

is holding prisoners in subjection. A good analogy would be the case of the wall that separates West Berlin from East Berlin. This wall has been put up to hold as prisoners the Germans who live in the Soviet zone; many of whom have risked their lives in trying to escape. Many West Berliners seek to help their relatives and friends to escape from oppression and slavery. They do their best to dig under the wall, or to help people to climb over it, or in some other way to get away from the slavery to which the wall holds them. If you were to say that the Berlin wall will not prevail against the citizens of West Berlin, you would mean that they would be able to release their friends in East Berlin from the imprisonment that this wall typifies.

When Jesus spoke of "the gates of hell," He was not speaking about the situation of people after death, but about those who are today in bondage, headed for eternal destruction. He was speaking of those who are on their way to everlasting suffering in hell. He said that it will be possible for the church to rescue many whom Satan has bound. Then, speaking to Peter as a representative of His true church, He continued: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

It is easy to see the relevance of this promise to every member of the true church of Christ. One of us sees a man who is bound by Satan and on his way to hell, headed for the eternal destruction which he merits for his sin against God and against Christ. If we do nothing to bring to this man the message of salvation through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, thus leaving him bound, the man is bound on earth, and will remain bound through all eternity. God has made the church His representative as the means of bringing the message of salvation to those whom Satan has bound. If the church fails in this task, the lost will continue to be bound, but if the church fulfills its responsibility of bringing them the message of salvation, and they receive the Lord Jesus Christ into their hearts, they will be loosed. Jesus promised Peter, as the representative of every member of His true church, "whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The very gates of hell cannot prevail against this = message.

Jesus praised Peter as the man who first clearly saw and declared the truth of the deity of Christ. He said to Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Peter was a wonderful man. He was one of the very finest of the apostles. According to tradition he gave his life as a martyr for his loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter deserves great praise and our Lord certainly gave it to him in this verse.