

The background of the cover is a photograph of a stone archway. Through the arch, a courtyard is visible, featuring a blue sky with white clouds. The courtyard is flanked by stone buildings; the one on the right has a series of arched windows. The ground is paved with large, irregular stone tiles. The title 'GATEKEEPERS OF THE TEMPLE' is superimposed over the upper half of the image in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

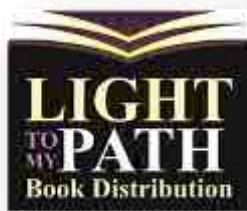
GATEKEEPERS OF THE TEMPLE

An Examination
of the Role of
Gatekeeper in the
Old Testament
and its Lessons for
the Christian Life Today

F. WAYNE MAC LEOD

Gatekeepers of the Temple

*An Examination of the Role of Gatekeeper in the Old
Testament Temple and its Lesson for the Christian
Life Today*



F. Wayne MacLeod

Light To My Path Book Distribution
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Gatekeepers of the Temple

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Preface

Some years ago, I was studying French in the province of Quebec in Canada. To help with the learning process, my wife and I attended a French church. At that time, we did not have enough knowledge of the language to communicate or even understand the pastor's sermon. I remember feeling quite lost and useless in that church.

The believers met in a local school, and so the hymn books were brought each week and placed on the desks so that people arriving would be able to sing. When the service was over, the pastor would gather up those hymn books and take them home with him. I remember watching him gathering up the books after the Sunday service. I realized that this was a task I could do—one that didn't require that I have a good knowledge of the language. From that point on, I made it a point to help gather up those hymn books after church.

What I have never forgotten was the sense of fulfilment and joy I felt in gathering up those books. I felt as if the Lord had given me a ministry in a church where I could not communicate verbally. I had a deep sense of serving the Lord. Somehow, I believe He smiled as I joyfully performed this task each Sunday.

The roles God calls us to do are not always visible. Sometimes they go unnoticed. No ministry is unimportant, however. Each part played in the Christian life is a vital one

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and needs to be done with a heart of joy and gratitude to the Lord. The function of the gatekeeper was one of those duties. People would walk past these men at the entrance of the temple and hardly notice them. Their role, however, was significant in the overall functioning of the temple.

Not only was their role essential, but it also has much to teach us about God's expectations of us as believers in the church today. I trust that this study will help us to see the significance of the role of gatekeeper and what it teaches us about God's expectations as we seek to live out our Christian life today.

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Chapter 1

The Gatekeepers

This is a study about the gatekeepers of the temple. I admit it is an obscure topic. I believe, however, that there are no unimportant roles to play in the work of the kingdom of God. I am convinced that these individuals teach us something significant about God and our walk with Him.

In the most basic terms, the gatekeeper was one who stood at the doors watching over what came in and out of the temple. The Bible and its various versions use different terms to describe these workers. Consider the references below from the English Standard Version of the Bible:

[10] For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. (Psalm 84)

[21] Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah was gatekeeper at the entrance of the tent of meeting. (1 Chronicles 9)

[4] I brought them to the house of the LORD into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, keeper of the threshold. (Jeremiah 35)

The ESV version of the Bible uses the terms “doorkeepers,” “gatekeepers,” and “keeper of the

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threshold,” to refer to this function in the work of the temple. The KJV Bible adds the word “porter.”

1 Chronicles 23:2-6 tells us that the role of gatekeeper was not given to just anyone:

[2] David assembled all the leaders of Israel and the priests and the Levites. [3] The Levites, thirty years old and upward, were numbered, and the total was 38,000 men. [4] “Twenty-four thousand of these,” David said, “shall have charge of the work in the house of the LORD, 6,000 shall be officers and judges, [5] 4,000 gatekeepers, and 4,000 shall offer praises to the LORD with the instruments that I have made for praise.” [6] And David organized them in divisions corresponding to the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. (1 Chronicles 23)

From this passage, we see that King David organized the Priests and Levites into divisions, each with their various responsibilities. Of the thirty-eight thousand priests and Levites, four thousand were gatekeepers. Notice that the gatekeepers were selected from the priests and Levites. The task of keeping the gates was a function of the Levitical priests of the day. This is confirmed in 2 Chronicles 34:12-13:

[12] And the men did the work faithfully. Over them were set Jahath and Obadiah the Levites, of the sons of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to have oversight. The Levites, all who were skillful with instruments of music, [13] were over the burden-bearers and directed all who did work in every kind of service, and some of the Levites were scribes and officials and gatekeepers. (2 Chronicles 34)

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Notice the phrase, “and some of the Levites were scribes and officials and gatekeepers.” The implication here is that the role was given only to those God had chosen to be His priests. They were responsible for what came in and out of the temple of God.

1 Chronicles 26 tells us that the decision about who would be responsible for the various gates around the temple was determined by lot:

[12] These divisions of the gatekeepers, corresponding to their chief men, had duties, just as their brothers did, ministering in the house of the LORD. [13] And they cast lots by fathers' houses, small and great alike, for their gates. (1 Chronicles 26)

From 1 Chronicles 26:17-19, we learn about the number of gatekeepers required to be on duty at the temple every day:

[17] On the east there were six each day, on the north four each day, on the south four each day, as well as two and two at the gatehouse. [18] And for the colonnade on the west there were four at the road and two at the colonnade. [19] These were the divisions of the gatekeepers among the Korahites and the sons of Merari. (1 Chronicles 26)

Six gatekeepers worked on the east gate. The north entrance only required four. In the south, four Levites were stationed at the door and another four at the gatehouse. Six more men were positioned at the west—four at the road and two at the colonnade. In total, twenty-four men guarded the various entrances to the temple every day.

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In 1 Samuel 2:22, we have a reference to the sons of Eli and their sin. It appears that they were having sexual relations with the women “who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting.”

[22] Now Eli was very old, and he kept hearing all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting. (1 Samuel 2)

The task these women performed is not clear from the passage. We should not, however, confuse them with the gatekeepers. The gatekeepers were chosen from among the Levites and given the role to watch over what came in and out of the temple. The women described here likely performed many necessary tasks connected with keeping the entrance of the temple clean and presentable, but they were not gatekeepers in the conventional sense of the word.

We have a New Testament reference to a servant girl in the courtyard of the high priest's home in Matthew 26:69. It was this servant girl who asked Peter if he knew the Lord Jesus. She was not an official guard or gatekeeper but, like the women of Eli's day, carried out her responsibilities at the entrance to the priest's home.

The gifts of God's people supported the gatekeepers and provided for their basic needs. This is evident in Nehemiah 12:47:

[47] And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers; and they set apart that which was

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for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the sons of Aaron. (Nehemiah 12)

These daily portions of food and provisions were stored in chambers in the temple and used as needed by the priests and gatekeepers.

[4] Now before this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was related to Tobiah, [5] prepared for Tobiah a large chamber where they had previously put the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests. (Nehemiah 13)

From Jeremiah 35:4, we understand that some gatekeepers lived in chambers in the temple:

[4] I brought them to the house of the LORD into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaiah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, keeper of the threshold. (Jeremiah 35)

Notice the reference to the “chamber of Maaseiah, the son of Shallum, keeper of the threshold.” It appears that he had a room in the temple where he could stay. This is not to say that all gatekeepers lived in the temple. These men would have their own homes. We do understand, however, that some rooms were set aside as lodging for gatekeepers and temple officials.

We understand then that some of the Levites were given the responsibility to be gatekeepers. Each day twenty-four

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of these Levites were stationed around the temple watching what came in and out. These gatekeepers were supported by the gifts of God's people and exercised an essential role in the everyday functioning of the work that took place in the temple. In the next chapters, we will examine the roles these men played in greater detail.

For Consideration:

Why would the temple of God require gatekeepers? What kind of things do you suppose these men would be keeping out of the temple? What kind of things would they not allow to leave the temple?

How important was the role of the gatekeeper? Would this have been a highly sought-after job?

What kind of tasks go unnoticed? How important are those responsibilities?

For Prayer

Take a moment to thank the Lord for individuals in your family, work or church who faithfully perform ordinary and unnoticed duties that make life easier for everyone.

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Ask the Lord to help you to see the importance of the role
He has given you to play.

Chapter 2

Guarding the Entrance

One of the responsibilities of the gatekeepers of the temple was to keep watch at the entrance. There are many reasons why we might want to guard a property. The first reason has to do with protecting what is ours. The temple of Solomon was richly decorated with gold and silver. There were many valuable articles housed inside its walls. It would be natural for the people of God to protect this from anyone who wanted to profit from its wealth. This, however, was not the primary reason for the gatekeepers.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the gatekeepers were priests. If the concern of the gatekeeper was merely to protect the wealth of the temple, they could have hired soldiers to watch the doors. The gatekeepers were Levitical priests for a reason. Their responsibilities were spiritual and rooted in their understanding of God and His purposes.

The God of the Jews was holy. Speaking to His people through Moses, the Lord said:

[44] For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. [45] For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11)

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This holiness separated God from all that was sinful or unclean. Notice in the passage above that a person could be defiled by touching an insect that crawled on the ground. A quick examination of the book of Leviticus shows us that many things could make a person unclean. Unintentional sins (Leviticus 4) or deceiving a neighbour (Leviticus 6) would require an offering for forgiveness. Beyond this, however, a person was impure if he or she touched any form of human uncleanness (Leviticus 5:3), had a bodily discharge (Leviticus 12, 15) or skin disease (Leviticus 13). The Law of Moses required that those who entered the presence of God first be cleansed of any impurity. To enter the presence of God in an unworthy manner, was to show great disrespect to God and His temple.

1 Samuel 2:22-25 recounts the story of the sons of Eli, the priest. They defiled themselves through sexual relations with the women who served at the entrance of the tabernacle. When Eli heard what his sons were doing, he rebuked them, but they refused to listen. 1 Samuel 2:25 tells us that God put Eli's sons to death. He did so because they defiled the temple and the holy name they represented through their actions.

Leviticus 15 contains the requirements of God for men who had an emission of semen or a woman who had her menstrual period. The chapter concludes with the following warning:

[31] "Thus you shall keep the people of Israel separate from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by defiling my tabernacle that is in their midst." [32] This is the law for him who has a discharge and for him who

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has an emission of semen, becoming unclean thereby; [33] also for her who is unwell with her menstrual impurity, that is, for anyone, male or female, who has a discharge, and for the man who lies with a woman who is unclean. (Leviticus 15)

There were severe repercussions for entering the tabernacle without first being cleansed of bodily discharge. Those who did so defiled the tabernacle and dishonoured the name of their God. Leviticus 15:31 warns of death to those who showed such disrespect.

The gatekeepers restricted access to the temple. They did so to protect those who entered, but more importantly to show respect and honour to the temple and the God they served. 2 Chronicles 23 is an account of the reforms that took place under Jehoiada, the priest. Of significance is a reference in 2 Chronicles 23:19 to the posting of gatekeepers at the gates of the house of the Lord:

[18] And Jehoiada posted watchmen for the house of the LORD under the direction of the Levitical priests and the Levites whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the LORD, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, as it is written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. [19] He stationed the gatekeepers at the gates of the house of the LORD so that no one should enter who was in any way unclean. (2 Chronicles 23)

2 Chronicles 23:19 states that Jehoiada posted gatekeepers at the gates of the house of the Lord so that “no one should enter who was in any way unclean.” It was the heart of Jehoiada to respect the holiness of God. The

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gatekeepers at the various entrances of the temple were to watch out for anything that might offend the God of Israel.

Writing in Psalm 24, David says:

[3] Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? [4] He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

[5] He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. (Psalm 24)

David speaks here about the “hill of the Lord.” This is a reference to the temple that was located at a high point in the city of Jerusalem. He asks the question, “who shall stand in his holy place?” In other words, what kind of person can come into the temple to worship the Lord God? David answers this question in verse 4 but telling us that it is the person who has clean hands and a pure heart. The one who had not given his soul to what is false or sworn deceitfully can enter the holy presence of God. It is this person alone who can expect a blessing from the Lord (verse 5).

As we enter the presence of God, we must respect His holiness. Sin and uncleanness are repulsive to Him. No one can stand before Him who has not cleansed of his or her impurity. The sacrifices offered day after day on the courtyard altar sought to purify those who had defiled themselves.

The gatekeepers were a reminder to Israel of her obligation toward a holy God. They restricted access to the

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temple to anyone who was not clean. They were to be zealous for the honour of God. Nothing was to pass by them that would defile the temple. Nothing unclean was to blaspheme the name of their God.

For Consideration:

Why were gatekeepers necessary at the entrance of the temple?

What do we learn here about the holiness of God? Do we understand or respect this holiness today in our churches? How important is it to recognize God's holiness?

How did the gatekeepers remind the people of God about their obligations as they came to worship?

What kind of impurities can we bring to the worship of God today? How can we be cleansed of these impurities?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord that, as a holy God, He is separated from all uncleanness and impurity.

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Ask the Lord to search your heart to see if there is any impurity you need to confess to Him.

Ask the Lord to give you a greater respect for His holiness. Pray that He would help you to live a life that honours this quality in Him.

Chapter 3

Protecting Temple Property

We have seen that the gatekeepers were stationed around the temple watching out for anything that might offend a holy and righteous God. The responsibility of the gatekeepers did not end there. We discover that they also had the responsibility to watch over what entered the temple doors.

People came to the temple regularly with offerings. They brought grain and financial gifts for the Lord and the work of the temple. The gatekeepers and priests depended on these contributions for their wages. These donations were placed in storerooms in the temple and guarded by the gatekeepers. We have the names of six gatekeepers tasked to care for the storehouses at the gates in Nehemiah 12:25:

[25] Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and Akkub were gatekeepers standing guard at the storehouses of the gates. (Nehemiah 12)

From 1 Chronicles 9, we learn that it was the chief gatekeepers who were entrusted with the care of the storehouses and treasures of the temple.

[24] The gatekeepers were on the four sides, east, west, north, and south. [25] And their kinsmen who were in their villages were obligated to come in every seven days, in turn, to be with these, [26] for the four chief gatekeepers, who were Levites, were entrusted to be

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over the chambers and the treasures of the house of God. [27] And they lodged around the house of God, for on them lay the duty of watching, and they had charge of opening it every morning. (1 Chronicles 9)

These men lived on site while performing their duties, assuring the safety of the donations. The donations were not the only articles these men guarded. 1 Chronicles 9 goes on to say:

[28] Some of them had charge of the utensils of service, for they were required to count them when they were brought in and taken out. [29] Others of them were appointed over the furniture and over all the holy utensils, also over the fine flour, the wine, the oil, the incense, and the spices. (1 Chronicles 9)

It is evident from these verses that the responsibility of the gatekeeper was to watch over the utensils used for sacrifices and other priestly duties. These utensils would be stored and taken out as needed by the priests. The gatekeepers would assure that what went out came back and was safely stored. They also watched over the furniture of the temple, making sure it was kept safe and in good order. 1 Chronicles 9:29 tells us also that the supplies needed by the priests such as flour, wine, oil, incense and spices were also under the responsibility of the chief gatekeepers.

At times repairs would be required. We have a record in Nehemiah 3:29 of a man by the name of Shemaiah, the keeper of the East Gate. He was responsible for repairing the city wall in the days of Nehemiah.

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*[29] After them Zadok the son of Immer repaired opposite his own house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, repaired.
(Nehemiah 3)*

The gatekeepers were not always faithful in their duties. The temple was defiled at times. This may have been because the gatekeepers were lax or negligent in their duties. Such was the case when Josiah came to the throne of Israel. The temple of God was in disrepair. To restore the worship of Jehovah God in his nation, Josiah issued an order to the priests and keepers of the threshold:

[4] And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the keepers of the threshold to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron and carried their ashes to Bethel. (2 Kings 23)

It was the task of the priests and gatekeepers of Josiah's day to remove all defilements from the temple. Notice how the gatekeepers and priests removed vessels made for Baal, Asherah and the hosts of heaven. This was an indication that the gatekeepers had not been doing their duty. All these pagan articles were carried outside the city and burned.

During that reign of the evil Queen Athaliah in Judah, a priest by the name of Jehoiada determined to restore order to the nation and return it to the worship of God. To do so, he planned a rebellion against the Queen. His idea was to replace her with the rightful heir to the throne, the young

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king Joash. 2 Chronicles 23:4-6 detail his purpose for the priests and Levites in this overthrow of the evil queen:

[4] This is the thing that you shall do: of you priests and Levites who come off duty on the Sabbath, one third shall be gatekeepers, [5] and one third shall be at the king's house and one third at the Gate of the Foundation. And all the people shall be in the courts of the house of the LORD. [6] Let no one enter the house of the LORD except the priests and ministering Levites. They may enter, for they are holy, but all the people shall keep the charge of the LORD. (2 Chronicles 23)

Notice the function of the gatekeepers in this time of evil. They were to guard the gates of the house of the Lord so that no one would enter except the Levites and priests who were holy before the Lord. With gatekeepers in place, Jehoiada proceeded to anoint Joash as king. When Athaliah heard about it and came to see what was happening, Jehoiada ordered the soldiers to kill her. With the evil queen out of the way, Jehoiada and Joash went on to restore the worship of God in the nation. The gatekeepers had a role to play in the removal of an evil queen and the restoration of the worship and service of God.

These verses show us that gatekeepers were not only responsible for guarding the entrance to the temple, but they also had the care of temple offerings, utensils and furnishings. Defilements did not always come from outside the walls of the temple. If what was already in the temple was not kept secure and in good repair, it hindered the worship of God. Imagine that offerings could not take place because the utensils required had been lost or misplaced.

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Imagine that the offerings of God's people were spoiled because they were improperly stored. While the role of gatekeeper may not have been as noticeable as that of the High Priest, it was nonetheless a vital ministry.

When defilements did enter the temple, the gatekeepers were involved in cleaning and restoring the purity of the building and articles of worship so that the name of God might be honoured. Their work assured that the worship of God in the temple would be unhindered and that the name of the Lord was held in high regard.

The God of Israel deserved the highest praise. This meant that He could not be worshipped carelessly. All the articles used in the adoration and praise of His name were set aside, kept clean and secure so that nothing would defile this worship. The service of the gatekeepers was itself an act of worship.

For Consideration:

Can we disrespect God by misusing or abusing what belongs to Him? Explain.

How can caring for what belongs to God be an act of worship? What has God given you to care for today?

What kind of defilements enters the church of our day?
What do you need to deal with personally?

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For Prayer:

Ask the Lord to show you if you have been slack in caring for what He has placed under your responsibility.

Ask God to show you if there are any defilements in your life or church that need to be removed.

Ask God to give you the grace to be a good gatekeeper over what He has given you personally.

Chapter 4

Temple Finances

We have seen that the gatekeepers were responsible for temple property. They watched over this property to assure it was in good condition and accessible to the priests. This ensured the proper functioning of temple services.

The gatekeepers were not always faithful in their duty. In the days of King Jehoash, the house of God was in great disrepair. King Jehoash had a burden to see the temple restored and commanded the priests of his day to take the offerings of the people and repair the temple:

[4] Jehoash said to the priests, "All the money of the holy things that is brought into the house of the LORD, the money for which each man is assessed—the money from the assessment of persons—and the money that a man's heart prompts him to bring into the house of the LORD, [5] let the priests take, each from his donor, and let them repair the house wherever any need of repairs is discovered." (2 Kings 12)

The king reprimanded Jehoiada, the priest for his neglect of the temple. He also commanded that all money received as donations be handed over for repairs:

[7] Therefore King Jehoash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests and said to them, "Why are you not repairing the house? Now therefore take no more

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money from your donors, but hand it over for the repair of the house.” (2 Kings 12)

What is essential for us to note in 2 Kings 12 is what Jehoiada did in response to the king's command.

[9] Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in the lid of it and set it beside the altar on the right side as one entered the house of the LORD. And the priests who guarded the threshold put in it all the money that was brought into the house of the LORD. [10] And whenever they saw that there was much money in the chest, the king's secretary and the high priest came up and they bagged and counted the money that was found in the house of the LORD. [11] Then they would give the money that was weighed out into the hands of the workmen who had the oversight of the house of the LORD. And they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders who worked on the house of the LORD, [12] and to the masons and the stonecutters, as well as to buy timber and quarried stone for making repairs on the house of the LORD, and for any outlay for the repairs of the house. (2 Kings 12)

Jehoiada put a chest at the entrance of the house of the Lord. When money was donated to the temple, the “priests who guarded the threshold” (gatekeepers) would bring the money and put it in the chest. When the chest was full, the king's secretary and the high priest would bag the money and give it to the workmen for the restoration of the temple. It was the gatekeepers who were responsible for seeing that the money donated to the service of God was placed in that chest.

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Later, under the leadership of king Josiah, further repairs were required in the house of the Lord. Listen to the command of King Josiah in 2 Kings 22:4-5:

[4] "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may count the money that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people. [5] And let it be given into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD, and let them give it to the workmen who are at the house of the LORD, repairing the house. (2 Kings 22)

Notice the phrase "count the money that has been brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the threshold have collected from the people" (2 Kings 22:4). Again, we see from this that the gatekeepers assured that the financial gifts of God's people were adequately accounted for and kept safely for the work of the Lord.

1 Chronicles 9:26 shows us that it was not only the responsibility of the gatekeeper to receive the gifts of God's people but also to ensure their safekeeping. They were to guard the "treasures of the house of God:"

[26] for the four chief gatekeepers, who were Levites, were entrusted to be over the chambers and the treasures of the house of God. (1 Chronicles 9)

2 Chronicles 31 teaches us that they were also charged with the responsibility to distribute those treasures to those who needed them:

[14] And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, keeper of the east gate, was over the freewill offerings to God, to apportion the contribution reserved for the LORD and the

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most holy offerings. [15] Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah were faithfully assisting him in the cities of the priests, to distribute the portions to their brothers, old and young alike, by divisions (2 Chronicles 31)

Notice that Kore, the keeper of the east gate, was given the task of distributing the contributions and offerings. A team of priests assisted him in distributing these gifts to their brothers in various cities.

As you can imagine, the task of gatekeeper required absolute integrity. Writing to Timothy, the apostle Paul would say:

[10] For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. (1 Timothy 6)

We have all read stories of men and women who have abused their position of trust because of their love for money. The people of God entrusted their finances into the hands of these gatekeepers who saw to it that their gifts were safely stored, accounted for, and distributed as intended. It was their duty to guarantee that every donation, no matter how small, was used for the glory of God.

In the days leading up to the death of the Lord Jesus, He and His disciples were at that home of Lazarus. Mary, his sister, took some costly perfume and anointed the feet of Jesus. While this was a prophetic statement about that death of Jesus, Judas objected to Mary's extravagance,

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claiming that it would have been better to sell the perfume and give the money to the poor:

[4] But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, [5] "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"
(John 12)

Notice, however, the motivation behind the objection of Judas:

[6] He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.
(John 12)

Judas was a gatekeeper of sorts. He received and safeguarded the donations given for the work of the Lord Jesus and His disciples. The problem was that his love for money was such that he would help himself to what was in the moneybag. He was not trustworthy.

The work of God requires reliable gatekeepers. The task will not be accomplished without the generous contributions of God's people. We need men and women of confidence to assure that the donations of God's people are kept for the purpose intended and distributed faithfully to accomplish the goal for which they were given.

For Consideration:

How was the position of gatekeeper a position of trust? What would be the result if gatekeepers were not trustworthy?

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How essential were the contributions of God's people for the work of ministry in the Old Testament period? How significant are these contributions today?

What has God given you personally? Are you accountable to Him for the use and safekeeping of the gifts He has given? Have you been faithful?

The task of the gatekeeper was to assure that all contributions were distributed to those for whom they were intended. Have you been faithful to see that what the Lord has given you has been given to those who need it?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord for what He has entrusted into your care. Ask Him to help you to be faithful in getting what He has assigned to you to those who need it.

The gatekeeper did not own what was contributed; he was merely to watch over it and assure that those for whom it was intended received the benefit. Ask the Lord to give you this heart. Ask Him to forgive you for believing that what we have received is for us alone.

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Ask God to give you absolute integrity in the handling of the gifts He has given you.

Pray for the men and women in your church who have responsibility for the finances. Pray that God would give them victory over any temptation to dishonesty and greed.

Chapter 5

The Gatekeepers and the Worship of Jehovah

While the role of the gatekeeper was a “behind the scenes” role, it was nonetheless a vital one. The significance of their responsibilities became quite evident in the worship of Israel.

1 Chronicles 16 recounts the story of how David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem and placed it in a tent. This was a significant event in the history of the city. It was over this Ark that that Lord God revealed His presence in the temple. Speaking to Moses, the Lord said:

*[22] There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.
(Exodus 25)*

God told Moses that He would meet with him at that ark. From there, He would speak to Him and reveal His purpose for the nation. The ark contained a copy of the ten commandments given to Moses. The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies, the most sacred place in the temple. This place was so holy that even the priests could not enter lest they die:

[2] and the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the

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veil, before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat. (Leviticus 16)

The writer to the Hebrews teaches us that the High Priest alone could go into the Holy of Holies. He did this only once a year to perform his duties before the ark. Before doing so, however, he had to purify himself to be sure he brought no defilement before God in this most holy place.

[6] These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, [7] but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. (Hebrews 9)

The Ark of the Covenant was so crucial to the worship of Jehovah that according to 1 Chronicles 16:37-38, David assigned gatekeepers to watch over it.

[37] So David left Asaph and his brothers there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister regularly before the ark as each day required, [38] and also Obed-edom and his sixty-eight brothers, while Obed-edom, the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah were to be gatekeepers. (1 Chronicles 16)

Obed-edom and Hosah were to be gatekeepers of the ark (verse 38). Their task was to protect the ark at a distance assuring that nothing would enter the Holy of Holies to defile it.

It is interesting to note that when the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem for the first time, it was

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accompanied by priests and singers who played on musical instruments. Harps, lyres and cymbals offered loud praise to God as the Ark approached the city (1 Chronicles 15:16). In the middle of this celebration, however, we also find the gatekeepers:

[23] Berechiah and Elkanah were to be gatekeepers for the ark. [24] Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, should blow the trumpets before the ark of God. Obed-edom and Jehiah were to be gatekeepers for the ark. (1 Chronicles 15)

Notice the reference to gatekeepers twice in these two verses. They were an essential part of the worship of God that day.

2 Chronicles 35 recounts the history of the revival that took place under King Josiah of Judah. After cleansing the land of its impurities, the king ordered the celebration of the Passover. This Passover was like no other Passover:

[18] No Passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet. None of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as was kept by Josiah, and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 35)

As the celebrations of that day began, we read in verse 15:

[15] The singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their place according to the command of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer; and the gatekeepers were at each gate. They did not need to

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depart from their service, for their brothers the Levites prepared for them. (2 Chronicles 35:15)

The singers and gatekeepers were in place as the celebrations began. Each had their role in the worship of Jehovah. The singers praised His name in song. The gatekeepers watched for anything that would offend His holy presence. This was their act of worship. It was an essential service to the community. Nothing would drive the presence of God from their midst like sin and evil. These men stood guard, assuring that the Lord was worshipped in the “splendour of holiness” (see 1 Chronicles 16:29).

The Ark of the Covenant was not the only article in the temple for which the gatekeepers were responsible. 1 Chronicles 9 lists the responsibility of the gatekeepers:

[28] Some of them had charge of the utensils of service, for they were required to count them when they were brought in and taken out. [29] Others of them were appointed over the furniture and over all the holy utensils, also over the fine flour, the wine, the oil, the incense, and the spices. (1 Chronicles 9)

Many of the articles used for the worship of the Lord were under the care of that gatekeepers. It was their responsibility to watch over these articles and assure that they were kept securely and in good condition so the worship of God would be unhindered.

We should notice here that the task of the gatekeeper was not only to protect the temple from any desecrations but

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also to let in those who would bring joy and gladness to the worship of Jehovah God.

We have a story in 2 Kings 7 about how the Syrians attacked and surrounded the city of Samaria in the days of Elisha. This event caused great distress to the inhabitants as the food supplies were cut off. Mothers resorted to eating their children and despair filled their hearts. Amid this suffering, the prophet Elisha promised an abundance of food for the city. While some mocked his prophecy, the fulfillment came when the angel of the Lord caused the Syrians to hear the sound of an army approaching. This caused their hearts to fear and, in panic, they abandoned their siege of the city and fled, unknown to the inhabitants of Samaria.

It was some starving lepers in the region who discovered that Syria had abandoned its siege, leaving behind an abundance of provisions as Elisha had prophesied.

Not feeling it was right to leave the city to starve while they basked in abundance, the lepers approached the gatekeepers of the city to inform them of what they had discovered.

[9] Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us.

Now therefore come; let us go and tell the king's household." [10] *So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city and told them, "We came to the camp of the Syrians, and behold, there was no one to be seen or heard there, nothing but the horses tied and the donkeys tied and the tents as they were."* [11] *Then the*

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gatekeepers called out, and it was told within the king's household. (2 Kings 7)

It was the gatekeepers who announced to the inhabitants of the city that the prophesy of Elisha had come true. The result was that the city went out and brought back provisions of food. The lives of the inhabitants of Samaria were saved. The gatekeepers announced the good news that brought their salvation. The report these gatekeepers gave cause for the citizens of Samaria to give praise and honour to their God who had provided for their need.

The gatekeepers played a vital role in the worship of God. They safeguarded the sacred articles of the temple and kept them from defilement. They stood guard as the people praised and gave thanks to the Lord for His goodness. For the Old Testament believer, the worship of God was not taken lightly. They set a guard around the worship of Jehovah. Gatekeepers were charged to stand watch as the people worshiped their God so that no distraction or defilement would hinder the praise of His name.

For Consideration:

In what way was the Ark of the Covenant central in the worship of the Lord God? What responsibilities did the gatekeepers have toward the Ark?

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What role did the gatekeepers have in preserving the integrity and purity of worship? How significant was this role?

Why is it essential to guard our worship of God? What kind of distractions can enter our worship of His name?

For Prayer:

Take a moment to thank the Lord that He is worthy of our sincere worship.

Ask the Lord to show you if anything is distracting you in the praise of His name. Pray that these distractions will be removed.

Ask the Lord to guard the purity of worship in your church? Ask Him to raise up men and women of faith who can warn us of distractions and errors in our worship.

Chapter 6

A Position of Honour

The role of the gatekeeper was, for the most part, unnoticed. It was a service role to the other priests, who were more visible in the temple. This is not to say, however, that their position was not an honourable one.

In 1 Chronicles 6:31-33, we have a list of priests given the responsibility for music in the worship of the temple. Among those listed were the sons of Korah (verse 33). According to 1 Chronicles 9, these sons of Korah were known as the Korahites and were tasked with the responsibility of being “keepers of the threshold” or gatekeepers.

[19] Shallum the son of Kore, son of Ebiasaph, son of Korah, and his kinsmen of his fathers' house, the Korahites, were in charge of the work of the service, keepers of the thresholds of the tent, as their fathers had been in charge of the camp of the LORD, keepers of the entrance. (1 Chronicles 9)

These Korahite gatekeepers were also involved in the temple music. As musicians, they composed eleven psalms (see Psalm 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88). Of note is Psalm 84, where they speak about their role as gatekeepers.

[10] For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house

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of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. (Psalm 84)

The Korahites saw their role as gatekeepers to be an honourable one. Standing at the door of the house of the Lord was better than living in the luxury of wickedness. One day serving in the court of the house of God was better than a thousand days serving anywhere else. They felt privileged to play a role in the worship of the Lord God as gatekeepers.

Many years ago, I attended a French church as part of my language preparation for serving in Mauritius and Reunion. In those early days of language study, I was unable to understand that message or even speak with the members of the church. I felt useless. The church was meeting in a school at that time. I remember watching the pastor gather up the hymn books after the service and felt the Lord speaking to me about helping with this. I remember to this day the joy I had on Sundays to serve in this way. I believed that this was the ministry the Lord had given me in that church. As I read Psalm 84:10, I get this sense of joy in the hearts of the sons of Korah. They delighted in the work they had been given and served with all their heart.

When Ezra was commissioned to return from Babylon to Jerusalem to teach the Jews who had returned to build the city, he did not go alone. Ezra 7:7 tells us that he brought with him priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers and temple servants:

[7] And there went up also to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king, some of the people of Israel,

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and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants. (Ezra 7)

Ezra believed in the importance of gatekeepers in the worship of God.

Nehemiah also was a leader in the reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem after the exile. In Nehemiah 7, we read that the Lord put it on his heart to make a list of those who had returned from exile to Jerusalem to help in the rebuilding of the nation:

*[5] Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I found written in it:
(Nehemiah 7)*

In that list, we discover the following:

[45] The gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, 138. (Nehemiah 7)

Six families of gatekeepers responded to the call to return from exile to be involved in the reestablishment of the nation of Israel. One hundred and thirty-eight gatekeepers were among those who resettled in the ruined city of Jerusalem.

The people who returned from exile settled in various parts of the nation of Israel. In Nehemiah 11 it was determined that the population of the city of Jerusalem needed to be increased to defend and manage its affairs. The leaders of the people were living in Jerusalem, but many of the

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people were living outside the city where they could make a living off the land. Remember that the city had been burned and left in ruins by their enemies. Life in Jerusalem would have been somewhat challenging in those early days of rebuilding.

The people decided that they would cast lots to see who would live in the city. One out of ten families were chosen by lot to live in Jerusalem. The rest would live elsewhere in the nation.

[11:1] Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns. [2] And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.
(Nehemiah 11)

Notice in Nehemiah 11 that the people blessed those who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem. They recognized that this decision would not be easy as there would have been many inconveniences, at least until everything was restored. Among those chosen to live in the city of Jerusalem in those days were one hundred and seventy-two gatekeepers:

[19] The gatekeepers, Akkub, Talmon and their brothers, who kept watch at the gates, were 172. [20] And the rest of Israel, and of the priests and the Levites, were in all the towns of Judah, every one in his inheritance.
(Nehemiah 11)

These gatekeepers willingly offered to serve their brothers and sisters by settling in the city. The citizens of Israel respected the humble servant attitude of the gatekeepers.

2 Kings 25 tells us what took place in Jerusalem when the Babylonians invaded and sent the Israelites into captivity. Nebuzaradan burned the temple, the king's palace and the other homes in the city of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:8-9). He stripped the temple of its treasures and carried them off with him to Babylon (2 Kings 25:13-16). He also took the key leaders of the city captive and brought them with him to Babylon to present them to the Babylonian king. 2 Kings 25:18-20 is a list of these officials:

[18] And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the second priest and the three keepers of the threshold; [19] and from the city he took an officer who had been in command of the men of war, and five men of the king's council who were found in the city; and the secretary of the commander of the army, who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land, who were found in the city. [20] And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. [21] And the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was taken into exile out of its land. (2 Kings 25)

Among those taken into captivity were both religious and political leaders. Here is the list of men presented to the king of Babylon:

1. An officer in command of the men of war
2. Five men from the King's council

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3. The secretary of the army commander
4. The high priest Seraiah
5. Zephaniah, the second priest
6. Three keepers of the threshold (gatekeepers)
7. 60 men of the people

Notice that among these officials were three gatekeepers. They were taken along with the two highest ranking priests at that time. All these men were put to death by the king of Babylon.

The gatekeepers of the Temple were men of honour who certainly left their mark. Among them were the psalmists of Israel who composed psalms for the worship of God. They volunteered their time and efforts in the reconstruction of the nation of Israel after the enemy destroyed it. They were among those who willingly offered to settle and defend the city of Jerusalem in the early days of its resettlement. Finally, at least three of them lost their lives as they stood proudly before the king of Babylon with the other officials of Israel. They saw it as a privilege to be a “doorkeeper in the house of the Lord” (Psalm 84:10). Their humble attitude in a service role is one we need to see today.

For Consideration:

The gatekeeper's role was a humble but honourable role. Do we recognize the significance of people in our day who have this kind of position in the church?

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Psalm 84:10 shows us the attitude of a gatekeeper toward his humble position. What does this psalm teach us about how blessed the psalmist felt in his status as a keeper of the threshold? What is your attitude toward the role God has given you in His kingdom?

What evidence do we have in this chapter of the servant attitude of the gatekeeper? What challenge does this bring us today as servants of God?

For Prayer:

Ask the Lord to give you the grace to accept and delight in the role He has given you in the advancement of the kingdom.

Take a moment to pray that the Lord would help you to be a willing servant, ready to sacrifice your all for the blessing of His people and the glory of His name.

Thank the Lord for men and women in your church and community who serve with no need for attention or affirmation. Ask the Lord to bless these humble servants.

Chapter 7

A Picture of Work of the Lord

The gatekeepers of the Old Testament not only served a vital role in the worship of God, but their position has something to teach us about the heart of God for the lives of His people.

The apostle Paul had this to say to the Corinthians:

[19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own. (1 Corinthians 6)

What is the temple of God today? According to Paul, the bodies of believers are temples of the Holy Spirit who lives within. If our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, they need to be kept from defilement just as the temple of God in the Old Testament. This requires a gatekeeper.

Speaking about his suffering for the Gospel, the apostle Paul told Timothy:

[12] which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. (2 Timothy 1)

The apostle Paul suffered much for the gospel of Jesus Christ, but he was not afraid for he knew that the Lord God would guard what he had entrusted to him. Paul knew that, as a temple of the Holy Spirit, God had placed His Holy Spirit in him, and now God was working out His purpose in

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the temple of Paul's body. That purpose of God was so sacred that God Himself chose to guard it. God stood as gatekeeper over the work He was doing in the heart and life of the apostle.

This idea of God as a gatekeeper brought great comfort to Paul as it did to Solomon. Listen to the words of Solomon in Psalm 127:

A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon. [127:1] Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. [2] It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. (Psalm 127)

Solomon knew that he could post watchmen at the gates of his city, but unless the Lord watched over the city, the work of these guards was in vain. The only way Solomon could sleep well and secure at night was in the assurance that the Lord God, Himself acted as the gatekeeper of his city.

The apostle Paul shared this same bold confidence. He was assured that God would keep what He had entrusted Him. His salvation was assured because God stood guard at the gate of his earthly temple.

Isaiah adds another dimension to this thought when he says:

[9] "For my name's sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. [10] Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. [11] For my own

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sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another. (Isaiah 48)

Notice what God says through the prophet here. He told His people that He would restrain His anger for the sake of His praise. He would not allow His name to be profaned, nor would he give His glory to another. The task of the gatekeeper was to honour the name of the Lord God by restricting the access to that temple. They kept out anything that hindered the praise of the Lord God. This is what the Lord said He would do for Israel. He would restrain His anger lest it cause His people to cease offering Him praise.

Consider the words of the Lord God to Hosea concerning Israel:

[5] For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.' [6] Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths. [7] She shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them, and she shall seek them but shall not find them. Then she shall say, 'I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now.' [8] And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. (Hosea 2)

Through His servant Hosea, the Lord told his wandering and unfaithful people that He would not allow them to

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continue in rebellion against Him. He would pursue and overtake them. In the end, they would return to the Lord their God and praise Him for His bounty and mercy. As the gatekeeper actively pursued anything that would defile the worship of God, so the Lord God seeks to remove anything in us that would keep us from bringing Him the honour and praise He deserves.

In Isaiah 48:10, quoted above we see that God told His people that He had refined them

[10] Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. [11] For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another. (Isaiah 48)

It was the duty of the gatekeepers not only to protect the temple but also make sure that its utensils and articles used in worship were in good repair. Notice what God told Isaiah in chapter 48 of his prophecy. God told him that He had refined his people in the furnace of affliction. God took it on Himself to purify and cleanse His people of their sin and defilements so that they could be true worshippers of His name. Of course, the best example of the passion of God in this regard is the death of His Son, the Lord Jesus, who assured our pardon and cleansing.

Listen to what the Lord God has to say through His servant Ezekiel:

[25] I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. [26] And I will give you a new heart,

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and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. [27] And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. [28] You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. [29] And I will deliver you from all your uncleanness. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. (Ezekiel 36)

God promises to cleanse us from our uncleanness and put a new heart and spirit in us. This is a task that the Lord God takes on Himself. Indeed, if He did not take this task on Himself, we would have no hope of being clean before Him. As our gatekeeper, the Lord God stands guard over us, protecting us from evil and cleansing our impurities so that we can worship Him in purity and integrity.

The Scripture often speaks about how the Lord God watches over His people and what He has entrusted to them. The writer of Proverbs, writing about a God who knows all things says this:

[12] If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work? (Proverbs 24)

Notice the question the writer asks here: "Does not he who keeps watch over the soul know it?" God watches over our souls. He has an interest in our spiritual life. He knows every detail about the condition of our soul and commits Himself to care and to look after us.

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Psalm 121 promises that God will keep us from evil:

[7] The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. (Psalm 121)

It was the prayer of Jesus to the Father that He would protect those who belonged to Him from the evil one:

[15] I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. (John 17)

King David not only understood that God was his gatekeeper, but he prayed that God would keep watch over the door of his lips.

[3] Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips! [4] Do not let my heart incline to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds in company with men who work iniquity, and let me not eat of their delicacies! (Psalm 141)

David knew how dependent he was on the Lord God to be the doorkeeper of his lips, heart and actions. He understood the temptation of his flesh to speak evil. He knew the evil inclinations of his heart toward evil. He found himself in the company of wicked men, desirous of eating the enticing delicacies of sin. He pleaded with God to watch over his soul. If God was not his gatekeeper, David knew he would fall. He depended entirely on the work of God to guard what was coming in and out of the temple of his body.

David also cried out to God to watch over his thoughts. He invited the heavenly gatekeeper into his mind to search out any impurities and remove them.

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[23] Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! [24] And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (Psalm 139)

What a comfort it is for the believer to know that the Lord God acts as a gatekeeper over our soul, protecting, cleansing and keeping it so that we can worship Him aright.

There is another aspect to the image of God as a gatekeeper that we need to see. Speaking about the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28, the Lord said:

[16] In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. (Ezekiel 28)

As a gatekeeper, the concern of God is for holiness and righteousness. This means that He will judge anything that defiles His purpose and cast it out. This is what Ezekiel tells us happened to the king of Tyre. He was removed from the presence of God, “as a profane thing” and destroyed.

When the apostle John saw his vision of the temple in Revelation 21, he made the following statement:

[22] And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. [23] And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. [24] By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will

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bring their glory into it, [25] and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. [26] They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. [27] But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21)

The gates of the city of the New Jerusalem will be guarded and protected. Nothing unclean, detestable or false will enter to defile. While there is no reference to gatekeepers in this passage, it is evident that the gates would be kept from anything sinful. Nothing evil will enter these gates for God acts as the gatekeeper of the city.

There is one more detail I want to mention regarding the Lord God as a gatekeeper. We read the following in John 10:

[10:1] "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. [2] But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. [3] To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. (John 10)

Jesus uses a parable here to explain the way of salvation. In this parable, Jesus used an illustration of a shepherd and his sheep. At night the shepherds would bring their sheep to a pen where they could spend the night. This pen was large enough that the fold of many shepherds could spend the night. The shepherds of these various folds would then hire a gatekeeper to remain by the gate at night to protect all the sheep. In the morning, the shepherds

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would come to the fold. Because the gatekeeper recognized them, he would open the gate for them. Each shepherd would call out to his sheep. The sheep, understanding their shepherd's call, would then make their way to him. The shepherd would then lead them out to pasture where he would spend the day with them.

The gatekeeper would not open the gate to anyone other than the shepherds. He would judge anyone who tried to enter any other way as a thief and defend the sheep against this intruder. As a gatekeeper, the Lord God opens the door to His son to call out to us. He gives us access to His Son by opening the gate for us to follow Him. Only those sheep who respond to the call of the shepherd can leave the fold for green pastures. The gatekeeper then closes the gate to all who do not answer to the voice of the Shepherd.

This is a sobering thought. The gatekeeper restricted access to the temple. The gates of heaven are not open to all. As a gatekeeper, God only allows those who respond to the voice of His Son to enter the city. How important it is then that we hear the call of the Lord Jesus, the Great Shepherd.

What do we understand from this? The gatekeepers reflected, by their work, something of the character of God and His purpose. They did this in two ways.

First, they protected and guarded the temple of God. Similarly, the Lord God watches over what He has entrusted to us. He preserves the work He began in us. He purifies us of our sins and cleanses us so that we can bring Him glory. Without His work as a gatekeeper, protecting

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and maintaining we would surely be lost. We depend on Him to watch over and keep us.

Second, the gatekeeper was responsible for restricting access to the temple. Nothing impure could enter. Nothing that would defile the holiness of the temple was given access. As a gatekeeper, the Lord God also restricts access to the Holy City of Jerusalem. Only those who respond to the call of His Son will be permitted to enter. Only those who have been forgiven and cleansed by the work of Christ have the privilege of eternal life in His presence.

[7] The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. [8] But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21)

For Consideration:

Why do we, as temples of God, need a gatekeeper? Can we serve as adequate gatekeepers of our souls?

What assurance does having the Lord God as your gatekeeper give? We have examined some verses in this chapter that speak to this work of God. Is there one that gives you comfort?

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The gatekeeper was responsible for keeping the utensils used for worship clean and in good repair. What can defile our souls before God? What comfort do you find in the fact that God, as a gatekeeper wants to cleanse you of these defilements?

Is the gate of heaven open to all people? What are the requirements for entering? With God as the gatekeeper, will any enter who do not respond to the voice of His Son?

Why is it important that nothing evil or unclean can enter heaven?

For Prayer:

Thank the Lord that He has committed Himself to keep what He has entrusted to us. Pray that you would be open more to this work of His Spirit in your life.

Confess to the Lord that you are in yourself unable to keep what He has entrusted to you. Confess to Him your weakness and ask Him to guard your mind, body and soul against evil and temptation.

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Praise the Lord that heaven is closed to sin and evil of all kinds. Thank Him for sending His Son to forgive you. Thank Him for giving you His Holy Spirit to enable you to walk in righteousness.

Take a moment to ask the Lord to search your heart and mind to see if there is any evil way in you. Ask Him to cleanse you so that you can bring greater glory to His name.

Chapter 8

Lessons to Learn from the Gatekeepers of the Temple

I want to conclude this study with a word about what the role of gatekeeper teaches us about our obligations before God today. Let's begin with what the apostle Paul told the Corinthians:

[19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6)

Paul told the Corinthians that their bodies were the temple of the Holy Spirit. If they belonged to the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit lived in them. The conclusion Paul brings from this is that the believer was to glorify God in the body. The purpose of a temple is to honour God for whom it was made. These bodies were created by and for the Lord:

[16] For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (Colossians 1)

Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6:19 (quoted above) that they did not belong to themselves because they were bought with the blood of Jesus Christ. It is for this reason and more that the apostle challenges us to glorify God in the earthly temples of our bodies.

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In the last chapter, we saw that God acts as a gatekeeper of our temples. This, however, does not excuse us from personal obligation. Scripture calls us to participate with God in the protection and use of our temples for His glory. This means that we too are to be gatekeepers. This is why the apostle Paul challenged the Corinthians to glorify God in their body (1 Corinthians 6:20). In saying this, the apostle showed the Corinthians that they had a responsibility to be active gatekeepers over their bodies.

Many sacrifices were made in the temple of the Old Testament. The Lord God was worshipped through these sacrificial offerings brought each day. Consider what the apostle Paul told the Romans in Romans 12:1:

[12:1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. [2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12)

The sacrifices of the New Testament are not animal sacrifices but the presentation of our bodies as holy and acceptable offerings to God. Paul told the Romans that for this to take place, they were not to be conformed to the world and its standards. On the contrary, they were to be renewed in mind so that they could discern what was pleasing to God and walk in it.

What we need to see from Romans 12:1-2 is that God expects that we offer ourselves not just as living sacrifices but as holy and acceptable sacrifices to God. God

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demands more than a sacrifice –he requires holiness. Defective lambs did not bring honour to the Lord. Paul told the Romans that if they were going to offer themselves as holy and acceptable sacrifices, two things needed to happen. First, they were not to be conformed to this world. Second, they were to be transformed by the renewing of their mind. We could go into great detail here on Romans 12:2 but suffice it to say in this context that for us to honour God and be the holy and acceptable sacrifice He desires we need to resist the influence of this world and embrace the renewing work of God's Spirit in us.

As gatekeepers of our bodies, we must watch over our minds. The world around us bombards us with its way of thinking and its priorities. A good gatekeeper has enough discernment to know what is godly and what is unholy. It is our responsibility to resist the ungodly influences of this world and refuse them entrance to the temple of our bodies lest they hinder the work of God's Spirit to renew our minds.

Imagine that you were on a ship that struck a rock and tore a hole in its side. The result is that you are taking in water. To remedy this, you send your crew down into the hull of the ship to bail out the water. They work for hours but don't seem to be getting anywhere. They keep bailing water, but the hole in the ship's side keeps allowing water in, and they can't get ahead of it, so the vessel continues to be a risk of sinking. What is the remedy to the problem these sailors are experiencing? The solution is to fix the hole in the ship so that the water can no longer pour in. This is what Paul is saying to the Romans. He is telling them that if they wanted to honour God in their bodies, they needed to plug

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the holes that allowed the ungodly influences and thoughts to flood into their mind. This is our role as gatekeepers of our temples.

Consider what Paul told Titus:

[11] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age (Titus 2)

According to Titus 2, we are to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. We must not allow these evil thoughts entrance to our minds. Nor are we to allow our bodies to submit to their temptations. When Paul told Titus that the believer was to learn how to “renounce ungodliness and worldly passions,” he was telling him that we need to stand guard and actively fight off the influences of the world. As gatekeepers, we must jealously guard the temple of our bodies lest they are defiled by the sinful lusts and passions of the world. We are to keep watch on ourselves:

[6:1] Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. (Galatians 6)

It is not just the influences from outside that the believer was to avoid. As sinners, the old nature raises its head and reveals its presence more often than we would like. Paul told Timothy that he was to refrain from “irreverent babble:”

[16] But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, (2 Timothy 2)

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While Paul does not clearly define what he meant here, the Spirit of God will reveal this clearly to us by convicting us about our words. It is our task as gatekeepers, not only to protect ourselves from outside influence what will contaminate but also to maintain the purity of the utensils used for worship of God already in the temple. Our tongue is one of those utensils committed to the praise of Jehovah. We must take care lest it becomes unclean and defile the temple in which the Spirit of God dwells.

Listen to what the Lord told His people in Deuteronomy 8:

[17] Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' [18] You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. (Deuteronomy 8)

God challenged His people to watch over their heart lest they allow it to believe that they had become wealthy because of their efforts. In other words, they were to guard their hearts against pride. The Lord would go on to tell His people:

[9] Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, 'The seventh year, the year of release is near,' and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the LORD against you, and you be guilty of sin. [10] You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. (Deuteronomy 15)

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Because all their wealth came from the Lord, they were to give it to those in need. As gatekeepers of their heart, they were to watch out for greed, lest it defiles the temple of God. If we are to worship God in these bodies, we must be careful not only to keep outside contaminating influences out but also assure the purity and cleanness of what is in the temple.

There is one other detail I want to touch on in this regard. Listen to Paul's challenge to Timothy:

[20] O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. (1 Timothy 6)

He would go on in his second letter to Timothy to say:

[6] For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, [7] for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. (2 Timothy 1)

Paul encouraged his son in the Lord to faithfully guard what God had given to him for ministry purposes. He was not only to guard this gift but fan it into flame. He was to use what God had given him boldly. One of the duties of the gatekeeper was to assure that the gifts God's people gave were used for their intended purpose. Paul makes it very clear to Timothy that the gifts God had given him were to be used for His glory. These gifts were not to be hoarded up or stored away unused.

Writing in 1 Peter 4, the apostle Peter said:

[10] As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: [11]

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whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4)

The apostle challenges us as gatekeepers of the temple of our bodies to be faithful stewards of the gifts that God has given us. We are to walk in those gifts. If we have gifts of speaking, we are to speak the words God gives us. If we have gifts of serving, we are to serve with all the strength God supplies. Notice the purpose for our stewardship of these gifts – “that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (verse 11).

The purpose of the temple was to provide a place to glorify God. God was exalted as the gatekeeper kept out sinful influences. God was praised when what the keeper of the threshold kept what was inside the temple clean and undefiled. God was honoured that same gatekeeper made sure that the gifts given for God’s purpose were used as intended.

What is true for our personal lives is also true of our church life. Our churches need gatekeepers as well. We need prophetic men and women who are discerning and wise to warn us of the evil influences of the world creeping into our midst. We need gatekeeping pastors who to help us to walk in integrity and holiness of life. We need gatekeeper teachers who will train us in the ways of the Word of God. We need men and women of faith who will be wise stewards of the gifts God has given and step out boldly in the use of those gifts to minister in Christ’s name.

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As gatekeepers of our temples, we have a vital role to play. Have we been slack as gatekeepers? Has this resulted in weak spiritual lives and churches filled with ungodly influences? Have we hindered the work of God's Spirit who resides in us by our failure to be gatekeepers? Has the church lost its position of power and influence in our society because it has been defiled?

In the last chapter, we saw that God has promised to be a gatekeeper, but this does not mean that we are excused from our obligation. We are called to join the Lord God in this task of maintaining the purity of the temple of our body and the purity of His church. We are challenged by the Word of God to be diligent in our role as gatekeepers. We must guard our body, mind and soul, lest the evil of this world defile them. We must respect our body, mind and soul as the temple of the Holy Spirit and maintain their purity and godliness. We are called to see to it that the gifts given to this temple are used faithfully to bring glory and honour to the Lord, for whom we were created. Only as the temple of our body, mind and soul is maintained and offered as an acceptable and living sacrifice to God can it become all that God intended and bring Him glory. May God give us the grace to be wise and discerning gatekeepers for the glory of His name.

For Consideration:

Romans 12:1-2 tell us that we are to offer ourselves as holy and acceptable sacrifices to God? Can we do this if we are not guarding our hearts and minds?

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Can we expect to be all that God calls us to be if we are not blocking out the evil influences of the world? What kind of worldly influences hinder the work of God's Spirit in our lives?

The role of the gatekeeper of the temple was to assure that the gifts brought to the temple were being used as God intended. Have you been faithfully using the gifts God has given you? Are their spiritual gifts that you have not used?

Why is it essential that we have gatekeepers in our church today? Who are these gatekeepers? Is their role an easy one? What are the challenges for the gatekeeper today?

For Prayer:

Ask God for discernment to recognize the evil influences that hinder the work of His Spirit in our lives?

As gatekeepers, sometimes there are difficult decisions to make. Ask the Lord to give you grace not to compromise when it comes to His glory in the church and your personal life?

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Thank the Lord that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to give you such a delight in this thought that you will do whatever is required to keep anything that would hinder His work in you away.

Ask that Lord to show you any area of your life that needs to be cleansed. Ask Him to reveal anything that needs to go so that He can work more fully in us.

Pray that God would give you greater boldness to use the gifts He has given so that His name would be glorified through you.

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