

At The City Gates

***“They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.”
(Amos 5:10 KJV)***

The gate of each and every city in the old days was the place where the elders and the leaders of the city would sit to meet with the people and to decide in the affairs of life. But why the gate of the city was used for that purpose, were the elders would sit and give their decisions about important things of life?

The gate of the city is the place where people would leave the city to go and travel to another place for a certain purpose. So when they are approaching the gate of the city they needed to declare the reason why they are leaving. So in that place they would receive the approval to leave and go on their journey or they will be denied. Also if they are leaving they would be checked and see what are the things that they are carrying with them outside the city. Precious things that are essential and important for that particular city they might not be allowed to carry out with them.

The gate of the city is the place where people from outside they will be received and examined before they will be allowed to enter into the city. If they are carrying bad things it might be taken from them. Or if they are harmful people then they will be denied to enter the city.

Therefore for the importance of that place and because many activities are performed at the gate of the city, then that was the place where the judges and the elders of the city would meet there to meet the people and handle important things in their lives and to interfere and decide about certain important events in their lives.

With that reason and setup, then it is mandatory for the judges and the elders of the city to follow the law of God to speak and to implement important decisions in the life of the people. For us in the New Testament church the city gate is the Church of God and the leaders, and the elders of the church are the people who are responsible to examine the life of the people of God.

Further down the Scripture that will enlighten us about the importance of the city gate and what are the functions to be done at the city gates:

1. Child Discipline: ***“18 If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: 19 Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; 20 And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. 21 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.” (Deuteronomy 21:18-21 KJV)*** The parents who are not able to handle and discipline their children, then the children will be brought by the parents to the city gates, to the elders, to be examined, disciplined and dealt with. We need to report the sinful things that our children are doing to the church leaders so they can advise us and help to handle them in the proper way.

2. Important decision like marriage, and selling or buying properties: In the book of Ruth when Boaz dealt with the other kinsman redeemer in regard to the property of Naomi and marrying Ruth the widow of Mahlon, Boaz went to the city gates and open up the matter to the elders to approve and to witness the transaction as you can read here: ***“1 Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down. 3 And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth a parcel of land, which was our brother Elimelech's: 4 And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it. 5 Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance. 6 And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. 7 Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. 8 Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe. 9 And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi. 10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day. 11 And all the people that were in the gate, and the elders, said, We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel: and do thou worthily in Ephratah, and be famous* in Bethlehem: 12 And let thy house be like the house of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Judah, of the seed which the LORD shall give thee of this young woman. 13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.” (Ruth 4:1-13 KJV)*** So here we found clearly that the transaction of the land and the marriage of the widow were done under the supervision and the approval of the elders of the city. Plans for marriage and plans for buying lands and houses are serious decisions and we need to come to the church leaders, opening up the whole matter, so they can teach us and give us the right advice and the will of God in the matter that we are about to do.

3. Dealing with immoralities and marital unfaithfulness: ***“13 If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, 14 And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid: 15 Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: 16 And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; 17 And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. 18 And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; 19 And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a***

virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days. 20 But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: 21 Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you. 22 If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. 23 If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; 24 Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.” (Deuteronomy 22:13-24 KJV) As you can see clearly that the elders of the city get involved with the affairs that pertain to the moral aspect of family and marriage. In the same way the church should have a word and is able to deal with sin that relate to immorality and that affect the sanctity of marriage. The church leader should keep the church living in holy environment in disciplining men and women by not allowing boyfriend and girlfriend phenomenon and to apply discipline on men and women dress and make up to avoid nakedness that will promote immoralities. Also the church should not allow boy and girls to intermingle with each other; men should go along men and women should go along with women so immoralities can be avoided. We need to be very alert about the sin of immoralities because it is a very effective way for devil to inject demons into the church and cause others to be infected and leading them to immoralities. “15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. 16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. 17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. 18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” (1 Corinthians 6:15-20 KJV)

4. Wisdom and discernment for certain critical decisions: The elders who are at the city gate should be known by their stand, their life and testimony and being followers of God. Their families are in order and their life is a good example and a good testimony to be followed. Proverbs 31 verses 10 to 31 speak about the woman of virtuous character and how her good input to the family had made a great impact to her husband and his influence at the city gate, “23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.” (Proverbs 31:23 KJV) Such kind of women and families are well testified of and are good example to others to follow, “31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.” (Proverbs 31:31 KJV) The church should have elders, those whom their lives and families are good example and challenge to others to follow, so they will in return give a good input of wisdom to the critical issues that the church is passing through. Wisdom needed at the city gate, Wisdom, “21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,” (Proverbs 1:21 KJV) Wisdom required for the elders of the church in leading the affairs of God's work and His people, “1 Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? 2 She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths. 3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. 4 Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to

the sons of man. 5 O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.” (Proverbs 8:1-5 KJV) Those who lead the church should have the wisdom of God and their lives and their testimonies should testify about them: “13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.” (James 3:13 KJV)

5. Family who raise up Godly children is raising men who can deal with the enemy and the important issues at the gate of the city: “4 As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. 5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” (Psalm 127:4-5 KJV) Godly families and godly parents will keep the environment of the house for training purposes for the children to be raised up as Godly children who fear God and who are trained with God's Word of how to handle the issues and the problems of life. The family of Rebekah when they sent her to marry Isaac they wish her the following: “And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.” (Genesis 24:60 KJV) In the old days the gates of the city are the most important places and if the enemy would control these places they will be able to take the city. Joshua when he took the city of Ai and had killed its king, he did the following to the king of the enemy, “29 And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day.” (Joshua 8:29 KJV)

Jesus Christ is our New Testament Joshua who is leading us into Eternal life, by His blood that was shed on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. He said to Simon Peter, “18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18 KJV) The gates of hell are the gates of those enemies who hate Christ and His seed.

Christ is our Lord and our Savior. He contented with His enemies without the gate of the city and he overcome, “12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.” (Hebrews 13:12 KJV) They crucified Him outside Jerusalem. They hated Him because HE confronted them with their sins and trespasses, and HE exposed all their corruptions. We need to follow His example in serving Him. People should hate us because of our firm stand against sin, worldliness, against tradition and against all the work of Devil. Our Lord Jesus Christ in His priestly prayer, He mentioned to God, the Father, the following about us, His disciples, “14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” (John 17:14 KJV) The people of the world should hate us in one point or another in link to the teaching and the Word of God. If everyone love you and is pleased with you, then sure you are compromising and not facing the people with their sins. That calls for repentance from your side.

And now what can we said about Amos 5:10, “They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.” (Amos 5:10 KJV)

They hate him that rebuketh in the gate: Those who do wrong and are rebuked and are stopped from doing wrong and from pursuing their own will, sure they will hate those judges

and elders who rebuke them. Now a day the church leaders they don't want to interfere with the life of the people who are entrusted under their care, simply because they don't want the people to hate them or get angry with them.

and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly: More grieving to know that people do not like the pure person who is not corrupted with the affairs of this life. Now a day the church leaders they don't want to proclaim boldly their stands and what the bible clearly speaks about the issues of life, because they don't want to offend the feelings of the people and their emotions.

Sin, like stealing, adultery, bribing, telling lies, etc., are grievous things. But more sinful than these sins is when the church knows about the wrong things that people under their care are doing but they keep silent, not facing them and not declaring to them the will of God. Compromises are the worst sin that greatly endanger the church now a day. Those who compromise are sins sharers with those who are committing the aforementioned sins and are encouragers to them.

Pastors, elders and the rest of the church leaders who do not rebuke the people for their sins and who do not interfere with people personal life because they want to keep the people favor, and they don't want people to dislike them, they are not serving God and their ministry is harmful.

Apostle Paul said, **"11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."** (Ephesians 5:11 KJV) The church leaders their responsibilities will be complete when:

- A. Exposing sin.
- B. Reproving sinners for their sins, by exposing their sins, expounding the bad effect of these sins, and dealing with them, helping them to get deliver out, and disciplining them appropriately.
- C. Protecting the rest of the church members from being infected with the sins of others. That is why as watchmen and watchwomen we need to report to the church leaders in details whatever sin and wrong doings that come across our lives so they will deal with it properly.

My dear and beloved: Church leaders should not be intimidated with people words and opinions. God had placed you at the gate to serve Him therefore be strong and do the work of God truthfully, **"10 And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass."** (2 Chronicles 19:10) The church leaders should not compromise when sin is exposed. Because if they will not take any action, God's wrath will come upon the whole church and the people will fall into many troubles due to God's wrath stimulated by the compromises of the church leaders. Therefore we need to rebuke those who sin, and expose sin and report them to the church leaders so it will be dealt with properly and that will cause God's favor, God's grace and approval will fall on the whole church. Let us, everyone of us commit ourselves to the ministry at the city gate and do what is needful as we learned from this message.

My Prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead to give me eternal life.

Lord forgives me my compromises with these sins _____ and with the following people _____.

Today I commit myself to stand firm and to be bold dealing with sins and help sinners to repent and come back to you. Lord gives me wisdom to help the people to understand the importance of following your will and helping them to take and implement Godly decisions. Lord sustains me and provide for me so I can continue to serve you.

Lord I pray for my brothers and sisters to faithfully take the message and apply it in their lives, so that your church will be protected and our enemy the devil will be defeated. Lord I pray for transparency in their lives to open up hidden things that devil is hiding in so they will be healed and recovered from sin and from all the effects of the work of Devil. Lord heal and support those who are willing to abide with the teaching of your Word. Lord give them fruitful ministry, protects them, and provides all their needs. Lord gives us discernment and wisdom to see threats and to handle it properly.

Lord bless our church and protect it. Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us, and free us from harm so we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us all in Jesus name, Amen.

Dr. Ramiz Khalaf
The Church Overseer
Church of God
United Arab Emirates
Email: thebread1@gmail.com
Mobile Tel #: 00971551902647

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