

5. Join a mission team. Is the Lord leading your beautiful feet to be active in local missions or travel with others on a mission trip? Short-term and long-term mission opportunities abound in your local area, across the United States, and overseas. Maybe your “shoe size” gifts and abilities are the perfect addition to a team on a mission to share the Light of Christ in a dark and dying world.
6. Support missions. Your beautiful feet have the amazing ability to bring Good News to people all over the world without even going out the door! While your athletic shoes may never feel the sand of the African desert, the sidewalks of the inner city, or the floor of a soup kitchen, they are partners in the Gospel when they support other beautiful feet! You can pray for missionaries supported by your church or district, as well as those supported by the LWML and LCMS World Mission. You can learn about their specific goals and needs, and you can walk beside them in prayer and through financial support or other gifts, as needed.

Read **Philippians 1:4–6**. List several ways you can have a “partnership in the Gospel.” Where is the Lord leading you to carry the Good News?

Whether you join a mission team or support those who have, you also partner with fellow believers to carry the Good News to a world in need of a Savior. He will continue to equip your beautiful feet to carry the Good News!

It doesn't matter whether you are sporting expensive, name-brand athletic shoes or your everyday flat-footed sneakers. The people's lives touched with the Gospel of Jesus won't care or remember the shoes you wore. They WILL remember that you walked beside them and into their lives.

They won't see your *beautiful feet*; they'll see Jesus.

The Cool Down

Read **Ephesians 6:19–20**. How can you use Paul's prayer request to pray for those in the mission field today? In what other ways can you provide support?

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, You have given us beautiful feet to carry Your Good News to the world! Grow us and guide us in Your Word, that we may be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have. Strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit, and show us how and where You would have us run with the Gospel, so that others may receive the free gift of salvation in Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

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bible study

The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail

By Rev. Michael Mattil

[For Bible study leader notes and Bible passages, click on the Quarterly icon at www.lwml.org or contact the LWML Office.]

Open with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to guide your study of the Word.

Just recently I was paying bills and came across a credit card receipt from a dress shop in the mall. It showed a purchase of a dress for \$300. I tried to remain calm, but I'm sure my voice gave away my angry mood when I confronted Cheryl with the bill. “How could you do this?” I demanded. Cheryl replied, “I don't know. I was walking past the store and saw it in the window and before I knew it, I was trying it on. It was like the Devil was whispering to me, ‘Gee, you look great in that dress. You should buy it.’” I told her, “Honey, you know how to deal with the Devil!” Just tell him, “Get behind me,

\$300!

Satan!” Cheryl said, “I did! I told him to get behind me. And he said, ‘It looks great from back here, too.’”

We can laugh, but the truth is that we all do battle with Satan every day. The church is under constant attack. Satan and his forces are always attacking, always on the offensive, always looking to take us down. We're in a fight. We're in a battle. Paul reminds us of this in the context of putting on the armor of God: **“our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12).”**

Read **Matthew 16:18**. This passage is a promise of victory for God's people. It tells us that Satan is not the victor — Jesus is. He has won the victory. Luther wrote: “All Christians are Peters on account of the confession which Peter here makes, which is the rock on which Peter and all Peters are built.” So the promise is not just for Peter but also for the people who profess and possess the faith that Peter expressed here. We are all a part of the

promise, a victory that comes from Jesus Himself, the one who overcame death just as He said He would, proving the reliability of His words. We maintain our faith in our Savior in spite of what is going on in the world around us.

Compare English translations of this passage, especially the last phrase. Look at as many translations as possible, but especially ESV, KJV, and NIV. What similarities and differences do you see?

Many of us are used to hearing the KJV translation: **“the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”** However, the more literal translation is “gates of Hades.”

Hades is one of several words in Scripture that are rendered “hell” in English. It occurs 10 times in NT. In addition to “Hades” (5x), NIV renders this word as

“the depths” (**Mt. 11:23; Luke 10:15**)

“hell” (**Luke 16:23**)

“the grave” (**Acts 2:27, 31**).

In classical Greek, Hades is both a “god” and the place of the dead, which is why we often understand it as the place of the dead.

The gates of hell shall not prevail ... Discuss what you think of when you hear this phrase.

I think most often we hear this passage as saying that the Church will withstand any and all attacks of Satan. The forces of evil will not overcome, overpower, or prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ. That is true. We think of the portals of Hades as being that place from where the many and varied attacks of the devil and all his forces originate. The gates of a walled city symbolize its strength; not only could they keep out invading armies, but also the gates would be the place through which a city sent its own army to attack others. We envision the gates of hell are opened and they spew forth legions of evil intent on doing us eternal harm. Maybe we don't have as vivid an understanding of this as we should, but the demons are intent on destroying the Church.

Luther had a firm grasp on this and refers to it in his hymn, “A Mighty Fortress:”

**Though devils all the world should fill,
all eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill, they shall not overpower us.
This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none, he's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.** PUBLIC DOMAIN

The enemy is not just that quarrelsome person with whom you can't get along. It is not just improper conduct and conversation. It is more than those inappropriate movies and Internet sites. You are not just struggling against bodily

ailments and financial woes. Satan is your ultimate enemy. He stands at the head of a vast, powerful, invisible army of evil spirits who are intent upon your eternal destruction. He uses things like those listed above to pull you away from God. And you know that at times, he is successful — he takes your focus away from Christ.

The promise Jesus makes is that evil and death and Satan will not prevail against HIS Church. He said He would build HIS Church on the confession of Peter, and that will stand. That is the promised victory.

In our hymn, “The Church's One Foundation,” we remind ourselves that “the church shall never perish” because that is the promise of our Lord.

There is another way to understand this phrase “the gates of Hades will not prevail” or prove stronger than the Church. **Hades**, the place of death, cannot keep the dead in Christ captive. Jesus and His resurrection and His victory will prevail. With Christ on the offense, assaulting the place of the dead, the faithful will come out. Death will not be able to hold believers in Christ. The Grave has no choice but to give up the saints. See **Revelation 14:13**.

The gates of Hades will “not prove stronger than” the Church because of Who is on our side, the Rock on whom our hope is built. The One who made everything is still in control of it all. How is this stated in **John 16:33**?

Death is not the victor; JESUS IS. Death has no power over those who are in Christ. Look at **John 5:24**.

We have crossed over from death to life because of the cross of Jesus Christ. Our Lord and Savior was willing to take all of our sins on Himself and pay the price through that brutal crucifixion. And in rising from death, He proclaimed this victory that becomes ours through faith in Him, the victory over sin and death and Satan and whatever He throws our way. The gates of Hades cannot prevail against those who are in Christ Jesus.

One more promise: In speaking of our spiritual warfare against the spirit of antichrist in this world, how does John convey this promise from our gracious God? Read **1 John 4:4**.

The One who is in you is the One who won the victory for you on a cross, the One who allows us to CROSS OVER from death to life, the One who promised, **“On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”**

Close by singing or speaking the words of “The Church's One Foundation” (*LSB* 644; *LW* 289; *TLH* 473).

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