to learn accurate unadulterated bible doctrine. They may be well-meaning, but they don’t put in the work where it really counts – in “rightly dividing the word of truth”, often seeing it as unnecessary, while instead putting their time into elaborate works programs and emotional lures.

Unfortunately, the only way to really understand why exegesis based on hermeneutical principles is so important, is to actually do it or learn from a PT who does long enough to see the difference.

The point is, like Nicodemus, most communicators and teachers are blind concerning what God's word, in the original language, has to say. They

may get the meaning wrong, or they may only get part of it, but miss the real meat of it, or miss the typology, etc., which really highlights the divine complexity and wonder of the Bible. It's important that we don't fall into this nonsense and it is the pastor teachers job to warn us – which he does an incredible job in training us with.

So, some principles:

Principle #1. Without some knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, and an understanding of hermaneutics (which your pastor teacher must have), you cannot accurately teach those who look to you for help as to the original language of scripture.

Principle #2. Without some knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, you cannot appreciate the critical discussions relating to the books of the Old and New Testaments.

We see this with the confusion over baptism, with many sects believing and teaching that without being dipped in water, there is no salvation, even though the Apostles weren't and none of the OT saints were either. Abraham was never dipped in water! I guess he wasn't saved then....sorry Abraham! No, this is a false teaching that directly results from superficial, amateur interpretation of scripture, which does not reveal the meaning of '*baptizo*' aka baptism or the different uses of the word "water". These people assume if it means baptism in one place, it must mean it everywhere. We also see this with the word "fire" - many people, any time they see the word in the entire Bible automatically read "hell" into it and make the passage be about loss of salvation.

Principle #3. All Scripture was written for every believer (**2TI 3:16**) but not all Scripture was written '*to*' every believer.

The rejection or ignorance of dispensational teaching makes the Bible make no sense and contradict itself. Almost all the apparent contradictions of the Bible are eliminated with the application of dispensations, which allows us to understand *which* period of time and prophecy is being referenced in a particular passage. Some of the spectacular spiritual gifts which were given in the pre-canon period but are taken away during the church age (**1Co 13:8**), will return during the Millennium. This is all part of “rightly dividing the word of Truth.” Truth does no good, and can even be harmful, if it is not correctly understood. It can be like a grenade in the hands of a toddler.

In case you need a refresh or you may not be familiar with the term: I.C.E. is an acronym that describes the way in which the word of God must be interpreted. It stands for

Isagogics: To fully understand the word of God, the Bible must be interpreted within the framework of isagogics, which is the historical setting.

Categorical: The Bible must be studied through the scrutiny of the particular doctrine as recorded throughout the Scripture, line upon line, verse upon verse, and category upon category. Hence, Scripture must be used to interpret Scripture. No scripture can stand alone.

Exegesis: The Bible should be studied in the original languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Koine Greek), with full context of the selected verse or verses, paying strict attention to grammar, syntax, and the etymology of the words from the original languages.

It sounds complicated but it really is just a matter of setting some sanctified time aside and when you let it sink in... you will have a much better understanding of what the Word of God is all about.

Principle #4. Without some knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, (speaking of the PT especially here) you cannot be certain that you are presenting the correct teaching of that text.

Principle #5. It is helpful for the student to learn some level of basics just so that they can understand how and why the Pastor-Teacher arrives at a particular interpretation.

It is good for a Bible student to ask questions and make sure they are 100% clear on a teaching, and it is ok for a believer to ask the Pastor to explain and show why he interprets a verse or passage a certain way. There will be others who have different interpretations, and in the case of controversial doctrines, there will be attackers and mockers. It is better to know and be confident in what one believes when faced with such people. If all you can say is “well my PT says so and he is always right!” you aren’t going to change any minds. But if on the other hand, one can convey with understanding the reason for the interpretation and the reason the other is incorrect, this gives you firm footing. This is not absolutely necessary, but as I said, it is very helpful in “being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you with gentleness and reverence” rather than frustration and emotional reactions!

The first thing you should do after being born again and saved is not to serve, it’s not to get involved in the ministry, it’s not to sign up for some program and work and hustle around for the church... ---the first thing you should do is sit down, - relax - let others do the work and you just

simply learn what the plan of God is all about. How can you serve God *effectively* if you aren't crystal clear on what God wants or how He wants it to be done? There are vast numbers of energized believers, desperate to show God their enthusiasm, running around half-cocked and barking up the wrong trees, doing more harm than good. They are doing the right thing in the wrong way, or the wrong thing in the right way, or neither, but very rarely both! God demands the right thing be done in the right way.

We also need spiritual growth in order to serve God effectively. You are an enlisted man or woman in God's army, and you are preparing to enter combat. Do we recruit soldiers and send them right into the battlefield with no training? Absolutely not! This is the purpose of this study series: Christian Soldier Prep. Prep for what? For service – in warfare. We are like combat medics! We not only need to know how to help and represent Jesus Christ as ambassadors (**2Co 5:20**), we need to know how to serve as priests (**1Pe 2:9**), and how to defend ourselves against the many relentless cosmic attacks (**Eph 6:16**). People who run into combat without being properly prepared become casualties.

Here is a point at which Satan very frequently misleads this particular type of person. What type of person? The type of person who has been brought up in a religious atmosphere. They are like a person who worships a stone or gold idol, and burns incense, performs oblations and rituals at certain fixed times, but there is no relationship with a divine being – because there is no divine being there – it's just a statue. All those things they do are like religion, it's all about man doing things to earn something from God, but ignoring God, knowing nothing about Him. They're only focused on themselves and what they can get from God, never on what God wants from them. Even the things they purport to do "for God" are really for them, because they are expecting some reward,

usually material or emotional, and when they don't get it, they blame God.

Religion is the devils ace trump – it's the devils power – religion is more powerful to satan than immorality is. Immorality is actually an insult to satan because immorality destroys satan's ability to try to counterfeit God's heaven...

God's heaven is up in heaven but satan's heaven is on this earth. The occultists have an axiom, it's written on their satanic "baphomet" statue and in their temples, "as above, so below". This is the devil's true plan! To make the earth like heaven – by his own power and machinations, independent from God. This just also happens to be what the secular humanist wants and what the religions want. I'm sure there is no connection though....

And satan says I can be like God – but you look at this earth and does this earth look like anything to do with what heavens all about...?? Not at all....

We know what heaven is all about – heaven is a place of perfection, of love, of justice, --- this world is pure chaos... its filled with lies and deceit...

Satan may like it when we believers sin, so he can accuse us before the Throne of Grace all day and night (**Rv 12:10**), so he can say "these are your righteous ones? They're the worst of all!" But he wants *his* people to be moral and upright so he can say "look – we are better than your pathetic, chronically failing sheep!" Unfortunately this will never work, because human beings are ALL fallen and weak and pathetic, and he becomes increasingly frustrated with this, and will unleash his wrath on his own subjects during the last years of the Great Tribulation.

One thing that my dad wants us to hammer down and drive home is this statement right here in John 3 where our Lord makes this all clear:

Joh 3:6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Remember - the Christian life is not something we do but something which is done to us and through us by God (**Joh 3:7-8**).

That's why our Lord says in

Joh 3:7 "Do not marvel (the Lord said to Nicodemus – because apparently Nicodemus was said to be marveling because he realizes that the Lord is saying something that's really convicting him – almost like challenging him to the fact that he might not be saved – he may not be born again – that he might not see the kingdom of God let alone enter it) that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

And then notice how cool our Lord describes to us the born again life in verse 8:

Joh 3:8 "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Meaning that – we don't know where the life has come from – we don't know where the life is going – but we know this --- that we are born of Spirit and now God has a perfect plan for our lives. We are a new creation, we are new creatures in Christ - being born again, trichotomous, body, soul, and spirit.

Being born again is like the wind in verse 8, - which blows so is everyone who is born of the Spirit. We don't understand where the wind is coming from and we can't see it, we can't see the air molecules, but we see the effects of it, we see the leaves rustling and the dust swirling. I like to think about black holes (science nerd), which are invisible to the eye because no light escapes from them, but we can see them by the effect their massive gravity has on surrounding visible matter as it is drawn into it like water circling a drain. We can't see God either, but we see His brushstrokes in creation, and we see the effects of His interventions in our daily lives, and the inner transformation that metabolized doctrine brings. Others can see that too!

We all experience a desire to serve God, and most of us will experience some desire to “get out and do something”, sometimes a very strong urge, but if we don't even know what we are doing, we will do more harm than good. Just as in the natural realm: you can't build a building without a foundation can you?—why not? Because it will collapse! The same is true in the spiritual realm. You can't grow until you are born, you can't run until you can walk, and you can't win a race if you run in the wrong direction, or on the wrong track!

So God says, “before you can enter the race you have to grow, so that you can learn to walk and then to run, and you must learn the rules before you can be sure to follow them and not be disqualified from receiving a gold medal”. That's what the Lord is saying to Nicodemus here, “you haven't even seen the kingdom, and so you're not really entering into the kingdom.” He is saying to Nicodemus. “relax – I'm going to tell you how to do that”, and He does in **Joh 3:14-16**.

We need to understand and experience that we are new creatures and also that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” (Joh 3:6)

It may be refined flesh, beautiful flesh, religious flesh, outwardly moral flesh, flesh that impresses people, but it is still flesh, and flesh does not impress God! (1Sa 16:7) Or another good one:

Rom 8:7-8 **because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and THOSE WHO ARE IN THE FLESH CANNOT PLEASE GOD** (emphasis mine).

This just simply means that every born again person has two natures within them: one which is carnal (of the flesh) and one which is spiritual (of the Spirit). There is no mixing! You are either 100% spiritual or 100% carnal! This is why you are a spiritual schizophrenic at times – we are all spiritual geminis in adolescence, we are “double-minded, unstable in all our ways” until we grow up. Paul described it so perfectly what we ALL face as born-again believers with two conflicting natures in Romans 7:

Rom 7:14-25 **For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But**

if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

We all have a battle going on and God knows that we have this battle going on and He has already won the victory over it and so have we— we just need to live like it, and that comes from living IN it – learning to identify more with Christ and the new being than the body, which is our natural default setting as fallen creatures.

2Co 5:6-8 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight—we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

Our Lord's words in **Joh 3:7**, "Do not marvel", reveal the reaction of Nicodemus. And the Lord actually saw that, which is why He said this to Nicodemus. He was marveling (I can only imagine his facial expression) because he was religious and self-assured and he was blinded to the truth of the word of God by arrogance, by status, by position, by legalism. Religion had made him totally ignorant, he was totally baffled...

And so Jesus continues in verse 8,

Joh 3:8 "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

When you were born again you didn't see it. You may have seen and felt an emotional response, but that is solely your own reaction to thinking/awareness. Not everyone has an emotional reaction, and neither is right or wrong or better or worse.

Like the wind, God the Holy Spirit can not be seen, but the effects of it can be seen – the leaf that flies reveals it. We can't see a black hole but we can see the visible matter swirling like water in a drain as its invisible force draws it helplessly in. there are many examples of this!

Nicodemus was like all natural people, he is consumed with the visible and the material and with superficial, relativistic, empirical, and rational judgments. He can't think outside those boxes. He thinks of God in those terms too. But the Bible even says the things which are seen are temporal – the things which are not seen – they are the things which are eternal.

So in **Joh 3:9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"**

He had not been taught this at his theological seminary and please notice our Lord uses a little sarcasm at the right time.

Joh 3:10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, (one of the greatest teacher of Israel) and do not understand these things?

This was sanctified sarcasm. Sarcasm which is good because its based upon a true heart from God – right motivation and based on love. Jesus understands that education doesn't necessarily mean understanding. Sometimes it is just memorization and regurgitation.

And so He says

Joh 3:11-12 "Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak that which we know,(those who have been born again) and bear witness of that which we have seen; and you do not receive our witness. If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

Sometimes in order to understand something we have to set aside our existing framework and listen without prejudice. The infinite divine can not be understood correctly based on the finite worldly, humanistic, or scientific preconceptions and presumptions. When we try to understand something new, we try to fit it into what we already have, like a puzzle piece. But sometimes the pieces are from a whole different puzzle, one not even of this dimension! God, and the spiritual reality, that is the reality beyond the material universe, which is essentially like a vast terrarium, are not bound by physical, spacial, or temporal rules or limitations. The rules of the terrarium do not apply outside of it. You have to throw that out and start all over again. But Nicodemus is thinking like a natural-minded scientist who believes in some sort of divine intelligence but has no spiritual apparatus for discernment (1Co 2:14). He just can't make what Jesus is telling him fit. But he doesn't even believe the earthly things!

And then the Lord says in verse 13:

Joh 3:13 "And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven,(only the LJC ascended into heaven by His own power, Enoch was transferred, like what happens to us when we die) {even} the Son of Man.

Now He is going to give Nicodemus some teaching from the Old Testament so that he can learn how to apply what He is saying – you must be born again...

Joh 3:14 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;"

Now why is this important? *"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness (back in Numbers 21), even so must the Son of Man be lifted up?"*

Nicodemus was familiar with Numbers 21, which gives us the story of the serpent. Jesus was trying to convey that true life could only come out of death. The true life that we have comes from death – we have to die to our old nature to enter into the new realm of the eternal state. In order to live in the new nature, the old one must be abandoned. We can't live in both:

Mat 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

We cannot serve God and serve our body, pleasure, ambition, materialism, etc....this is a conflict of interest. It might take a while to get

to the fork in the road, but it will come, and we will leave one or the other then.

We need to understand this because if not – than you're not going to understand what it means to be born a spiritual birth and have this new life that God promises each of us to have NOW – not when we die and go to heaven – but beginning at the moment of your salvation - right now- while we are living on this temporary earth...

Paul the apostle knew all about it and he said it like this in

Gal 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I (the old man – the old nature) **who lives, but Christ lives in me** (the new nature); **and the life which I now live in the flesh** (as I am still living in a physical body) **I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me** (there is the SSD)."

He took my place – He was my substitute – He was your substitute or as we say He was “our” substitute.

1Co 5:7-8 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The Jews wanted their Messiah to be elevated to the throne of David (not on a cross) but before this, He must be lifted up upon the cross and put to shame. They didn't want a Messiah who was going to die, they wanted a Messiah who was going to reign, and them with Him... they wanted the crown but not the cross. They wanted the glory without the humility.

But the plan of God was that the Messiah must be lifted up upon the cross and put to shame... - in our place - as our substitute. They did not think they needed that, they thought they were already justified and sanctified by their works of the Law. They never understood, even right up to the present day, that the cross comes before the crown!

So in Numbers 21 the Israelites were rejected Moses – God’s chosen leader for the time - and they were murmuring against him - therefore - they were murmuring against God (**1Sa 8:6-7**).

Num 21:4 **Then they set out from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the people became impatient because of the journey.**

They were like us – they wanted things done yesterday... we are no better today, maybe worse in the age of instant gratification!

Num 21:5 **And the people spoke against God (and of who?)and Moses, (they said) "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food."**

You see the immaturity - they’d rather be slaves to the Egyptians than be free – they had the slave mentality. They were accustomed to having everything provided. A lot of immature believers have that today (and unbelievers too) - “give me bondage and take care of me but don’t make me have to be responsible for myself!” A child wants freedom until they realize it comes with having to do things yourself, then they run back home! We always want to have our cake and eat it too, but life doesn’t work that way.

In verse 6 and 7, God sent some discipline in the form of “fiery serpents”, meaning venomous, which bit them and many died (sin unto death). Then they got guilty and finally rebounded (only because of the discipline) and asked Moses to pray. So God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and raise it on a standard, and if anyone was bitten (by sin) they only needed to look to it to be healed. Note the typology.

Now - this is why it is so important for us to have a pastor-teacher – because we have two different words for serpents here... do you see that in the English? You don't see that at all – you see the one word - “serpent” - but the English word serpent is translated from two different words! There are so many cases of this, and so many errors springing forth from them.

In verse 6, the word for serpent is the same word used for the serpent in the Garden of Eden in Gen 3: '*nachash*' (naw-khawsh'); meaning “a snake which hisses” (secretly hisses -- it talks about the fact that the snake is a gossip btw – whispering behind the scenes), or literally an image of a serpent, or a fleeing serpent (mythologically speaking). This is a different serpent than the One that were going to see put on the pole. One serpent is a literal serpent, while the second is a type, or a representation of sin. Another word we could use is “likeness.” Remember that one.

Some traditions and demonic religions such as Buddhism or Taoism or other forms of mysticism or luciferianism (occult, hermeticism, theosophy, new age, satanism, neo-paganism) promote the notion that dualistic opposites like light and dark, hot and cold, good and evil, are mutually interdependent and even that they are two sides of the same coin, therefore both necessary and therefore good. This is a part of the father of modern psychology, Carl Jung's system which we see

permeating every area of post-modern culture and academic, scientific, philosophical and socio-political thought. The philosopher Hegel (he and Jung were major influences on Karl Marx, btw), termed it “thesis (truth), antithesis (anti-truth or opposite truth), and synthesis (both are seen to be the same thing and are merged). We see this in the current culture war – westernism (judeo-christian worldview and morality, aka divine establishment principles) is the thesis, while post-modernism i.e. collectivism/Marxism, utopianism/fabian socialism, social justice/egalitarianism, all of these things represent antithesis. Synthesis will replace them when the clash has run its determined course and they are merged into one, coterminous with religious ecumenism and political/economical globalism. So these traditions, from which the post-modernists derive their ideas, believe that good *needs* evil, or they need each other, and can’t exist without the other, because each is defined by its relationship to the other.

This is what one theologian calls “one-ism”. Everything is really one thing manifesting as different aspects, but the duality is only an illusion. Why the heck is all that important? Because all this is a direct satanic attack, aimed at discrediting and ultimately banishing the word of God. And in the Christian world, these “woke” ideas have begun to infiltrate the denominational churches and cults. Some mixed up Christians actually teach or profess that Christ needed sin, or that sin is necessary, and they will use this passage as a basis, but they are totally missing the typology and the dual meanings of ‘nachash’. We want you to be prepared to defend the truth! We know it is possible for good to exist without evil because God proves it! But then you see why this “one-ism” is so insidious: if one believes it, then God as we know Him - absolute perfection, absolute holiness, no darkness is in Him – is impossible and must be denied for a more “inclusive” conceptualization (invention). Jesus Christ did not need sin to complete His mission!

Now, in verse 7, notice that they confessed their sin, they had sinned and they cried out unto Moses for relief. And what did Moses do? – He did what any man of God would do – he went to God! Moses cried unto God and the Lord told him to make a serpent out of brass and place it on a pole.

Notice that this serpent is made out of brass and it is different from the literal serpents that were real. The Jews who were bitten by the fiery serpents were told to forget about the fiery serpents in GEN 3 and to look at the brazen serpent "in faith" in Numbers 21 and they should be healed. This was all a foreshadowing of our Lord Jesus Christ. So - the serpent on the pole was different than the serpent on the ground. The serpent on the pole was brass, a "likeness" of sin – remember? Actually /It spoke of Christ being lifted up on the cross in order that He might save, through the look of faith, those who were dying from sin.\ again – all they had to do was look in faith...

The serpent in GEN 3 spoke of sin. Not the brazen serpent – the brazen serpent spoke of something we are going to see in REV 1, the brazen serpent recalls of the feet of the bronze of our Lord Jesus Christ. It spoke of Him being lifted up and them actually looking at the feet of our Lord where He actually overcame His enemies because remember what God the Father said to God the Son- sit down at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for Your – FEET.

And we need to understand this type, because remember - Jesus Christ was made in the "LIKENESS" of sin...right??? So the bronze serpent is in the likeness of the literal venomous serpent which bit everyone and made them die ("the wages of sin is death...")... Is it clicking? I hope so!

He wasn't made in sin, He was made *in the likeness* of sin. And just like Jesus Christ was made in the likeness of sin and we look to Him so that you and I could have our forgiveness and our freedom – so was the same with the serpent in the OT with GEN 3 and NUM 21. Pretty cool!

Now, the question arises, why didn't Moses use one of the actual serpents and spike a fiery serpent on the pole? Because it would have damaged the typology. It would have pictured God's judgment on the sinner (the actual fiery serpent - the sinner himself) himself and worse still, it would have misrepresented our sinless substitute, TLJC, who died in our place. So Jesus Christ is human - made in the likeness of the sinner – but He Himself knew no sin.

Heb 7:26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens.

All they – or we - have to do is look to the bronze standard, in the likeness of sin but having no sin, who was sacrificed for us, which is analagous non-meritorious faith, and we are healed - sanctified and justified in Him.

Do you know that according to the word of God – bronze is stronger than gold and silver... In the scriptures brass symbolizes divine judgment! The brazen altar illustrates this truth for on it the sacrificial animals were slain. Upon the brazen altar (in the old testament in the ark of the covenant) descended the consuming fire (that came) from heaven. The brazen altar represents the sacrificial animals were slain; they were actually slain on one side of the altar.

In fact if you look at Revelation chapter 1 – this is where Christ is seen as judge inspecting the seven churches, we are told that His feet were like fine brass.

REV 1:15 and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace.

Just like that brazen serpent in Numbers 21 – our Lord’s feet were like burnished bronze... isn’t that AWESOME! The furnace was the divine heat of divine judgement on a person of Christ... but our Lord had endured those bronze feet bc He had endured the divine judgement from God for us...

So let’s begin to close by noting some of the things the Jews were **NOT** told to do. -- Notice I said Not told to do.

1). They were not told to manufacture some ointment as the means of healing their wounds.

“Spiritual” lotions do not cure the sin disease - only the Lord Jesus Christ. Like the poor woman mentioned in **Mk 5:26**, many spend all that they have but are nothing better, rather worse.

2). They were also not told to minister to others who were wounded and help each other out.

What use would it be for one to jump into deep water to rescue a drowning man if he could not swim himself. This speaks of making an idol out of men, even your PT, or trusting in medicine or science more than in God, which is also idolatry. How can one who is dying and unable

to deliver himself, help others in a similar state? It's the blind leading the blind.

3). They were also not told to fight the serpents.

What use would it be to fight the serpents for those who had already been bitten? They could all have killed a thousand serpents each but they would still have died. Fighting against the serpents or fighting against sin or the devil will not solve a thing. We cannot defeat them with human power!

4). They were not told to make an offering to the serpent on the pole.

God did not ask any payment from them in return for their healing. Grace ceases to be grace if any price is paid for what it brings. \ And that is one of the reasons we consider Grace Bible Church/Robert McLaughlin Bible Ministries a grace ministry and we operate under these same principles of grace and we always will...

5). They were told not to look at Moses, the man of God

They had been looking to Moses but God commanded them to look at the brazen serpent. Moses was the law giver and how many today are looking to him for salvation and spirituality. The Pastor-Teacher can not provide salvation, he is a servant of Christ just like all of us! We trust Him to help us understand the word of God, to put on the full armor of God, but he is only a communicator, not a replacement or substitute for God (sorry, Mr Pope!).

6). They were not told to look at their wounds.

Some think they need to be more occupied with the work of examining their own wicked hearts.

To be occupied with self is to be occupied with that which God has condemned. We must isolate our sin when we rebound by *"forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward toward to objective"* (Php 3:13) and we must not become preoccupied with our righteous deeds either – they are God's work being perfected in us – by HIS POWER!

The devil is very pleased when he gets an individual looking at good works, feelings, baptism, self, etc. as opposed to Christ. Let's look now at the positive side.

First,

1). Moses was commanded by God to make a serpent of brass, it was something the Lord provided.

2). Moses was commanded to fix this brazen serpent upon a pole. Therefore, the divine remedy was publicly exhibited so that all Israel might look and be healed.

3). The Lord's promise in **Num 21:8** was that "It shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten, when he looks upon it shall live."

The point is that man was to look away from himself to the divinely appointed object of faith. The brazen serpent was lifted up so that those who were too weak to crawl up to the pole itself simply could look and be healed. No one had any excuse, all they had to do was look...

Num 21:8 **Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he shall live."**

No matter how many times he may have been bitten, no matter how far the poison had advanced, if they looked they could be healed, anyone could look and anyone could be healed. It's so simple that many many believers refuse to accept it, and they always have to add something to it! But what happens when you add 0.00000000000000000001 nanogram of impurity to a pure substance? It's not pure anymore! There is no 99% pure in the spiritual life, 99% is rejected by God's perfect standards. This is what the unbelievers will learn at the Great White Throne judgment when their dead works aka "filthy rags" are tabulated and shown to be insufficient!

Matt 25:41 tells us hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. The reason is because God has more than one characteristic. God is love, but that doesn't mean sentimental, emotional, subjective love like we mostly practice, but divine love – and it is because of love that we are given FREE WILL, and with it, responsibility (**Gal 6:7**). God is love, but He is also absolute righteousness and justice and holiness (**Hab 1:13**)

The Bible is very dogmatic about a literal hell, over one hundred-sixty-two texts in the New Testament alone are given, Over seventy were uttered by the Lord (**2Th 1:4, Lk 16:23, Isa 5:14, Mt 13:42,50; Rev 20:15, Mat 8:12**), just to give a very few.

However, God so loved the world that He did something so that no one would ever have to suffer in the eternal state.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." All you have to do is see your venomous bite and look to the standard!

We have an awesome God and His word never ceases to amaze!

And guess what? – there is even more –

After salvation the Christian life continues by looking.

Joh 3:14-15 **"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.**

And here's that verse and I would like to dedicate this closing to anyone who has not yet accepted TLJC as your Savior – I'm here to tell you that all you have to do right now is look to Him – look to Jesus – the Son of God in faith – because:

Joh 3:16 **For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."**

