

"The Gates of Hell"

Matthew 16:13-20 - Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then He strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ.

I have always loved that sentence, "On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It made me think of God holding His church safe from all evil. Not even hell itself would be able to get at us!

It's a bit embarrassing, but it was many years before someone pointed out a perfectly obvious fact to me: gates don't walk. They don't ride into battle, screaming a war cry. They don't actually do much of anything, except stand around, locked and bolted. So what does Jesus mean when He says the gates of hell will not prevail against His church?

He means that *they* will not be able to stand against *us*.

Jesus is describing the church on the offensive—not hell. Hell is losing. Jesus is painting a picture of God's people carrying the battle to the very gates of hell—and beyond. It is as if He said, "With My help, nothing will be able to withstand you—not the devil himself."

I have no doubt that you know of an outpost of hell in your own area of life—a situation where the devil is at work and the Holy Spirit is calling you to prayer and battle. It may be something at work—a social evil you fight, such as poverty or ignorance or disease or lawlessness. It may be something among your family and relatives—a loved one's addiction, a marriage in conflict, a parent suffering from dementia. It may be something in your church or neighborhood—anything that the Lord has laid on your heart, your special concern. Whatever it is, it is your battlefield.

Take that to Jesus. He is the One who is directing the battle—you are His servant, His soldier. Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom so that you will know the right thing to do or say. Ask God to intervene in ways you could never imagine. And ask Him to keep you open to His will. He can do unimaginably more, and differently, than anything we can come up with.

This is not to say that everything will turn out precisely as we wish it would. God may do that—or He may do something different. We trust in Him. After all, He lay down His own life to rescue us from death and hell. Now that He has risen from the dead, we can surely trust Him to direct us in life, both now and forever.

THE PRAYER: Dear Father, I have no power, but You have all power. Work through me to do Your will. Amen.

This Daily Devotion was written by Dr. Kari Vo.

Reflection Questions:

1. What do you imagine hell's gates will look like when Jesus gets done with them?
2. What specific hellish area or problem lies heavy on your heart right now?
3. Can you think of a baby step you might take with God's help to serve Him in that situation?

[Today's Bible in a Year Reading: Psalms 87-88; 1 Corinthians 12](#)