



February 14, 2016

Nehemiah 3:13-14

Ever Changing, Never Changing Part 10

*"Examining Our Gates: Sin"*

Pastor Gary Hamrick

In the third of a series on the Gates of Jerusalem, Pastor Gary looks at the Dung Gate.

Sin is what separates us from God. It's a human condition we are born with, which will eventually kill us. But, there is a remedy - Jesus Christ, who died for our sins! The Dung Gate reminds us of the sin, filth, and garbage in our lives. Let us confess our sins and get right with God who loves us and sent his Son, Jesus, to die for us! Forgiveness is just a one prayer away!

### The Dung Gate

1. It's interesting to note that the four previous gates we've looked at were all repaired by groups of people; but just one man, Malkijah, rebuilt the Dung Gate!
2. In Hebrew, Malkijah means, my God is King, and Pastor Gary said, "It takes a guy whose God is King to hang the Dung Gate!"
3. In biblical times, dung was more than just animal manure; dung included human excrement, garbage, trash, and waste of any kind.
4. Everything was taken out of the Dung Gate (in the southern part of the city) to the Valley of Hinnom.
5. This valley is also called the Hinnom Valley or the Valley of the Children.
  - a. During the period of the kings, starting with the time when Solomon was king of Israel, the Israelites worshiped Chemosh, Molech, and Baal.

- b. Solomon built shrines in the Valley of Hinnom, and it was at these shrines that people sacrificed their children in the fires at the pagan altars.
  - c. **Jeremiah 32:35** - *“They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, nor did it enter my mind, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin.”*
  - d. This place was also called Topheth, which is a Hebrew name meaning, to beat like a drum.
    - i. During the child sacrifice, people would loudly beat drums hoping to drown out the excruciating cries of their dying children.
  - e. Josiah, who was one of the “good” kings, led reforms and did away with child sacrifice.
    - i. **2 Kings 23:10** - *“[Josiah] desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech.”*
6. By the time Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 444BC, God had purged the Israelites, who had been exiled to Babylon for 70 years, concerning child sacrifice, idol worship and paganism, as well as the desire to have a king like all of the surrounding nations.
  7. Nehemiah basically turned this horrific place into the city dump, and in order to keep disease from spreading, they burned everything, which meant that the human and animal waste, and everything else that had been deposited there was continually on fire!
  8. Pastor Gary said: “In order for [us] to understand the practical truth... [We] need to imagine the site, the stench, and the smoke that [was] continually rising from this place. It [was] vile. It [was] grotesque, [and] putrid. This [place was] a horrible thing to think about, to behold, and smell, and the whole deal! Jesus [pointed] to this location as a visual illustration, in small part, of hell.”
  9. **Mark 9:43-48** - *“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ ”*

10. Pastor Gary cautioned us to remember that Jesus was not speaking in literal terms concerning gouging out our eyes, etc., he was using drastic language to communicate a strong message about the importance of dealing seriously with sin, because heaven and hell hangs in the balance!
11. Jesus used the word, hell, twelve times in the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.
  - a. The Gospel of John does not record one instance in which Jesus used the word hell.
  - b. Eleven out of the twelve times Jesus used the word, Gehenna, which means, hell, he used it in reference to the Valley of Hinnom.
12. Hell is not a fable or a figment of someone's imagination; it's a real place, and it is described in the Bible as a place of fire, torment, outer darkness, and a place of suffering where there will be "*weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"
  - a. It's important to remember that hell is not a place of annihilation, as some believe it to be; it is a place of real, eternal suffering."

### Sin

13. The modern parallel for us is that the Dung Gate reminds us of everything that is filthy, and it's a picture of sin that leads to hell.
14. Sin is mentioned throughout the entirety of the Bible as being the human condition that separates us from God, and causes us to not be in right relationship with him.
15. Ultimately, if we do not deal with sin, in death we will be separated from the Lord and spend eternity in hell.
16. We must continue to personally deal with sin in our own lives, and address sin in the life of the church corporately.

### We Need To Agree With God About Sin

17. God's assessment of the human condition is that we are sinners from birth, and we sin by our nature from birth.
18. There is one remedy for the "sin disease," and that remedy is Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins, paying the penalty for our sins.

19. [2 Corinthians 5:21](#) - *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*
20. Pastor Gary said he has become more and more aware of the fact that many churches are moving away from talking about sin, choosing instead to talk about coping mechanisms people can use to help them manage their family, their money, their marriage, etc., as if the goal of life was happiness.
21. Pastor Gary made these comments on happiness and holiness:
  - a. The goal of the Christian life is not happiness; it is holiness!
  - b. The more we pursue holiness, the more we will experience happiness!
  - c. If we only pursue happiness, we will never experience holiness.
  - d. In pursuing happiness, we will only do what we want to do, not what the Lord wants us to do in order to pursue holiness.
  - e. Pursuing holiness means that we want to do what the Lord wants us to do.
  - f. Pursuing holiness means that we want to live our lives to please the Lord.
22. The sin issue is not just for the “sinners outside the church”; it is an issue both inside and outside the church!

#### We Need To Pursue Holiness

23. [1 Peter 1:14-16](#) - *“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’ ”*
24. The Bible presents holiness as a position, which is imputed to us, because we are made holy because of our relationship with Jesus Christ.
25. Holiness is also a practice, and we know this because the Bible teaches us to be holy, to act holy, and to live holy life.
26. The motive for pursuing holiness is not that we don’t want to “lose” our salvation; the motive should be that we love the Lord and we want to please him, and do what is right so we can honor him.
27. We must deal with the Dung Gate of our heart, by allowing the Lord to rid our lives of the filth, the garbage, and the mess!

28. **Psalm 34:4** - *"I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears."*
29. We need to agree with the Lord's assessment of the human condition, our need for a Savior, and his standard of right and wrong.

#### We Need To Confess Sin To God

30. **Psalm 32: 1-5** - *"Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord' - you forgave the guilt of my sin."*
31. **1 John 1:9** - *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

#### We Need To Live For God

32. **2 Peter 3:10-12** - *"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat."*

#### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Nehemiah 3:13-14** to provide the foundation for this study.
3. How has the Lord helped you deal seriously with personal sin?

4. Spend time talking about the ways the Lord has brought forgiveness, healing, and an increasing level of spiritual maturity into your life as a result of dealing with personal sin.
5. How do people you know who don't follow the Lord view their personal sin?
6. What are some of the reasons so many pastors and churches are avoiding the subject of sin, and instead focusing on coping mechanisms that help people live a happy life?
7. Do people you know who don't follow the Lord view hell as being a reality, a possibility, or a myth?
8. Read and discuss [1 Peter 1:14-16](#).
9. Share examples of ways you pursue and practice personal holiness.
10. Read and discuss [Psalm 32:1-5](#).
11. Do you, as someone has suggested, keep short accounts with the Lord?
12. Read and discuss [1 John 1:9](#).
13. How would you describe the feelings you have when you ask the Lord to forgive you and make you clean?
14. Read and discuss [2 Peter 3:10-12](#), and focus on the ways we can be intentional about living our lives with an eternal perspective.
15. In preparation for prayer, have someone be ready to read [Psalm 51:1-17](#); allow the Holy Spirit to minister to the people in the group, and encourage the people in your group to pursue a life of holiness.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).