

FAMILY LIFE  
Parenting

Lesson #7 January 28 & February 4, 2001  
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## Lesson Title: “Gatekeeping”

### I. Introduction

*In the course of time, the king of the Ammonites died, and his son Hanun succeeded him as king. David thought, “I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me.” So David sent a delegation to express his sympathy to Hanun concerning his father. When David’s men came to the land of the Ammonites, the Ammonite nobles said to Hanun their lord, “Do you think David is honoring your father by sending men to you to express sympathy? Hasn’t David sent them to you to explore the city and spy it out and overthrow it?” So Hanun seized David’s men, shaved off half of each man’s beard, cut off their garments in the middle at the buttocks, and sent them away.*

*When David was told about this, he sent messengers to meet the men, for they were greatly humiliated. The king said, “Stay at Jericho till your bears have grown, and then come back.” When the Ammonites realized that they had become a stench in David’s nostrils, they hired twenty thousand Aramean foot soldiers from Beth Rehob and Zobah, as well as the king of Maacah with a thousand men, and also twelve thousand men from Tob.*

*On hearing this, David sent Joab out with the entire army of fighting men. The Ammonites came out and drew up in battle formation at the entrance to their city gate, while the Arameans of Zobah and Rehob and the men of Tob and Maacah were by themselves in the open country. Joab saw that there were battle lines in front of him and behind him, so he selected some of the best troops in Israel and deployed them against the Arameans. He put the rest of the men under the command of Abishai his brother and deployed them against the Ammonites. (2 Samuel 10:1-10)*

*“The Ammonites came out and drew up in battle formation at the entrance to their city gate. . . “*

If you know anything about ancient cities, verse 8 of 2 Samuel 10 is far from surprising. In modern times we protect our nations with ICBM’s and sophisticated defense initiatives, such as the “Star Wars” technology. We surround our nation with technology in order to keep the inhabitants safe. The “technology” of ancient times was the city wall. The days of Abraham, Moses, David, and Isaiah were in many ways lawless times. Unless a city was surrounded by a formidable wall, each inhabitant of the city would be vulnerable. It was the towering and thick walls surrounding cities such as Jerusalem, Ninevah, and Babylon with kept people secure. Perhaps no story in Scripture more ac-

curately depicts the importance of city walls than that of Joshua's assault on Jericho. Unless God had intervened to collapse the walls, Joshua and his army would never have been able to penetrate the city.

Part and parcel of building city walls was the placement of city gates. By their very nature, gates were strategic. In a sense, they were a necessary evil. Obviously, gates had to be placed within the walls, otherwise no one could ever enter or leave a city. However, each gate became a place of potential vulnerability. If an attacking army were to have a chance of succeeding in invading a city, the breakthrough would almost certainly come at one of the city gates. Ancient walls could be as wide as forty feet and as tall as ninety feet. Made of solid rock, they were almost impenetrable; therefore, the battle was almost certain to be joined at the gates. Indeed, this is precisely what we see in 2 Samuel 10:8 . . . *"The Ammonites came out and drew up in battle formation at the entrance to their city gate . . ."*

The military significance of gates came home to me with even greater clarity when I was at the archaeological dig of Megiddo in ancient Israel. As Megiddo had been restored (Megiddo is the site of Armageddon), I had the opportunity to study in detail one of the ancient gates of the city. I noticed that an intricate corridor had been designed that would funnel any attacking enemy into the teeth of the city defenses. A few men could hold off a large army for a considerable length of time because of the design of the city gates of Megiddo. I thought to myself, "The cost in lives would be very dear indeed if an assault were attempted." I suppose the point that I grasped was simply this: The ancients understood that the gates of the city were crucial. Indeed, gates represented the place of vulnerability.

As I stood there pondering the ancient city of Megiddo, my thoughts turned to my own home. It seemed clear to me that just as ancient cities had their places of "coming and going" (their city gates), my own home had gates as well. Obviously, my front door and back door represented gates. My children would come and go. Friends would enter our home. Each time I sent my children out the door, they were passing through the gates of "my city" to enter another home (another "city"). I began to realize that each telephone in my home was a gate. My mailbox was a gate. Our television set was a gate, as well as our computer (and our internet connection). I thought of all the influences and people that passed through those gates into the lives of my children (and well as Helen's life and my own). Many of those influences were good. Did all of those influences bring spiritual health to my family?

As I pondered the gates of my own home, I saw how contemporary 2 Samuel 10:8 really is. . . "The Ammonites came out and drew up in battle formation at the entrance to their city gate . . ." Even today, the battle is still joined in the gates. The ancients understood that critical to the health of their cities was the defense of their gates. I began to do some earnest soul searching as to how well I was defending the gates of my city . . . my own home.

## II. The Place of Action . . . the City Gates

We've already seen that the gates were the place of warfare (2 Samuel 10:8). Numerous passages of Scripture describe various battles and confrontations taking place at the gates of a city. The eventual fall of Jerusalem is described in terms of her "gates having been burned with fire" (Nehemiah 1:3). In the same vein, Judges 18:16 tells us that "The 600 Danites, armed for battle, stood at the entrance to the gate."

Yet, the city gates were the place of judgment, as well as the place of warfare. The Scriptures repeatedly place the elders of a city seated in council together at the city gate. Proverbs 31:23 is familiar to many of us . . . "Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders

of the land.” Repeatedly, the Scriptures place elders in the city gate, judging according to the Law of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 16-22).

My awareness of Proverbs 31:23 (and related passages) gave me still more insight as I stood in the city gate at Megiddo. The gates were constructed in such a way so that there was an outer gate and an inner gate (2 Samuel 18:24). Between those inner and outer gates there was an area large enough to be a sort of courtroom. It was in this place that the elders of the city of Megiddo would meet together in council in order to judge the affairs of their city. Trials and disputes of various kinds would be brought to them that they might judge them according to the Law of Moses. For example, marriage disputes would be settled according to the Law of Moses. . . (Deut. 22:15... “then the girl’s father and mother shall bring proof that she was a virgin to the town elders at the gate”).

Family disputes would be settled by elders at the city gate (Deut. 21:18-19 . . . “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town.”) When Boaz sought to marry Ruth in fulfillment of a Mosaic law known as “The Levirate,” he went to the elders at the gate of the city (Ruth 4:1ff). Anything ranging from family squabbles to murder would be brought to the city gate and to the elders of that city. If those elders knew the Law of Moses and acted accordingly in their decisions, the city as a whole would be blessed and live under the favor of God.

Against this backdrop, it is no wonder that Proverbs again and again speaks of wisdom being found in the city gates. . . “Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public square; at the head of the noisy street she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech” (Proverbs 1:20-21). Notice that it is “in the gateways of the city” where wisdom makes her speech. The picture here is that of a wise elder (or groups of elders) who speak into various life settings on the basis of the Word of God. (Oh to be an elder such as this!) Similarly, Solomon tells us, “Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? In the heights along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrances, she cries aloud” (Proverbs 8:1-3). Again, the council of elders ruling according to the Law of Moses while seated in the city gate is the picture behind Proverbs 24:7. . . “Wisdom is too high for a fool; in the assembly at the gate he has nothing to say.” In fact, Scripture views wisdom as so compelling that even “evil men will bow down in the presence of the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous” (Proverbs 14:19).

Not only were matters to be judged according to the Word of God at the city gate, punishment was to take place there as well. For example, idolatry and witchcraft were viewed as capital offenses in ancient Israel and punishable by death. Deuteronomy 17:5 states . . . “If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been in Israel, take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death.” Similarly, it seems highly likely that Jesus was put to death just outside of the Damascus gate. The picture is a fairly graphic one. Having committed a capital offense and judged “in” the city gate, they were then escorted “outside” the city gate. Having been symbolically cut off from their community, they were then cut off from life itself.

This brings me to yet another thought with regard to the city gates and the responsibility of elders . . . City gates were the place of going and coming. Joshua 20:4 describes what God’s people were to do when an individual would flee to their city. If you had accidentally put someone to death and needed a place of refuge until tempers in his hometown cooled down, God provided a means of refuge. . . “When he flees to one of these cities, he is to stand in the entrance of the city gate and state his case

before the elders of that city. Then they are to admit him into their city and give him a place to live with them.” What I want to call your attention to here is the thought that no one could enter a city but through the “grid” of the elders and their decision-making based upon the Word of God. In other words, just as the elders had authority to evict from the city, they also had authority to allow entrance to the city. Again, it is fitting that the elders would hold council in the city gate—the place of going and coming.

Finally, the Scriptures also tell us that the city gate was the place of royalty. The book of Samuel describes David taking a place in the city gate of Jerusalem . . . “So the king got up and took his seat in the gateway. When the men were told, ‘The king is sitting in the gateway,’ they all came before him.” This, and other passages, indicates that at certain moments the king also would sit in the city gate (presumably along with the council of the elders). There he would rule and judge on matters of state.

The picture that emerges is that the gates of an ancient city were places of profound significance. The weightiest matters were determined at the city gate. It was at the city gate that the pivotal military battles were fought. The survival of a city depended upon the defense of the city gates. But military battles were not the only conflicts waged in the gates of a particular city. The warfare for righteousness took place there as well. The city elders, seated together, would judge on that which is right or wrong, who entered and must leave, and what may be forgiven and what must be punished. Even the king himself would sit in the gate of the city. Taken as a whole, we see that the city gate was the place of authority, wisdom, and royalty, as well as the place of warfare.

### III. Contemporary Gates

I supposed I’ve already tipped my hand (at least a bit) on this matter of ancient gates in modern times. A city could be considered simply to be a place of jurisdiction—a group of people living together with a common bond and rule of law. Similarly, our families and our homes can be considered “cities.” Furthermore, our churches can be considered as individual “cities,” as well. If our homes are simply modern cities, what then are our “gates”?

If in ancient times a gate was simply the place where goods, people, or ideas would come and go from an individual city, then it’s not difficult to determine what the “gates” are in our own homes. The television is a gate. People, ideas, and passions enter our lives through the gate of the television set. The telephone is a gate as well. As is also the computer (and an internet connection). Every magazine, piece of mail, and book represents a gate. Our front door (as well as our back door and even our windows) are “gates.” After all, people come and go through those openings just as people came and went through the gates of ancient cities. Each person carries with him ideas, opportunities, and influences. Each time our loved ones pass through the threshold of our doorway, they are leaving our “city,” and the Bible charges the elders (i.e. parents) with determining not only who enters a city but who leaves a city and under what circumstances. In short, our lives are filled with gates. The only question that remains is whether or not we grasp that it is our role as “elders” in our family to assert righteous authority over the gates of our household.

How do you do it? How do you control your city gates? **I suppose the first thing is to realize that each of us as parents is given the responsibility for overseeing our gates.** Clearly, not every parent grasps or believes this. The ethos of our culture is that the children should be free to come and go as they please and any influence or idea should have free access into our children’s lives. I cannot help but believe that the elders of ancient Israel would be aghast at the casual attitudes that so many of us

have towards our family gates.

Let me ask you an honest question. Do you understand that God has given you authority over the gates of your household? Are you willing to accept this God-given responsibility? In a penetrating article published in the July issue of Family Policy magazine, Maggie Gallagher asks, “*Where Have All The Grownups Gone?*” Good question. Where have all the grownups gone? The first step in gatekeeping is to acknowledge the elders have responsibility for the gates and everything associated with them. That is, in the context of our homes, we parents have responsibility before God for every computer, telephone, piece of mail, and person who enters or exits our household.

Secondly, **how do we put gatekeeping into practice?** If the elders were to judge who entered and exited their city on the basis of Scripture, how do we do the same? The answer is simple: We use the same litmus test the elders of ancient Israel. Scripture. Let me suggest to you a basic starting point . . . . Philippians 4:8: “*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*” If a relationship, piece of mail, telephone conversation, or Internet site is “true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy,” it passes the test.

Along these lines, it has never occurred to our children (or to us) that they might own or display anything in their rooms that does not meet this standard. After all, it’s not just that it’s “Dad & Mom’s house” and so therefore you must live by our rules. These are the rules that Mom and Dad live by. We are submitted to the Philippians 4:8 standard; therefore, we are calling our children to do no less than we do.

Another practical insight with regard to this matter of gatekeeping is that of the ancient practice of “minimizing the gates.” It’s common sense that cities which have fewer gates rather than more gates were more easily defensible. In today’s media-saturated world, the truth of the matter is that almost all of our homes have far too many gateways. Our goal is always to “shrink” the number of gates in our home rather than to expand them. For example, we have two telephones in our home (and we will not allow the children to have phones in their rooms). We have one television set (and that television set does not have cable...the regular broadcast channels are obnoxious enough). We like CDs and tape players rather than radios . . . we can control the content.

Another common sense application regarding gates defending a city is that **we never put children in charge of gates.** Can you imagine the folly of asking 14-year-olds to defend the gates of an ancient city under siege? In this light, we do not place television sets and telephones in our children’s rooms. Only one of our children has a radio (Lauren—she’s proven to us her ability to do some gatekeeping in her own life). We’ve also noticed that putting telephones and television sets in kids’ rooms tends to divide a family. We like the whole of our family assembling together in our den or living room to talk, play games, or watch something wholesome on TV. We like it when we’re together rather than each person escaping into their own world and “slipping out of our city” through a hidden gate in their own room. Do you see that when your child watches television or is on the phone they leave your city? Their minds and their hearts are elsewhere. This is not to say that all television or telephone conversations are bad. They can be wonderful gifts and used powerfully. Yet, they are gates and thus must be dealt with carefully. In a particularly penetrating passage, King Josiah speaks to our day as he deals with shrines located in gates of Jerusalem. Josiah was the child-king who led one of the great revivals in the history of the Old Testament. In the midst of this revival, 2 Kings 23:8 tells us the following . . . “Josiah brought all the priests from the towns of Judah and desecrated the high places, from Geba to Beersheba, where

the priests had burned incense. He broke down the shrines at the gates—at the entrance to the Gate of Joshua, the city governor, which is on the left of the city gate.”

The picture is a graphic one. Located in the gates of a backslidden Jerusalem were various “shrines.” Presumably, these shrines were nothing other than altars of idols. Do you see how far Israel and Jerusalem had drifted? The city gates were to be the location of the Law of God. There one was to find the elders of the land, seated together, discussing the Word of God, and rendering judgments thereby. In the Jerusalem of Josiah’s time, the city gates were filled with idolatrous shrines rather than God’s Word. The question we must ask ourselves is what would Josiah find in the gates of our city? Would he find gates well-guarded and filled with abundant evidence of the Word of God? Or would he find gates characterized by the various idols of our time (pornography, greed, a mocking spirit, gossip, slander, fall religions, etc.)?

## IV. Lessons from Failure

Let’s be honest about it. Failure is our greatest teacher. Against this backdrop, I want to trace the downfall of Jerusalem and its relationship to the gates of the city. Jerusalem finally fell in 586 B.C. After centuries of warnings, God finally fulfilled His promise to judge a city that would not repent. In the book of Lamentations, the prophet Jeremiah describes the tragic fall of Jerusalem. Perhaps most poignant of all, is Lamentations 4:12 . . . ***“The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the world’s people, that enemies and foes could enter the gates of Jerusalem.”*** Approximately 140 years later, Nehemiah similarly describes the gates of Jerusalem, ***“Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates have been burned with fire.”***

Jeremiah’s description is that of a city so splendid, walls so thick, and gates so well defended that none of the nations (or the kings) of the earth would ever have imagined that Jerusalem would have fallen. If there was an impregnable fortress, Jerusalem was that citadel.

The question that screams out to be asked is the question of the military strategist . . . how could this city, of all cities, have fallen to siege? How is it possible that impregnable Jerusalem was finally taken? Scriptures’ perspective is that the fall of Jerusalem had nothing to do with the superior tactics of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. Scriptures’ diagnosis, again upon the lips of the prophet Jeremiah, is as follows, ***“But if you do not obey Me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying any load as you come through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortress”*** (Jeremiah 17:27).

Do you see it? The battle in the gates was lost spiritually long before it was lost militarily. Jerusalem and her elders did not apply the standards of Scripture to the affairs of the city gate. The particular grievance in question was that of the violation of the Sabbath. The Law of God dictated that on the Sabbath commerce could not flow in and out of the city. It was not simply the violation of the Fourth Commandment that brought Jerusalem to her knees. Jeremiah makes it clear that the real issue was that the elders did not regulate the city gate according to the dictates of the Scriptures. They failed to control the gates. Before the gates were burned with fire by the Babylonians, they were decayed by the neglect of the Israelites. Had they kept their gates, Nebuchadnezzar’s siege would never have succeeded. I hope you see the parallel, application, and warning. Control of the gates is crucial.

One of the great ironies of Scripture as it pertains to elders and gatekeeping is found in Genesis 19 and in the story of Lot. The Apostle Peter makes it clear that the verdict of Scripture in Lot's life is that he was "a righteous man" (2 Peter 2:7). Yet, like many righteous men, Lot's life was filled with ironies and inconsistencies. Here in Genesis 19, we find Lot seated in the gate of the city. While the Scripture does not explicitly tell us that Lot was an elder of Sodom, his placement there in the city gate certainly seems to suggest that this is the case. Certainly, it would not be surprising if Sodom had made Lot to be one of her elders. After all, he was a successful man with a religious connection (note his relationship with Abraham).

Yet, while it seems likely that Lot was among those given charge of the city gates of Sodom, the picture that emerges from Genesis 19 is an individual who less than fully controls the gates of his own home. As the story of Genesis 19 develops, righteous Lot takes two strangers (who happen to be angels) into his home. Later that night, a group of unrighteous men assembled at the entryway to Lot's house. They demanded that he send the strangers out into their midst that they might homosexually rape the two strangers in his home. At this moment, Lot shines. He refuses to turn the strangers over to the violent crowd. He points out to the men of Sodom that "***These men have come under my roof for protection***" (Genesis 19:8). Yet, at the same moment that we see Lot's righteousness, we also see his weakness. Lot offers his daughters to the mob that they might rape his own flesh and blood. To Lot's credit, his daughters are virgins. Yet, this hardly seems sufficient to outweigh the fact that he was willing to turn his daughters over to a mob to be raped.

What do we see in Lot's life? Lot was a righteous man (2 Peter 2:7). Lot was an elder in the city and therefore had responsibility of the city gates. When it came to those who were visiting in his household, he was more than willing to enforce the gates of his own household and protect those who had come under his roof. However, when it came to his own flesh and blood, Lot fell down on the job. He was willing to let his own daughters pass through the gate of his home and out into a setting which would not only violate them but almost certainly kill them.

It seems an ancient and unlikely story. Surely, none of us would ever find ourselves in circumstances such as these. Well . . . not so fast. I remember one dear friend who served as an elder. He was an excellent elder. Without doubt, he was "a righteous man." Furthermore, I saw him go out of his way to provide for and protect strangers whether they be the poor and needy, new faces in our community, or those who had not yet come to Christ. He was an inspiration to me in many ways.

I still remember the pained look on this elder's face when he came to my home one morning. Through tears he told me that he'd learned that his 13-year-old daughter had lost her virginity. It seemed that she had developed a relationship with a boy in their neighborhood. From the beginning he did not trust the boy. The Holy Spirit had warned him. Furthermore, he had received my teaching which greatly discouraged romantic relationships between young men and women prior to marriageable age. He had believed that what I was counseling was Scriptural.

However, in the instance of this neighborhood boy, the requests of his daughter, and even the pressures of his wife, led him to allow his daughter out the front door of his city. He did not keep his gates. Like righteous Lot, he placed his daughter in the hands of a young man whom he knew from his gut was unrighteous. The result was predictable.

I also remember one father who wept at the altar as I prayed with him. It was clear that his 10-year-old son was greatly troubled in his spirit, and there seemed to be a darkness in his soul. Both parents

were Christians and the father was Spirit-filled. Yet, their 10-year-old boy seemed consistently drawn to darkness and even the occult. As he wept, the tragedy unfolded. Against his better judgment, the father had allowed his young son to dabble in the occult through ungodly comic books, occultic computer games, and violent forms of media. He had not kept the gate. His city had been invaded. His son had been taken captive.

One of the judgments of God upon ancient Israel should they violate the covenant was stated in Deuteronomy 28:32 . . . ***“Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation, and you will wear out your eyes watching for them day after day, powerless to lift a hand.”*** The word “nation” means a foreign people group or a foreign power. This 10-year-old boy was in the hands of a foreign power. Because the gates had not been kept and their dark influences had been allowed to enter this child’s life, he had become gripped by the occult. How many of our children must we lose before we start to keep our gates?

## V. Rebuilding Burned Gates

Is it possible to rebuild a broken wall or restore a burned gate? What I’ve just taught leaves a lot of people discouraged. We realize how we have failed to keep the gates of our own city, and we think all is lost.

I have good news for you. You can always repent. Even more so, it is possible to restore gates that have been burned with fire. The story of Jerusalem is that God established the gates. Over time, the elders and leaders of the city fell down in their responsibilities to keep the gates. God, in judgment and faithfulness to His own warnings, sent the Babylonians to burn those same gates. And yet the story of Jerusalem and her gates does not end with the siege of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. One hundred and forty years (approximately) later Nehemiah returned and set about the task of rebuilding the gates of the city. Nehemiah is a wonderful picture chronicling the restoration and rebuilding of gate after gate around the city of Jerusalem. The message? Burned gates can be reestablished.

Nehemiah’s story is that of not only rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, but also rebuilding her gates. The detail of Nehemiah 3 should be inspiring to any who realize that the gates of their home have been “burned with fire.” Gate after gate was rebuilt by the people of Jerusalem . . . “Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place . . . The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its bolts and bars in place. . . The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put doors and bolts and bars in place . . .” Do you see the picture? The people of God are rebuilding the gates which had been destroyed.

The Israelites knew the prophecies and the chronicle of their destruction. They would have known Jeremiah 17, which details the reasons as to why God allowed the gates to be burned with fire. Can you imagine the profound sense of grace and devotion in the hearts of those who rebuilt the gates in Nehemiah 3? They clearly understood that it was more than a matter of rebuilding the physical gates around Jerusalem. The entire principle of gatekeeping needed to be reestablished among God’s people. With that in mind, the moment described in Nehemiah 7:39-8:1 must have been filled with poignancy . . . ***“When the seventh month came and the Israelites had settled in their towns, all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the book of the Law of Moses which the Lord had commanded for Israel.”*** Do you see the significance and imagery in these verses? Not only had the gates been physically rebuilt, once again the Word of God was being read, understood, and applied in the city gates. Jerusalem had been restored.

It's worth noting that in Nehemiah 3 each person who restored the gates of Jerusalem is mentioned by name. In other words, God takes the time to write down (and commend) those who set themselves about the task of restoring the gates of their own city. The message is clear. If you look around and see evidence that the gates of your home have been burned with fire, you can repent, rebuild, and restore. If you apply the standards of Scripture and you find that "shrines" are keeping watch over the gates of your home rather than God's Word, you can always tear those shrines down as Josiah did.

Similarly, Asa, king of Judah, rebuilt the walls and gates of Jerusalem during another time of revival. "Let us build up these towns," he said to Judah, "and put walls around them, with towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours, because we have sought the Lord our God; we have sought Him and He has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered." The testimony of Asa is similar to the testimony of those in Nehemiah 3 . . . God will bless those who desire to put in place the city gates.

The Bible honors not only those who seek to build or rebuild gates; the Bible also honors those who are the gatekeepers. Several times in Scripture we find lists of those whose responsibilities it was to keep the gates. In 1 Chronicles 9:17-20, we find one such list. Among those listed are "***Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman and their brothers . . . These were the gatekeepers belonging to the camp of the Levites.***" As the passage develops there is an interesting note found in 1 Chronicles 9:20 . . . "In earlier times Phinehas son of Eleazar was in charge of the gatekeepers, and the Lord was with him." Phinehas was the picture of a man committed to holiness and decisive in righteousness. No wonder the Bible calls attention to him as "chief of the gatekeepers."

In Numbers 25 it is Phinehas who purges evil from the camp of Israel and turns away God's anger. My friends, it will take a Phinehas to keep the gates. Lot was a righteous man, but in the final analysis he was willing to give up that which was precious (his daughters) in order to appease the demands of a wicked culture. We will face the same pressures. Will we be Phinehases who are willing to stand strong when we must do so?

Like Phinehas, David was an experienced warrior who understood the ways of God. He too grasped the significance of the city gates. It's not surprising therefore to find that David made allowances that Solomon might effectively build gates during his own reign... "***And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings.***" David could not build Solomon's gates. He could, however, provide him with the raw materials to defend the city of Jerusalem during his own reign. Similarly, our children and our grandchildren must build their own gates and defend their own cities. However, through our modeling and teaching, we can provide them with the raw materials (the "iron") that they may be able to build and keep gates in their own time.

I'd like to end with one last passage of Scripture—Psalm 147:12-13 . . . "***Extol the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion, for He strengthens the bars of your gates and blesses your people within you.***" May the Lord Himself strengthen the bars of your gates so that He might bless the people within your city.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

Other passages of Scripture that place elders at the city gate are Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Deuteronomy 17:1ff; Deuteronomy 16:18ff; Deuteronomy 22:15; Joshua 20:1-4; Ruth 4:1-10; Job 29:7-11; Proverbs 1:21; Proverbs 8:1-6; Proverbs 24:7; Lamentations 5:14.

Song of Solomon 8:8-9 speaks to our responsibility to guard our daughters . . . “We have a young sister, and her breasts are not yet grown. What shall we do for our sister for the day she is spoken for? If she is a wall, we will build towers of silver on her. If she is a door, we will enclose her with panels of cedar.” The intent of this verse is not hard to discern. If a young maiden was a “wall,” what was meant was that she was chaste. No young man could enter in to her. However, if she was a “door,” she was not chaste. That is, even if she still had her virginity, her older brothers sensed that a young man could enter in to her. She was a “door.” That is, she could be entered in to. The young maiden who was a door was to be “enclosed with panels of cedar.” Do you see the gatekeeping implication? If our daughters seem to have an “available spirit” about them, rather than turning them loose in the community, we must do the opposite until we can win their hearts and they gain their senses.