

PP Nehemiah: Repairing Our Gates!

Text **Nehemiah 3:14-15**

Part 10-7/14-1/15, 2012

Illus There were three elderly sisters who lived together. The oldest of them got up to go to bed, but half way up the stairs she stopped and asked "was I going up or was I coming down"? The youngest sister replied with hint of aggravation, "you were going up to bed." The middle sister headed into the kitchen for a light snack, but once she entered it, she hollered back to the youngest, "what did I come in here for"? Again, the irritated youngest responded, "you went in to make yourself a sandwich". Then she said to herself, "I am so glad I'm not as forgetful as they are" as she superstitiously knocked on the end table. Hearing the knocks, she got up, walked to the front door and asked "Who is it?"

The need to review...

PP The Sheep Gate is the gate of salvation, the gate that leads to the cross where the Lamb of God died

It is the gate that points to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ

PP If you haven't come to the Sheep Gate, then you are not saved, for Jesus said, ***"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."*** **John 10:9**

Christian, If the walls of your salvation are in rubble, then follow Nehemiah back to the Sheep Gate, not to be saved again, but to once again find your way to the cross of Christ where the power of the gospel flows

PP And when we leave that gate, building up the wall of our salvation, we stop at the second gate, **the Fish Gate**

It's the gate of our witness, where we step on mission and testify of our Lord and Savior

It is the gate where we begin to exercise our faith and serve God in His kingdom

PP ***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."*** **Matthew 28:19-20**

PP The third gate, **the Old Gate**, is all about the infallible, trustworthy Word of God, that is never outdated, never expires whose truths are timeless and sure

We build the kingdom teaching followers of Christ to observe all that is found in the Bible

PP ***"Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock."*** **Luke 6:47-48**

There was another gate that I haven't included in the 10 that we are studying, simply because Nehemiah doesn't stop at it in his tour

Yet he mentions twice later on in this book (**8:16; 12:39**), called the ***Gate of Ephraim***

Ephraim was the second son of Joseph, whose name means doubly fruitful

It opened out onto the beginning of a long valley, called the 'valley of the cheese makers', or the Tyropean valley

We meet Jesus at the cross and His blood washes over us giving us new life with a new nature

Christ calls us out from the world separating us from our former love for the world, and instead

we testify to His kingdom and our salvation
The Word of God is alive, the Christian life is amazing and fruitful, we are growing in our faith
Yet this gate begins the long descent into the valley and if we are going to move from drinking
spiritual milk and eating the meat of the Word of God, then the Valley Gate is necessary

PP ***"The Valley Gate"*** opens out onto the descent into trials and difficulties

It was over 1700 feet between the old gate and the valley gate, a long distance, and it
overlooked an intersection of three valleys

A trial is a path of descent for faith, where it is tested, refined and purified

Though we don't like this gate and would avoid it if we could, they are indispensable if we are to
grow in our trust of and commitment to Jesus Christ

PP This is why James tells us to ***"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various
kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let
steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in
nothing."*** James 1:2-4

And what happens at the Valley Gate is that the pressure of trials squeeze our hearts and what
often comes to the surface is the dross of our sinfulness

There is quite a bit of distance from the Valley Gate to the next gate- '***a thousand cubits***' or 1500
feet-revealing the truth that sometimes trials and difficulties can go on for a long time

PP It is this sin that remains in our hearts that leads us to the necessity of ***"the Dung Gate"***
***"Malchijah the son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem, repaired the Dung
Gate. He rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars."*** 3:14

The ***Dung Gate*** opened through the southern wall

PP The ***Dung Gate*** was the opening through which the people of Jerusalem took out their trash
Not only trash, remember, ancient Jerusalem had no sewage system to dispose their sewage
They had no plastic waste, or metal, it was all biological, and if it wasn't disposed of, it would
not only stink terribly, but cause disease

Lepers, beggars foreigners who died were taken out this gate to be burned in this Valley

People were sometimes hired to carry this waste out of the city through this gate

It is where everything that represented defilement was taken in order to cleanse the holy city of
God

The gate opened out onto the Valley of Hinnom, where a fire was kept burning at all times
In the Old Testament, this valley was called ***"The Valley of the Son of Hinnom"***, the location
where both King Ahaz and King Manasseh sacrificed his sons to the god Molech
The name Hinnom developed in the New Testament and began to be called ***Gehenna***
Jesus referred to it often, translated into the word 'hell', the place of eternal punishment of the
wicked

As trials force the impurities in us to the surface, we carry them out the Dung Gate to the valley
below

PP ***"And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"***
Psalm 139:24

PP *“Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.”* 2 Corinthians 7:1

And don't overlook the work crew that Nehemiah introduces us to: ***“Malchiah the son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem”***

If you saw the Lord of the Rings trilogy, then you may remember the lighting of the beacons from The Return of the King

PP ***“Beth-haccherem”*** was a hilly town visible from Bethlehem that served as a signal station to warn of invasion

PP ***“Flee for safety, O people of Benjamin, from the midst of Jerusalem! Blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and raise a signal on Beth-haccherem,”*** Jeremiah 6:1

‘Malchiah’ was the ruler of this district and the one who repaired the Dung Gate
What humility it took for a ***‘ruler’*** to repair the refuse gate

PP Friends, remember the words of **Psalm 87:2**, ***“the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob”***

He loves all the gates, even this, the Dung Gate, for it is where we cast sin away

This is the gate of repentance, where we throw out from our lives what is displeasing to God

It's also the gate of forgiveness, for unforgiveness is one of the most toxic impurities in our souls
Friends, what is in your life that needs to be carried out this gate?

Are you refusing to forgive an offense of someone else?

Why would you keep it within the city of your heart when there is a gate through which you can carry it?

Only the humble will use it, for it puts to death pride and admits we have fallen short of the glory and the holy standards of God

Let me offer some practical ways to repair this gate

PP a- *The directions to this gate are found in the Word of God, which reveals both God's perfection and our imperfections*

Look often in that mirror, let it show you the truth

God's Word will never show us more than His mercy and grace will cover

PP b- *The guide Who accompanies us to this gate is the Holy Spirit*

And while we walk to the Dung Gate, He is praying for us, comforting us, counseling us, speaking the truth of His love for us

If you are seeing your sin but not hearing of God's great compassion for you, the guide at your side is not the Holy Spirit

So do what Psalm 15:2 tells us, and speak truth in your heart

He wants to help us get rid of what is keeping us distant from Him

PP c- *The way you open up this gate is through confession*

A biblical word that means to acknowledge and agree with what God is revealing in us

But there is more to this word and it's often what is missing in our repentance

We open the Dung gate by acknowledging and agreeing with God, but then we must cast or throw the sin down into the valley below

It is not uncommon to walk back home carrying what we did not throw through that gate

It must be hurled away from us with all our force, and then remember that this gate has bolts and bars to lock behind us

Throw the sin that God has revealed down into the Valley of Hinnom and lock the door behind you and walk away into freedom!

One of the greatest ways to make sure you cast it away and lock the gate is to immediately tell a trusted godly friend what you have done and then live in transparent accountability

From the Old Gate, we have been moving downward into trials and difficulties and repentance

Most of us have experienced God showing us our sins, and it can be overwhelming to see

If God left us there, with the awareness of how sinful we are, we would be utterly in despair

But He doesn't leave us there, neither does He tell us to deal with it ourselves without His help

We are to throw out of our lives that which displeases God, but that will not give us the power to live in a way that pleases Him

As we leave ***the Dung Gate***, both the ground and the experience of the Christian takes an upward move as Nehemiah shows us the ***"the Fountain Gate"***

PP ***"And Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He rebuilt it and covered it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars."*** **3:15a**

The ***'district of Mizpah'*** was about 8 miles north of Jerusalem, located on a hill serving as a lookout from invasion from the North

It was the ruler of this district that oversaw the repairs to ***the Fountain Gate***

Again, this was someone whose life consisted of being a watchman, to care for and protect, and we will see that this Gate must be protected for it is vital to the believer!

Let's look a little deeper at this and read on in Nehemiah's journal: ***"And he built the wall of the Pool of Shelah of the king's garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the City of David."*** **15b**

This ***'Pool of Shelah'*** is where the water gathered as it flowed into the city through Hezekiah's tunnel

PP The water that came through this tunnel was called in Hebrew, *Chay mayim* (ki mayem)... ***'living water'***

It is water that is alive, not like that found in a well or cistern, but a moving, ever-fresh ***fountain*** of water

The fountain of living water is a type or symbol of the Holy Spirit who lives in every believer

PP ***"For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit upon your offspring,"*** **Isaiah 44:3**

PP Jesus later gives us this same truth: ***"Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this He said about the Spirit"*** **John 7:38-39**

The ***Fountain Gate*** reminds that living in the heart of every believer is the Holy Spirit, Who is pouring streams of living water that is gushing up into eternal life

It is the gate that speaks of the power of the Holy Spirit that cleanses the repentant sinner

Friends, the Holy Spirit will not fill us with fountains of living water if we are harboring sin in our lives

But when the Valley Gate reveals our wickedness, and we throw it out at the Dung Gate, new

power will instantly come as the Holy Spirit fills us to overflowing
The fruit of the Spirit will be produced in greater measure than before
You know, if you have experienced this, the sense of freedom from the rubble in our lives that this brings!

And we cannot get this *'living water'* by skipping the other 5 gates and going straight to *'the Fountain Gate'*

So many want the exciting experience of being filled with the Spirit
But so many will not establish their lives at the Old Gate, will not live obediently at the Fish Gate, and hate and avoid the trials of the Valley Gate, and do not cast their sin through the Dung Gate

We first have to come to the cross of Christ for salvation, and then learn to obediently confess Him in our witness

We learn to establish our confidence in God's Word and be held secure when we enter into trials and difficulties, allowing them to bring our impurities to the surface where we can throw them away through confession

There's too much rubbish for the water to flow, God must get rid of the filth and sin
When we do, we will know, and experience the filling of the Spirit!

Friends, maybe right now you need to confess and throw away what God has been showing you at the Dung gate, and lock the bars in place as you walk into freedom

Perhaps you need to return to the Fountain Gate and let the Holy Spirit fill you and give you His cleansing power to live out that freedom

Invitation...Pray