



take it home



On the Attack



## Gates

*...the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18 ESV*

There's nothing like looking through arrow slots and walking ramparts to begin to understand the fine art of siege warfare back in the days of walled citadels. Walls are very formidable to attackers, but the weakest place is the opening at the gate. Lots of engineering and design go into strengthening the gate. Many towers look over the gate. Many arrow slots are aimed at the area just in front of the gate, to defend it from attack. (The Lord of the Rings movies give you great visuals of this!)

When Jesus talks about hell's gates, his first century audience understands that he is talking about being on the attack and Satan being under siege. This is it! We're storming the castle! Don't be afraid of arrows zinging by, rocks lobbed at you, boiling oil pouring down... Jesus is taking us through the gate.

Which gate of hell do you want to push open - poverty, injustice, suffering, addiction, illness? They all sound insurmountable, but Jesus says that in the hands of His church, they are going down. Here's something for you to return to each day this week and maybe for some weeks to come. Pick a gate - a specific instance of poverty, injustice, suffering, addiction or illness and pray about it, research it's stronghold in your community, pray some more, talk to people about it, form up a cohort and charge!

## On Alert

*To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me. Ephesians 6:18,19 ESV*

Satan will whisper lies in your ear so that you question your faith and your Christ-like inheritance, and the promise of deliverance from your enemies. He will make you want to focus on things below and not above. He will churn up your insides until they are in knots and you must swallow hard not to spew all that is tumbling around inside. He will make you doubt the grasp of God's Hand on your life. So how do you begin to unravel yourself from Satan's snare and cling to Hope with a death-like grip? You strap on the belt of truth, put on the shoes of peace and the helmet of salvation. It's time to not give up and stand your ground with the sword.

*Therefore, since God in his mercy has given us this new way, we never give up. We reject all shameful deeds and underhanded methods. We don't try to trick anyone or distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know this. If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. 2 Corinthians 4:1-4 NLT*

## Onward

*Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Timothy 6:12 ESV*

Hurricanes, fires, wars and rumors of wars, illness, death and destruction... all evil... all around us. Satan attacks! What are we to do? We pray, we help, we defend and we fight, we march on. Yes, God has already won the eternal battle on the cross. But Satan has yet to give in. He pursues us, wanting to win just one of us and draw us away from God's saving grace: His goal... death and the darkness of hell.

As His children, God has given us responsibility to care for His creation which includes people. We are clothed with His armor, covered by His blood; we fight alone and with His church; we are led by His Spirit and we march on.

The familiar old hymn comes to mind:

*Onward Christian Soldiers. Marching as to war.  
With the Cross of Jesus going on before.  
Christ the royal Master leads against the foe.  
Forward into battle see his banner go.*

*At the sign of triumph Satan's host doth flee.  
On then Christian soldiers on to victory.  
Hell's foundations quiver at the shout of praise.  
Brothers, lift your voices, loud your anthems raise.*

*Like a mighty army moves the church of God.  
Brothers we are treading where the saints have trod.  
We are not divided, all one body we.  
One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.*

*Onward then, ye people, join our happy throng.  
Blend with ours your voices, in the triumph song.  
Glory laud and honor, unto Christ the King.  
This through countless ages, men and angels sing.*

## Victory

*When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. Deuteronomy 20:1 NIV*

I taught Sunday School to preschoolers for years. At the beginning of class, we would sing songs. One of their favorite songs was "I'm in the Lord's Army". Do you remember the song from your childhood?

*I may never march in the infantry, ride in the cavalry, shoot the artillery. I may never fly o'er the enemy, but I'm in the Lord's army, Yes Sir!*

The song was geared towards kids, motions and all, but the words are true for all ages. God has built an army and we, the church, are it. We are in a war against the devil. The devil is trying to break God's creation through poverty, injustice, suffering, and illness. But God's people, with Jesus as our general, are ready for the battle.

God has called us to go forth and fight. We are to go on the offense. He has given us weapons to win the war; truth, righteousness, readiness, faith, and love. Brothers and sisters, stand firm and do not be afraid. Remember that when the fighting gets tough, we do not need to fret because, ultimately, God is in control. He is with us and will deliver us.

Go out and fight with the attitude of victory! Through Jesus, the battle is won! Amen!

## Not Timid

*For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7 NIV*

If there was one war the United States should have lost, it was the Revolutionary War. When revolts between the Colonies and Great Britain turned into open fighting, the British sent 30,000 of their best soldiers to put down the rebellion. The colonies had no standing army to resist, only a few state militias. Early battles were disasters for the Colonies as both New York and Philadelphia fell to the British. What was a defensive war for the Americans was a mess. Their morale was shot.

But the winter of 1776 proved to be a turning point because George Washington went on the offensive, famously starting with crossing the Delaware river and ending with the British surrender at Yorktown. The rest is history.

In our war against the forces of Satan, we can draw strength from Paul's reminder to Timothy. Our battlefields aren't the plains of New England but in places where injustice, suffering and fear prevail, anywhere Satan has a foothold on the Earth. And then, when we see victories against the enemy, our morale improves just like it did for Washington's men. We aren't timid any longer in our faith, but realize that the Holy Spirit is leading us in our fight. He's the best field general of them all. From Him, we have the courage to keep taking the fight to the enemy.