

# The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail | Matthew 16:13-18 | Storming the Strongholds

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[0:00] The gates of hell. We're going to go to Matthew 16 from verse 13. Matthew 16 from verse 13.

It tells of our Lord asking his disciples, Whom do men say that I am? From verse 13. Matthew 16 verse 13.

When Jesus came into the coast of Caesarea, Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I am? That I, the Son of Man, am?

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremiah, and 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, by Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

[1:04] 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. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt find on earth shall be bound in heaven.

And whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. We're going to concentrate on verse 18 here, where our Lord says to Peter, 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.

Our Lord promises that he's going to build his church, and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Now some think of the church as, in this context, as being some kind of defensive kind of promise, like a fortress mentality, where the church is huddled together, afraid, besieged, hiding behind some gates, holding out against hell's attacks.

But actually it's the other way around. Gates don't attack, they defend. And it's not a picture of hell attacking the church, as much as that sometimes does happen, but it's the church attacking the gates, amen, of the gates of hell.

And the church is pictured here as being on the offensive. It's telling of the unstoppable advance of the church, the army on the march.

[2:44] It's a picture of the church storming the gates of hell, the church militant. And the setting of these words are Caesarea Philippi.

It was a centre of pagan worship, a place where there was temples to Roman emperors, and shrines to Pan, the god of lust and fear. And here in this enemy territory, the Lord Jesus asks his disciples who they say he is.

And Peter confesses, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. And here's the truth that the Lord builds his church upon.

Here's the foundation, the confession of Christ. Gates in the Bible represent defence and authority, not offence.

Gates are where the leaders met together, the judgements were made, and power is exercised. Hell's gates, we could understand them to be fortified strongholds that defend Satan's territory, holding their captives inside them.

[3:51] Now the Lord wants for his church to advance and to attack those gates. The church is not meant to retreat in fear. It's meant to advance, to go forward in faith, in Christ's power.

And talking along themes of this nature, of this world that we're living in, really it's a world at war with God, isn't it? And there's brokenness everywhere we see, the culture decay.

But God's promise stands firm that the gates of hell shall not prevail. Our Lord declares that his church will prevail. Let's unpack some of that then. Why is this so?

His church will prevail because of its foundation. Peter says to Christ, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And our Lord says to Peter, upon this rock will I build my church.

Now, as much as there's lots of nice Peters in our church, I know people kind of joke about it, that we've got so many Peters in this church, we should rename it the Church of St. Peter.

[4:54] But, no, it wasn't Peter that it was talking about here. It's, the rock is not Peter the man, but the truth that Peter confessed.

Amen? His confession, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And the Lord says, flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Verse 17. So this revelation of God is the foundation, the Christ. He's the foundation. The word tells us of our Lord, our God, the Lord is my rock and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler or small shield, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

Here's the picture of God as the rock, the solid rock, the sure rock. Make sure you're standing on the rock. And the church is built on this, this identity of our Lord, the promised seed, the one who crushes the serpent, the suffering servant, the eternal son, the Messiah.

It's his identity. He is the rock. And not only is he the builder of the church, he's the foundation of it. He's laid it as the foundation. And he is the foundation.

[6:15] And so the Lord sustains his church. We see through the word of God, through the book of Acts. For example, chapter 8, of persecution of the church.

We see various heresies. Acts 15. The church has been sustained by God's enabling. And that same power avails today.

The same power that raised Christ from the dead. It dwells within us, inside of us. Empires come and go and fall, but Christ's church stands as that rock-solid church that it is.

That foundation is rock-solid. And we have his promise that the church will prevail. The gates of hell will not prevail.

So we see the foundation is that Christ is the foundation that makes the church strong. And consider next the gates. What does it mean, gates?

[7:16] The gates are points of control. They're designed to keep people in and keep liberators out. The gates of hell. We can understand that to be the defences that protect Satan's kingdom.

His grip on the world. You could understand that to be harmful mindsets, sinful habits or systems, cultural influences. You see, all kinds of things you could understand are like two gates that are kind of a controlling thing.

They control people, they trap people, and they keep them held prisoner. It's these kind of gates. So let's consider thinking about this concept, what that could relate to.

Let's identify what those gates could be. What are they? What are these strongholds that we must attack? These gates that we must break down. The gates of hell, they're the strongholds of Satan's domain, of hell.

Hades, the place of the dead. They're places of death, deception, and domination. And we could understand these gates to represent organised power and evil strategies that hold people captive.

[8:36] It tells us of these principalities and powers. Ephesians 6, in the context, is talking about the armour of God, of God's equipping the people of God as soldiers in this fight.

And Paul says to the Ephesians verse 12 of chapter 6, 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.

It's talking about this wrestling, it's talking about this onslaught that we ought to have against such things. All of these powers of the evil won. And we think of these gates that it speaks of in this passage, speaks about authority, of defence, centres of power, and at the gates is where the rulers sat and they administered, they made decisions.

It speaks of strength, of control over a territory, over a people. Gates, confining, strongholds, systems, centres of demonic authority.

And you think of those gates that hold our world captive, the unsaved, the lost, they're held in as kind of prisoners, and God's people are outside.

[9:58] And our Lord is saying that the church is meant to be attacking these gates. And he promises that these gates will not prevail. Think as you could consider what are kind of strongholds that hold people captive.

death is that final enemy, it tells in 1 Corinthians 15, it's the result of sin. And we know that the enemy is intending death as the result of sin, and we know that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The wages of sin is death. You see, death itself is this enemy of sorts, there's this fear and separation from God that people have of death, but yet on the victory side, we see that for believers that Christ has destroyed the power of death at the cross and his resurrection.

And we're called to declare his message of eternal life in contrast to that kind of gate of death. We have other gates such as the gate of sin.

The thing of sin, it holds people captive in shame, bondage, addiction, in lust, bitterness. People are trapped by sin.

[11:20] It's like the prodigal son, the misery of it, of the woman at the well, the hopelessness. Yet the blood of Christ breaks the chains of sin. We know that we can be set free.

There's also the gates of deception. Satan is called this father of lies, he's the master of it, he's the master of camouflage, and he wants to keep people in this falsehood, this darkness.

When we think of deception, we could think of this world and its messaging. It's constantly denying Christ, false religions. We see atheism, relativism, all the ideologies that exalt self over God.

And the enemy wants to foster false teaching and idolatry. Think of worldly philosophies that contradict the truth of the Bible, God's truth. Or the cultural narrative that truth is relative.

It's deception, isn't it? It's a gate. And the church is meant to be demolishing these gates, these lies, with the truth of his word. To lead people to freedom in Christ.

[12:24] We know John 8, 32, and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Deception. It's a gate. We want to break that down. The gates of fear.

Think of people that are paralysed with anxiety, despair, there's much depression, there's loneliness, yet God gives his people a spirit of power, not a spirit of fear.

2 Timothy 1 verse 7. Fear is a gate. You want to overcome that by faith. There's the gates of strife.

We can think of strife and discord, division within families, tearing families apart, within churches, there's much confusion, and James 3 talks about confusion, the work of the enemy, isn't it?

Strife and mayhem, all kinds of evils, of wickedness, immorality. The devil wants to cause strife and confusion, but we're called to withstand that with God's peace and truth, his righteousness.

We also face the gates of opposition. Think of the opposition to the gospel. Many hate the gospel today, don't they? Righteousness, there's outright opposition, persecution, there always has been, right back through Bible days, through church history, persecution, opposition.

[13:44] But we're called to attack those gates that oppose the things of God. We're called to persistent prayer, to destroy those strongholds.

We know there's that encouraging scripture that tells of the weapons of our warfare. They're not carnal, they're not fleshly thing, but they're mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, smashing down of gates, you could see, of tearing down that which would oppose God, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

We can destroy those strongholds, we can smash down those gates by prayerfulness and faith. We think of the modern day context now. What are some cultural gates that we face in Australia in our time?

You could think of all kinds of aspects we could reflect on as being kind of the dominion of Satan in the world that we live in. For example, we see some of the gates of our modern world.

It seems like life itself is under threat, that there's a sanctity of life, the Bible tells us, but the enemy doesn't want us to have that view of life.

[15:05] There's abortion, the devaluation of human life. In Bible days we know they had the child sacrifices to Moloch in the valley of Hinnom.

Nowadays the innocents are destroyed for convenience or prosperity.

Abortion. How can we advocate for life-affirming laws? How can we stand up for the unborn, the value, the infinite value of every person created in God's own image?

The sanctity of life. We should stand up for the life and advocate. What about the media and entertainment industries? It's like a gate as well.

There's all of these gates that are in the media world, entertainment, like portals. And what do they bring? What do they push? I know there's some good radio stations out there, but we know the media is largely ungodly, isn't it?

Promoting lies, immorality, ungodliness, shaping world views away from the truth. The media is just saturated with evil messaging, isn't it?

[16:14] The entertainment world built on immorality. These are all gates, aren't they, that shape the world views of people? And how can we as the church, how can we smash that down, that gate as it were, by having maybe a godly influence in social media or all kinds of media?

How can we be a godly impact as salt and light as we meant to be? How can we counter those false cultural narratives with the gospel, with gospel-centered truth, with gospel-centered media? Can we tell others of God's grace? I know it's good for those that might be on Facebook or other such things, that it's a way that you can platform the truth and present the truth, tell others of God's grace, share biblical truth and encouragement, use it for the Lord and his glory.

Don't just enter into the vanities that it largely is full of. Media, entertainment. The third one there, the educational systems, they can act like a gate, as strongholds.

Think of the gates, as it were, of universities, of schools, often hurting young people, causing much confusion about their identity, pushing secularism and relativism, eroding faith and moralities, constantly against the things of God.

[17:35] How can we be the ones attacking, as it were, that gate? How can we be equipped as parents, as mums and dads, supporting teaching, in homeschooling, in presenting biblical worldview, in schools?

How can we support that? Another gate is family and marriage, constantly under attack, isn't it? The breakdown of the family or the redefinition of marriage in some ungodly form.

And the home is under attack today, isn't it? Every home, every house, hold of God's people, family unit.

Can we as the church give support to support families, to have strong, loving families that uphold God's design? I know it's one thing with flow to the idea at the committee of having something to engender a conference to support the family, the family unit, of building godly marriages, godly parenting and such things of that.

Have hopes of holding something of that nature, to engender that because families are under attack these days. And we want to be a church that builds families and upholds families and God's designed for the family.

[18:56] We see the moral breakdown of society. It's right through, and I know having been in government, in different government roles, it's endemic.

But this moral breakdown, this challenging of everything that's right and righteous, there's political corruption, there's a crying need for integrity in our society, in the lawmakers and governors of our world.

There's this moral breakdown. And you think, in Bible days, ancient kings built altars to false gods. It's happening today.

They're building altars to false gods in Australia, aren't they? And how can we break down, as it were, the moral breakdown? How can we rather engage by promoting ethical leadership, by voting for one thing, and by standing, potentially?

How can we support godly governance in our land? And find those that have some appreciation appreciation of God's truth, or at least Bible principles.

[20:09] How can we advocate for that in the public square? For truth about marriage and the home, God's design.

We see so much that is in need for our land, don't we? And nowadays, there's a whole lot of relativism, too, talking about truth. There's a truth war going on.

There's a whole lot of relativism where they're undermining the truth. You've got your truth, I've got mine, it's all very murky. You see public schools promoting all kinds of evolutionary humanism that erode faith, pumping that idea out that we're just a higher form of monkeys, or pond scum, if you go back far enough.

Foolishness. There's a push for harmful gender ideologies, too. Gender transitions, especially among minors. This is little tots.

They're pushing this messaging all the time through schools, laws, and media. They deny God's creation design. Look at God's design of creation. How did God make the world?

[21:21] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God. Created he him, male and female. Created he them. Whoa, that's countercultural, isn't it?

That's offensive, but it's the truth. How can we stand up? How can we oppose such a culture war, this truth war? How can we stand up for parental rights?

They're constantly being undermined. Supporting biblically based counselling to counter the confusion that harms so many people in this culture war, this truth war.

We're battling this relativism, this subjective truth idea, that truth is subjective. But no, truth is absolute. Truth is unchanging. Truth, 2,000, 4,000 years ago is still truth today, right now, and will be tomorrow.

Truth doesn't change. A modern culture treats morality as if it's something that we take our pick and choose how we feel or we redefine or we define our own truth, our own truth.

[22:28] There is no such thing. It's either true or it's not true. It's the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth. That's what we're told, isn't it? That's what they say. We have truth.

We have an unchanging standard of truth. That does not change. But the world today treats truth as if you redefine it, you define your own truth.

But there is an absolute truth. We have an absolute authority, the word of God. So how can we as believers storm these gates, these different kind of gates? How can we teach biblical truth in our home settings?

Thank God for homeschooling families, at least you've got more control than many, or in Christian schools at least, there's still some measure there. How can we storm the gates and have biblical truth as that which we stand upon?

And it doesn't deviate in our churches, in our homes. How can we stand up? How can we attack those gates? How can we make that difference that we need to, we're called to?

[23:30] We see this increasing normalisation of ungodly lifestyles. What the Bible says is abomination they want to celebrate in the streets.

We want to resist the moral decline. That is all around us, in our culture. And how? Through compassionate outreach, defending marriage, offering hope for the hurting.

For those that have this, really it's an underlying brokenness that they have. We want to reach out to them in compassion, but without compromise. Another big thing these days is what they call cancel culture.

And silencing dissent. They want to label biblical views as hate speech.

Biblical views on the family or justice. They want to marginalise Christian voices. They want to de-platform Christians. So if you put something out there, they will pull the rug from under you and close down your channel and close down your voice.

[24:41] They want to de-platform Christians from having a voice. And so this ongoing culture war, there's these gates. May we keep faithful to our Lord and not be afraid to withstand such things, to stand up for the Lord's truth, to not compromise, to have that bold, loving engagement with our culture that's gospel driven, rather than retreat and try to hide and kind of be invisible.

may we rather be strong, to lift up our voices in whatever ways we can in our different lives, to be that witness, to take prayerful action. Think about the erosion that is happening, it's a constant thing, erosion of religious freedoms.

There's talks of threats to faith based hiring, so Christian schools can't actually recruit Christians selectively. There's talks of bans on conversion prayer that criminalise biblical counselling, this is

happening in Australia.

There's increasing gender ideology in schools. Victoria and Queensland have policies that embed fluid gender teachings without parental consent, that confuse children.

So there's this effluent pipe of garbage being pumped into classrooms, into young minds, it's a very sad world.

[26:03] God's And what are we meant to do, just kind of retreat and let it all happen? Or are we meant to withstand it? Amen? Aren't we? Shouldn't we? To push back against all of these gates, to be that salt and light that we're meant to be individually, corporately, as the church.

We've seen the foundation, it's Christ, the confession of Christ. We've seen the gates, there's all manner of them. Thirdly, we see the authority that is here. Our Lord gives authority to the church. He says, 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. Our Lord's telling the church here, hey you've got authority, I've invested this to you, there's keys that you have.

And we're called to advance against these gates and we're doing it with his authority behind us, with boldness. And this authority that we have, it comes from his victory over sin and death.

In Matthew 28 he says, all authority, all power is his. And he delegates it to the church. We've got authority as the people of God. And it means we can attack and oppose evil.

[27:19] And we can be a part of loosing, of liberating the captives, of bringing blessing. And in all of this in Matthew 16 it's telling us about the church, it's picturing us as an army, as an army.

But we do not fight in our own strength, but by his spirit. It's not by might, not by power, it's by his spirit, isn't it? And hell's gates cannot overcome because Christ is one.

As much as we might feel threatened with all of those kind of gates that we see all around, rather we're meant to be willing to not be afraid but to stand and to advance.

And it assures us, our Lord says, that the church of God will prevail. Victory is sure, it's his promise.

As we bind deception, as we loose truth, as we bind oppression, as we loose freedom, as we oppose all of those gates that we talked about with rather the contrary, God's truth.

And when you think of it, as you witness individually, as we go out and tell others, every soul that is saved proves that the gates of hell fail.

[28:32] That's why we care about soul winning as a church. We want to reach souls while we can. Let's consider some practical steps then to storm the gates. We've seen the foundation, we've seen the gates, we've seen this authority that we have and let's not be ashamed of the gospel.

Let's share it. Let's do it. Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believe it, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

We're meant to be a soul winning church and we're meant to be doers of the word. Be doers of the word. In other words, how can we make some application of this that we've been hearing about today?

There's some specific biblical actions that you can take. Can I urge you, enlist, join the army. If you get to be saved, of course naturally, you need to be saved.

Trust Christ. Believe. Join the army. And then engage in the battle. Don't be a spectator, be a soldier. And here is our battle plan laid out for us.

[29:49] There's things that every believer can do. Here's how we can storm the gates of hell. Don't you want to be a part of that? To storm the gates of hell? You can proclaim the truth.

You can share the word of God against deception. We storm the gates of hell every time we share the gospel, don't we? Every time we tell others of the saviour.

So know the gospel, be ready to give an answer, a reason for the hope that you have. We need bold evangelism. Don't be afraid.

This is our battering ram against the gates of the devil's lies. Go and win souls. It tells of how we should pull them out of the fire.

As it were, you could think, well, the gates of hell, there's fire there, we want to pull them out of the fire. Before they go there, before they go to hell, we want to get them out of hell's domain, out of the gates of hell, as it were.

[30:47] Snatch them as brands from the burning. How can we be such a people? We've got a sword, the word of God, the sword of the spirit. Use scripture as a sword as the Lord did in Matthew 4 when he encountered the enemy, when he spoke to the enemy, he said, it is written.

And how can we be a biblical people? Let's memorise Bible verses. Memorise Bible verses. There's one thing I love to urge people to do.

If you've yet to do that, contact me, I'll give you a list of them that you can use. Embed them in your brain, in your heart, write them on the tablets of your heart.

Bible verses, memorise. Let's share the gospel boldly, don't be afraid. Time is short. Get together for Bible study so you can learn the word of God. You can hear it, you can embed it, you can receive it, you can discuss it and learn it.

Serve and be soul wherever you can be. Let's impact our culture for Christ. So do not be silent. In Acts 4 it says when the believers were challenged, they said we cannot but speak the things which you have seen and heard.

[32:04] Share your testimony with others. Revelation 12, 11 talks about the testimony of the people of God. It's powerful. It overcomes. And we see prayer.

How can we pull down the strongholds? Pray. Pray through. Bind the strong man as it were. Pray for one another. The church prayed and Peter was freed. In Acts 12. His chains literally fell off and the prison gate opened.

That's Acts 12 when the church prayed. Also let's worship. It's literally shaking the gates. In Acts 16, 25 and at midnight Paul and Silas they were there in confinement and it says that they prayed.

And they sang praises unto God. And the prisoners heard them. Who are these weirdos? Praying and praising. What's there to pray and praise about?

And suddenly all the doors were open. Prayer. Prayer. It bashes down the gates. Let's be all part of this mission together.

[33:09] And let's join the building crew for the church to be a builder, to build unity, to make disciples, to be a strong part of the church body, to build, to build, to edify one another, build up one another.

How can we do that? Forgive. If you've got something against another, forgive. Reconcile relationships. Refuse division. It's the enemy's work.

Live your life for the glory of God. How can we be in a church that's building up one another? Do justice, love mercy, speak truth in love, smashing down the gates, smashing down the gates.

We can know victory. We can. The church militant is also the church triumphant. our captain has already won.

He promises you, the gates of hell shall not prevail. Sure enough, we'll be having those times when we feel a bit defeated from time to time, under the pump, a bit tired, tested.

[34:20] But what can seem defeats, I want to urge you this morning, they're temporary. The defeats we have in life, they're temporary. And we've need of steadfastness in the battle.

Keep on plugging, keep on fighting. Let's rise up as that mighty army of God that the word of God tells you that you are. Think of those things again, just to recap, how can we be equipped, get the word, hide it in your heart, speak it with your mouth, pray and praise, like Paul and Silas.

Pray for one another. Worship the Lord. Build the church and together we can know that victory.

Know that his promise is sure, it's certain. The gates of hell shall not prevail, he says. We have victory. God's people, the church, it says that we're more than conquerors.

And it tells in 1 Corinthians 15, but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. It says even when life's tests come, that in all these things we're more than conquerors through him that loved us.

[35:45] You have victory. The church has victory. Really the church is unstoppable. unstoppable. When you think through all the years, centuries of persecution, the church has just maintained.

It's been sustained by the power of God. It's unstoppable. And we guarantee victory. The gates of hell shall not prevail. It's not a possibility, it's a promise.

The gates of hell shall not prevail. He assures of that. And we can give him thanks. Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ.

Brothers and sisters, these are your marching orders. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church of God. Our Lord calls us to penetrate enemy territory.

Let's not have this hunkering down, bunker mentality that, oh, we've got to hide and kind of just keep invisible or keep quiet and don't say anything that's going to offend anyone and don't dare be a Christian that is a visible Christian.

[36:56] That's what the enemy would want you to do, to be like that. But God says, no, stand up and be counted. Answer the fray, answer the conflict. Challenge those gates and smash them down.

Believe God's promise that we have victory and he always causes us to triumph. Penetrate enemy territory every chance you can. Will we take the fight to the enemy?

Maybe the souls we can talk to of the saviour. Arm yourself with his word. Let's get ready for battle this week ahead. Now, the gates of hell, they can sometimes seem foreboding.

All of those gates, we see them constantly. They're all around us. But we're not to be afraid of them. We're to challenge them. We're to storm the gates of hell. Advance in faith and those gates cannot stand.

Brother, sister, be encouraged in your own walk with God to tear down the strongholds of hell for the glory of God. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you love us so that you give us the gospel truth.

[38:03] Lord, for a man sinful can be made whole and clean and saved. Lord, we can be set free from the devil's captivity and chains.

Lord, we thank you that you have power over sin and death and hell. And Lord, you've given your church that authority as you've invested your promise of power, of gate crashing victory.

Lord, help us to see that, that we're not some defeated, hiding crowd, fearful, but we are your people, a strong army by your grace, equipped, enabled by you, empowered by you.

Lord, help us to have that mindset of victory. Give us, Lord, strength when the battle times are hard. We're flagging sometimes, Lord, humanly we may even feel defeated, yet, Lord, we know that we have victory.

It's the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Lord, we praise you for your grace. We pray that each one may know that today, the saving power of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

[39:16] Lord, help us to put our trust in you, to know your saving power, and Lord, to walk in that truth of your victory as that advancing church.

Help us to make a difference in our world, Lord, to recognise those gates, and Lord, to give us strength to stand up and be counted. Enable us, Lord, we pray.

Pray for every soul that is here, that each one might just get that greater concept of your victory in our lives. Lord, be glorified, we pray, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Amen.