

The Church Militant

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[0:00] Matthew 16 from verse 13.

When Jesus came into the coast of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

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.

[1:02] And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.

The church militant. I've spoken on this theme before. It's something the Word of God speaks of. The church. The church militant. And verse 18 is really the first mention of the church as such in the Word of God.

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. It's a defining moment.

Our Lord is building His church. The solid rock is the foundation of our faith. It's Christ who is the rock. It's Christ the foundation stone.

And nowadays we're seeing what you could put as a feminization of Christ and Christianity. It's like Christ has lost His manliness.

[2:06] Christ has lost His ruggedness. You know, He was a rugged carpenter. A man's man. And the Bible in contrast tells us today of our Lord.

That He was a mighty man. A man of war. A military commander. And He's raising up an army today. He is the commander in chief of this army.

The founder of this church. The builder of it. The purchaser of it. By His own precious blood. It is His church. He says, I will build my church.

He is. The builder. It is His church. We are but His instruments. It's a church. An assembly of God's people.

Called out. Called together. To be under His command. Reporting to Him. Our commander in chief. His instruments.

[3:03] Engaged on earth in a holy warfare. Until He comes for us. The church militant. It's backed by His command. And by His power. And this church.

That our Lord is building. Is indestructible. And one important factor for success. I've read. In warfare. In military terms. Is unity.

Of command. And another factor. Is simplicity. Plans that are clear. Help an army to complete. Its mission.

And our commander in chief. There's a unity of command. He is the head. He is the builder. And maker. And the commander in chief.

And He's given us clear instructions. Simple. Authorised. Instructions. That He's given to us. To simply obey. To act upon them.

[3:58] His simple command. To deliver His strategy. In these days. That we live. And His orders are clear. And concise. It's the work of conquest.

That we call to. Our commander in chief. He's placed His church. On the offensive. He's placing us on. A battlefield. He says.

I will build my church. And the gate to hell. Shall not prevail against it. Some like to picture the church. As holding the fort. As if we kind of garrisoned.

And protected from all the enemy's powers. And I suppose there's some element of that. But really and truly. We're meant to be an invading force.

An advancing military force. Founded upon our confession of faith in Him. We are to be the church militant. The church on the move.

[4:52] An armed force. His weapon. Now in the world. The church of today. We see that we're a mixed band. There's some tears amongst the weed. Not everyone who joins a church.

Or he assembles. Or comes to a church service. Is saved. There's tears amongst the weed. There's weeds amongst the weed. But God's true church.

Those that are the saved. Are meant to be a force that will move the gates of hell. Our mission as a church is to storm the gates of hell.

We're meant to be some force that is attacking. And taking back ground. The picture here is of an army. As it were with a battering ram.

Smashing into some gates. And breaking them down. Demolishing the powers of the evil. To be going on the offensive. On the attack. To engage in hostilities.

[5:48] With man's arch enemy. And his minions. The gates of hell. The gates of hell. They are defended. But they will fall. At the attack of the church of God.

And that's the picture that our Lord gives us here. In Matthew 16. It's a gripping picture isn't it? It's a graphic picture. God's promises can never fail. He says that he will build his church.

And the gates of hell will not prevail. Against it. What are the gates of hell? It's a term that we could really. Think of all kinds of.

Explanations for. But in the Bible. Gates referred to. Places of authority and power. It was at the gates of the ancient cities.

That there was authority found. That the elders sat. In our day. We might call it. The headquarters. In modern terms. You might think of it. As the headquarters.

[6:48] The place where the authoritative. Decisions are made. So it's saying here that. The church of God. Will attack. The domain.

Of the evil one. The headquarters of hell. If you like. So what could we think of that. In our terms. In our local community. In. Our local practical lives.

That we live. Here in this community. In this place. What are the gates. Of our. Of the devil's rule. If you like. In the place. Where we live here today.

We could think of it. Maybe we could think of. For example. The drug culture. Or the godlessness. That abounds. The. The addiction to gambling. Or drinking.

Or violence. That we've. Seen even. At close quarters. In our own number. Violence. Freemasonry. The occult. And witchcraft.

[7:45] The cults. They're abounding. They've got some. Lovely. Edifices. Where they assemble. Even in our city. The cults. They're abounding. Or maybe just poverty.

And the lack of hope. That many of our community have. We're meant to be a. Force that challenges such things. That is part of this. Cosmic conflict. That has engaged.

All of heaven. And earth. All of creation. Since the fall. To the final judgment. This is a cosmic conflict. That we are. A part of. We're meant to be.

Overcoming. And friends. Despite. What opposition. And obstacles. May face you. In your own individual lives. The bible says. That we will. Overcome. It says we shall.

Overcome. God's plan. Is that we be. An overcoming. Force. That will smash. And shatter. Some of these gates. That are. Holding people captive.

[8:44] And in bondage. And our lord has given us. Some clear. Battle plans. If you like. He has promised. That we shall. Overcome. That in Christ.

We triumph. Over the enemy. And all his forces. Satan really. Is a doomed. Army. As the church of God. That's empowered.

By God's. God's Holy Spirit. Takes back. The ground. And sees. This foe vanquished. The winner. In this cosmic battle.

Has already. Been decided. The church. Has already. Won. The victory. In Christ. We shall prevail. So think of it. If you can. If we. Could picture it.

In some of these. Military terms. If you like. Not meaning. To glorify war. Which we know. Is a horrible thing. But there is. A real war. That is. Present day.

[9:39] A war. That is going on. That you. Are a part of. And we. Ought to play a part. In this fight. The good fight. Of the faith. We're called.

To be true soldiers. Mustered. And mobilised. Engaged in a battle. Against this foe. There's much. Military imagery. Through the word of God.

For example. The book of numbers. I'm told. In the Hebrew. It means. The musters. Of the militias. It's got the sense. Where it's a role call. Of the able bodied men.

To arm themselves. And to fight. To prepare for the fight. And as the church of God. There's a battlefield. That we are. Playing. A role of combat.

In. In Psalm 144. It says. Blessed be the Lord. My strength. Which teaches. My hands. To war. And my fingers. To fight. My goodness.

[10:32] And my fortress. My high tower. And my deliverer. My shield. And he. In whom I trust. He teaches us. To war. He's calling us.

To train. To be combat ready. Warriors. You know. Some of you have been. On the battlefield. This last week. There's been some. Battles going on.

Press on. Press on. In the fight. And keep ready. For whatever. For whatever. Faces you. In the days ahead. To be that. Combat ready. Force. There's a wise commander.

Once told. His troops. Keep your powder dry. As it. As it were. There's. More battles. To face. In the days ahead. And we need to be soldiers.

Who've got that. Deliberate intent. That toughening. That stamina. That fitness level. To that. Level. That we can. Serve. I know. I was watching some. Footage of.

[11:25] Some soldiers. In training. For example. In North Korea. They're brutal. And vicious. With their soldiers. Training. Where they. Had to go through. Some intense.

Toughening up. And that's the kind of. Sense of it. Maybe the battles. You've already faced. Have just been part. Of that. Disciplining. Of your body. And soul. So develop that stamina.

And that fitness. For the days ahead. For those battles. Yet future. God is calling us. To get back. To him. And his word. To fight. To join up. In active service.

To use those. Spiritual weapons. That he's given to us. Of prevailing prayer. Of gospel witness. We read of. These weapons.

Of our warfare. We see in. Ephesians 6. That armour. That we're meant to clothe ourselves with. The armour. Of God. As forces of evil.

[12:21] Embodied. In rulers. In nations. In peoples. In circumstances. In the communities. In which we live. Even. Very close to home.

There's. These gates all around. As it were. And we are meant to wage war. Against such things. Such things. As false religion. And spiritual lies. Because the whole world lies.

In the clutches. Of this enemy. Even now. In Ephesians 2. We read. That you. Have you quickened. Who are dead. In trespasses and sins. Where in time past.

You walk. According to the course of this world. According to the prince. Of the power of the air. The spirit. That now worketh in the children. Of disobedience. The world. Is in this course.

In this way of heading. In this direction. That is according to the prince. Of the power of the air. And you. Have you quickened. You. Have you made a lie.

[13:19] It's as if. We are those that were. In that dry valley. Of dry. And dusty. Bleached bones. As it were. And God has breathed his life into us.

And made us a living army. He's raised us up. His church. So we really in this war. This is not just some. Quaint language. Or some. You know.

Some show thing. Some kind of pretend battle. Some kind of war games. This is real. This is real. And it's now. It's a life or death struggle now.

For you. As a soldier. In this army. Waiting war. And striving. James 4.7. One of the keys. Is submit yourselves to God.

Resist the devil. And he. Will flee from you. Number one. Submit to God. Number two. Resist the devil. There's many scriptures we could quote.

[14:14] That speak of this warfare. And of this enemy. For example. 1 Peter 5. Verses 8 and 9. It says. Be sober. Be vigilant. Because your adversary.

This enemy of yours. He says. The devil. As a roaring lion. He walketh about. Seeking whom he may devour. He wants to devour. And Peter writes.

Whom resist steadfast. In the faith. Resist him. Resist steadfast. In the faith. Our Lord has established a victory for you. Through his cross.

In Colossians 2. Talks about the handwriting. Talks about the accusations. If you like. That were against us. That were contrary to us. He took it out of the way.

Nailing it to the cross. And having spoiled principalities. And powers. He hath made a show of them openly. Triumphant over them. In it. Our Lord's cross.

[15:09] Was a place of triumph. A place of victory. His resurrection. Was a show. Of his all conquering power. And we follow in his train. Our weapons.

Are not carnal. But they are mighty through God. The weapons of our adversary. Are subtle and sneaky. He's sly. And very wily.

We read of his weapons. For example. Seduction. Deceit. Threatening as a roaring lion. And accusing. Our Lord came to destroy. The works of the devil.

We read. In 1 John 3. Verse 8. So friends. You've got the victory. As his church. As this mighty army. Of God's people. To quote Spurgeon.

To paraphrase Spurgeon. The church of Christ. Is pictured as an army. Yet its captain is. The prince of peace. Its object is peace.

[16:06] Its soldiers. Are men of peace. Yet the church on earth. And until the second coming. Must be. The church militant. The church armed.

The church warring. The church conquering. The spotless purity of truth. Must always be at war. With the darkness of heresy. And lies.

There's much of that today. There's heresy. And there's lies. It's invading the church. It's weakening the church. It's white-hanting the church. And we need to hold fast.

Our convictions. We need to hold fast. To the marching orders. And not straying. From the truth. To declare the saving gospel. And to stand up.

For this holy cause. There's no greater cause. There's no greater. Service. This is a holy cause. It's truly counter-cultural. And we must champion it.

[17:01] Friends. Think of it. This constant warfare. Now sometimes we regard it not. We just go about our day-by-day lives. Without stopping to consider. The constant combat.

As the world. The flesh. And the devil. Is against us. And we need also to guard against friendly fire. From shooting our own. You know the church. Sometimes shoots its own wound.

And it's been said. We need to support one another. And reach out. Sometimes to those wounded. That we may even have shot ourselves. And we need to consider.

The defence and the offence. Of the church. The defence. Is guarding our relationship. With God. And with others. It's loving God. And others.

And the good offence. Is proclaiming Christ. To those who know him not. It's loving others. It's sharing Christ. In evangelism. And reaching out.

[18:00] We are to proclaim. And to protect the truth. To be willing. To pay the price. To keep faithful. Think of soldiers. Again.

What do soldiers do? They maintain their agility. Their stamina. Their preparedness. For action. They train. With drills. And marching.

Maintaining their discipline. And their unity. So that when. The battle comes. They're a united force. Against the enemy. And we need to maintain. That perseverance.

That loyalty. That stickability. And the morale. It's been said. That morale. Is 80% of the battle. Morale. Is critical.

The morale. Of the troops. And how do we sustain morale? As a church. It's by true fellowship. As a Christian. We cannot be deprived. Of that fellowship. For any length of time.

[18:55] It's important. For us to maintain. Our morale. Our fighting spirit. To lift up. That flagging morale. So let's be that wholehearted force of soldiers.

That have an enduring. A daring. And a contagious spirit. That we can be consistent. Like the men and women of God. In his word. Like men. Like Daniel for example.

In Daniel 10. He fastened and prayed. Three weeks. Until the answer came. And we're called to a fight. That we must sustain. And persevere.

To do our duty. With military discipline. And our commander's clear instructions are here. To hear his command. To contend earnestly for the faith.

The faith. To unseek the sword. Now is the time for battle. Not for resting. And relaxing. It's like I saw a video clip. It's not that we're in a cruise ship.

[19:52] We're in a battleship. We're meant to be in a battleship. And contending for the faith. To put on the whole armour of God. That you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood. But against principalities. Against powers. Against the rulers of the darkness of this world. Against spiritual wickedness in high places.

The enemy is against you. He will do his utmost. To sow discord. To create division. To bring deception. To create discouragement. All around us are casualties.

As we see some. Dying in the ravages of sin. Some with battle scars. We need to lift up the wounded. The forces of darkness are against us. We need to unite together.

As a fighting force. To not flag or falter. To maintain the resistance. Friends. Friends. Our captain is victorious. This battle is sure. The victory has already been accomplished.

[20:53] He will lead you there. We can stand in him. Alone. For the weapons of our warfare. Are not carnal. But mighty. Through God. To the pulling down.

To the pulling down of strongholds. Casting down imaginations. And every high thing that exalted itself. Against the knowledge of God. And bringing into captivity.

Every thought. Into the obedience of Christ. Our weapons are mighty. Powerful weapons. Let's use all our available firepower.

Don't stifle that gift. Don't hinder that spiritual task that he has given to you to do. Don't hold back from prayer.

From persevering on the battle front. Don't neglect to sustain that morale. By being a part of the fellowship of the saints.

[21:49] Heed his command. Unsheath the sword. It's time to witness. It's time to be faithful to the gospel call. And to not neglect this warfare that we're in.

Where are we directing our fire? You know. I've heard stories of some conflicts. Where the soldiers have got the same colour uniforms.

And we've got to be careful. We don't shoot our own people. Let's direct our fire at the enemy. And focus our energies there. This warfare, as I say, it's not a game.

This is real. This is not make-believe. And you are a part of it. If you're a believer this day. Then you are a part of this eternal conflict.

You're called up to be enlisted in this mighty force. And God has given you spiritual weapons that are mighty. Through God. The battlefield is where you are today.

[22:49] The battlefield is now. It's our minds. It's that arena where Satan is besieging us. With doubts. With discouragement. Waiting war.

With our thoughts. With our ideas. Our imaginations. The battleground. The battleground can be our body. Our mind. Our emotions. Our relationships. And this war.

It has no ceasefire. There is no truce. There is no letter. It will be from here until he comes. It will be from now until the judgment.

When our eternal enemy will be destroyed forever. You are still on the battlefield. And friends. Take heart. You are a threat to the enemy.

You are a threat to the enemy. He quakes when you pray. He trembles when the church witnesses. The devil is afraid of you.

[23:45] Because you are mighty through God. To the pulling down of strongholds. Those weapons that you carry. The weapon of prevailing prayer. Of persistent witness. Of faithfulness.

Of military discipline. As it were. The devil is afraid of you. And you are a threat to him. So he will attack you.

You will be attacked. Some of you have been attacked. We have heard of some of our number. Even physically attacked. Or verbally attacked. He will attack you. Through harsh tongues. He will attack you. Through all manner of means. But friends. Let's not have the mentality to hold the fort.

So hide behind some kind of garrison. But let us press the battle. Because the gates of hell shall not prevail. Against the church of God.

[24:44] It shall not. Let's direct our efforts to fight the fire. And keep on fighting. The enemy will try to undermine.

And harass. And separate you from friendly forces. From your family. From your church. From your community. And you will try to cut the supply lines.

As it were. Of prayer. Of Bible study. Of your faith. He is constantly about that task. Of bringing you down.

But friends. Take heart today. Stand up. And strike back. Arm yourselves. And fight. Maintain your bearing. As a soldier with honour. For selfless service.

For integrity. For courage. At times the enemy will press the attack. And you've got to be wounded. You're going to carry some battle scars. Don't let it stop you from keeping.

[25:46] Obeying the marching orders. Don't let the enemy. And his attack. Stop you. From trusting. Your captain.

You know. Paul himself even said. In 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 18. You know. You think. This great apostle of the faith. You know. One of the leading lights of the New Testament.

Even Paul said. Satan hindered us. 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 18. So. You will be hindered. There will be times when.

You'll be taking. Taking two steps back. Instead of. One step forward. You know. You're going to be. There's going to be times. When you will face. Some setbacks. But.

Let that not stop you. From having that fighting spirit. It's an invisible battle. Sometimes again. We take it for granted. We just go about. Our day by day.

[26:41] Just like the world. Just like our neighbours. Who are lost. We just go about life. As. As a routine. And we neglect. To think. Of this cosmic battle. It's an invisible battle.

It's fought by faith. Keep on fighting. Go to battle. Be courageous. Be bold. And storm the gates of hell. Let's see.

Those gates broken down. In this very city. In this region. That we live. In these communities. Where we live. Let's see the church. As an advancing.

Invading force. So we can reach out. There's people. Held captive. As it were. That we can. Deliver the message. That will set them free.

And so we must. We must take the fight. To the gates of hell. Let us pray. Heavenly Father. We thank you that. You are. Our great leader.

[27:36] And Lord Jesus. You are the captain. Of our salvation. We want to report. For duty sir. We want to report. For duty to you Lord. And be a part.

Of that mighty army. That you've called us to be. Help us Lord. Not to shirk. Not to flag or falter. Not to lack that morale. To work together. To lift up the wounded.

To support one another. To be an invading force. Help us Lord. Not to shudder and hide. But to stand tall. And take the battle. To the very front lines.

To take the battle. To the very gates of hell. We pray. Lord. That we might be that. Force. To be reckoned with. That you have made us. Not. Of ourselves. But we're mighty.

Through you. Our God. To this conflict we face. Help us Lord. To see. The victory. That is completely accomplished. For eternity. At the cross.

[28:33] Lord Jesus. Where you triumph. Over all the forces of our help. You triumphed there. And Lord. We share that victory. We walk in that triumph. Lord.

We thank you. That we can be. A mighty army. And help us Lord. To see the enemy's work. When sometimes he. Subtly comes.

And sneaks in. Lord. Help us to recognise his works. And to denounce them. And to stand. And obey. Your marching orders. Lord.

To be. That gospel witness. That we can be. Those who are faithful. To that commission. To go. And to share. That message. That must be delivered.

Through our lips. Lord. Help us we pray. Unite us as that army. Together we pray. We pray if there's any. Yet to enlist as it were.

[29:28] They're not saved. Yet they're still outside. Of the camp. Lord help them to see. Yes. I must. I must. Enlist.

I must. Enlist. Help them to see that today. That they can come. And join. This force. Lord they can come. And bow their knee.

At Calvary's cross. And see the blood shed. See the sin paid for. Their own sin. Nailed there. In your body. Lord help them to see. To look to you.

And to see it. By faith. And to profess. Faith. Soul saving faith. By your mercy and grace. Help us Lord we pray. In Jesus name.

Amen. CONGRATIST Thank you.