

The Gates of Hell

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Susan and I are off to the annual district ministers' conference in West Lafayette today. This year's tone for the meeting is pretty prophetic. Pastor John Kilpatrick, of Brownsville Revival fame, will be with us to share about a new sense of urgency in the Spirit. This is something that I have been feeling and confirming for about a year now. This has continued to focus me on leadership training and imparting our gifts to the next generation. Although this is not what is on my heart today before I leave out, I wanted to set this week's blog in the context of all of our ministers across the state converging for two days of prophetic ministry.

What the Lord dropped in my spirit last night at church was the phrase "*gates of hell.*" This phrase comes from that familiar verse we quote every time it seems hell is storming our fortress trying to overwhelm us with destruction. However, as I quoted this in prayer last night, the thought came to me, "How can gates *prevail* against me? It's odd to think that the devil would attack me with the "*gates of hell.*"

In Matthew 16 Jesus was responding to Peter's confession that Jesus was "*the Son of the living God.*" Jesus calls him blessed for having this heavenly revelation, but then goes on to say in verse 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.) I never really understood nor embraced all of the things I have heard about this verse, from Peter being the rock of the church to revelation being what we build the church on. However, I feel I do have a new insight at least into the phrase "*and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" This is the King James version. The NIV says, "*and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*"

Staring at this phrase leaves me wondering if hell is not in the defensive mode. One interpretation says *gates* means the counsels of hell. This is because the city gates used to be where all decisions were made. Yet, I still see a deeper aspect as in the gates of hell are still attached to hell itself and the church is storming those gates. Rather than the counsels and attacks of the enemy coming against the church, would it not make more sense to say the church is coming against the counsels and attacks of hell itself?

Part of the reason I see this is because in the very next verse Jesus explains the principle of binding and loosing on earth and in heaven. Instead of bearing up under an assault from the enemy with the promise that he won't prevail against the church, maybe we are looking at the fact that the strength of hells gates themselves cannot withstand the impact of the church.

In my consideration of this I felt the key word here was *prevail*. What exactly does this word mean in this context. The NIV uses the term *overcome*, but the Greek word *katischuo* can also mean to be strong. So *shall not prevail* can also mean *not be strong against*. In others words, and the idea I'm trying to express is, the gates of hell cannot stand up against the power of the church. So be encouraged. It may not be that the devil is chasing you around with a set of gates, beating you over the head, it may be that the church is taking the battle to the very gates of hell and they cannot stand up against our assault on them.

*⁵ In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory,
and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,
⁶ And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment,
and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate."*

Isaiah 28:5, 6, KJV.

Let us be the ones who are taking the battle to the enemy. We are not held up in a fortress praying for a deliverer to come. We are the power of deliverance in the earth today. We are here to set the captives free. May the Lord strengthen us as we turn the battle to the gates of hell. They cannot stand up (prevail) against the church.

Those who are more theological than I may beg to differ on this point, but I sure like the picture it creates in my head more than me being on the defensive. We ought to be seeking out every work of the enemy, every stronghold he has built, and casting them to the ground. We have the power to tear the gates off of hell and see the captive souls walk free.

So the next time you feel threatened by the enemies tactics, remember he is more about defending what he still has than about taking new territory. We are the ones marching through the land, as the army of God, tearing down strongholds and everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. (2nd Corinthians 10:5)

*God's got an army marching through this land,
Deliverance is their song, their's healing in their hands,
Everlasting joy and gladness in their hearts,
And in this army I've got a part.*

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