

LIVE RATTLING THE GATES

“...I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

Imagine a dance so bold, so powerful, that when you move your feet the gates of hell are shaken! When we each take our place on the dance floor and move to God's choreography, the gates can be rattled rather than the gates rattling us.

Let me begin by saying that I don't believe we are to charge the gates in some spiritual way. What I am suggesting is that when we do what we were placed on this earth to do, the gates of hell tremble as a result.

The concept of rattling the gates has been on my mind for the past few years. While reading the encounter Peter had with Jesus, it struck me that we have the same words from Jesus to stand on. The gates of hell shall not prevail against us because we are His. The Church belongs to the King. We are indwelt by the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead.

Why then is the enemy better at rattling us as individuals and the Church as a whole than we are at rattling the gates? We have the power to make hell tremble. An effective believer is cause for concern in the dark world. That's why this journey you are on is so crucial. For as long as you doubt and underestimate God's love, you are rendered ineffective. The enemy wants nothing more than to keep you shackled and powerless and standing as a wallflower rather than daring to dance.

Allow your understanding and belief in the love God has for you to begin to grow, and you will be closer to accepting your role as a soldier in the army of the Living God. That's what we all should be, soldiers ready to do battle every day of our lives. Instead, we are a weakened body of babes who lack the ability to fight back, much less be on the offensive.

We spend more time running away from the enemy, fearing he has some mystical power over our lives, than we do charging ahead with the battle cry of the Lord. I often hear believing women say how much the enemy is pushing them around and leaving them feeling so defeated. In a recent season I felt exactly the same. We give the enemy power over us voluntarily and without realizing it. We speak his power into our lives with our words of defeat.

In my most productive seasons, I see the enemy firing arrow after arrow. Instead of being rattled and cowering in fear, I view his attack as confirmation that I'm rockin' along in this ministry with the Lord as my strength and my shield (Psalm 28:7). If the devil ever decides to leave me alone, I have reason to worry. If I'm no threat to him, then I must be slacking.

Consider this: If you are ineffective, then the enemy will likely leave you alone. If you aren't facing assaults, then you might want to look at what you're contributing to the kingdom. I'm not saying you should be facing attacks 24/7 since I know there are times when we are so under the protection of the Father that the enemy's arrows can't strike us. I do know this, though. When I am at my most productive, going about my Father's business, the enemy will strike.

I have known less productive seasons when he came against me as well. Because my faith was so weak, he was able to keep me in a cycle of self-pity, fearing what might happen next. It felt like I was enduring attack after attack with no means of knowing victory.

Now, attacks come, but they can't keep me down for nearly as long as I used to allow. Why? What's different about me? Many things in combination have made me more of a soldier and less of a babe in the faith:

- I began to read my Bible faithfully.
- I started to apply what God's Word says to my daily life.
- I allowed the Spirit to begin the transformation process in me. I actually acted on what God said rather than acknowledging it and then sticking to my old ways.
- I pursued His love. I set out to love Him and found myself more loved than I ever imagined possible.

- I set myself apart, as much as any of us can, from the world's influence through what I watch, listen to, and who I allow to influence me.
- I began to take tiny trust-steps until I was willing to take larger ones. I always, always find Him faithful, even when things don't turn out as I expect.

I'm sure there are more contributing factors that I could share, but you get the idea. Basically, I decided that the Christian life I had been living just wasn't cutting it. I was tired of living in cycles of defeat. I knew other believers who were the real deal. I hated being a faker and finally decided to do something about it. I actually prayed a prayer for God to make me real. He did.

I don't know what it will take for you to want something more than what you now know. Aren't you tired of the enemy rattling you rather than you rattling his evil gates? That's what you'll see if you look around, fearful believers whose lives are shaken and disrupted by the enemy's temptations and distractions. That may describe you at times. I know it does me in weakened and doubt-filled seasons. To live rattling the gates is a life lived on the offense rather than remaining on the defense.

Learn to play offense!

You know the saying that goes, "Let her sleep, for when she wakes she will move mountains"? I would like something similar written next to my bed so that I see it each morning: "Let her sleep, for when she wakes she will rattle the gates."

Life on the offensive can only be lived through the certainty of God's love, knowing before every battle that the victory is already won. Nothing can ever be the same once you get even the smallest glimpse of God's love.

If you consider your life ordinary, you are likely underestimating God's love for you.

If you feel you have no purpose, you are absolutely missing the depth of His love.

If you wonder if this is all there is to the Christian walk, then you haven't encountered the foundation-rattling love of God.

If you know you're faking elements of your faith, then being real is just a love song away.

It's time to take your faith walk to the next level. You aren't destined to remain a babe in your faith. You are placed on the kingdom calendar for such a time as this for a reason. There is kingdom business to be about. Babes in the faith can't help much in battle, but trained soldiers can. My challenge to you is to begin to take your position in the army of the Lord more seriously. Take steps to strengthen your faith. Invest time in what and Who matters.

Stop burying your head in the sand. There is an actual battle going on in the spiritual realm that crosses over into your physical circumstances. There is an enemy. You are a real target. Either train to be a soldier or keep living defeated. No matter what, you will be attacked repeatedly (John 16:33), so you might as well armor up, train with perseverance, and take your stand (Ephesians 6:10-18).

This past year and a half I have experienced opposition in an unparalleled way. For brief seasons I felt crippled and made little progress, but then the Spirit would seem to lift me to my feet so that I could re-engage in the battle. God hasn't expected perfection from me, and He sure wasn't surprised when I dropped to my knees in temporary defeat at times. What He does expect and provide is a way for me to stand again.

My story isn't foreign to you. The devil comes against you from the right side and the left. This is a cross we carry as a child of God, being identified with Jesus and an enemy of the devil. We each face opposition in different ways, yet we all serve the same powerful God. We can stand.

"We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed..." (2 Corinthians 4:8)

The enemy has a plan to hinder you and me and will keep hitting us with his best shots. His best shot at me came just days ago. Actually, I would call it his ultimate shot when something happened that I have long known would. I have to laugh at what must have been his disappointment at my reaction. The

enemy fired, and though his arrow made contact, I haven't allowed it to hinder my mission. Peace that surpasses understanding (literally) has been mine. I recently told a friend that this level of peace makes no sense under the circumstances, yet it should make perfect sense because I walk with the Prince of Peace.

Why am I so surprised? I guess because my mode of operating in previous years was to crumble under attack. Not today. That's not who I am now. Babes crumble and cry. Soldiers fight back. We pick up our sword and stand still since the battle belongs to the Lord (2 Chronicles 20).

So now, soldier-in-training, get to work. Learn how to defend yourself. Then, learn how to attack, how to rattle the gates of the one who intends to destroy you, your marriage, and your children. This is a no-joke situation you face. Be bold, mighty warrior.

Let's look at Gideon, a man God used to deliver the Israelites from the enemy's oppression as recorded in the Book of Judges. Gideon was just a normal guy like you and me. There was nothing impressive about him or his heritage, yet God knew what was in him, all the possibilities of who the New King James Version calls a man of valor. God saw who Gideon would become when Gideon only saw who he currently was.

Gideon's response when God told him He was sending Gideon to help His people is often what we feel when we're told we are to stand in battle. Gideon said:

"I am the least in my father's house." (Judges 6:15)

When I first began writing, especially when I saw how even fiction could minister to women, I felt just like Gideon. I had every excuse to not step into my role: my past, my mistakes, my sin, and my lack of education. All these excuses made me feel like the "least" in the family of God. Why would God ask me to help? Just like with Gideon, God saw who I would become long before I did.

Whether you feel like a soldier or not, it's your destiny to become one. While you only see who you are, God sees who you were created to be.

"[God] calls things that are not as though they were." (Romans 4:17 NIV)

You can train your children to be soldiers by being a soldier in front of them. Through your commitment, you can defend your marriage against the death blow of divorce that is your enemy's intention. You can't do this without faith, and faith comes from knowing God's love. Pursue love as if your life depends on it—because it does. God's love and your dependence on Him alone is the cure for your weakness in the battle.

How can you rattle the gates in your daily life? Step up and be: be the wife, mother, daughter, and servant you're designed to be. There is a version of you who lives out her purpose with intentionality and passion. Tap into her. Don't allow the world to drag you along in one fruitless pursuit after another.

"No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier." (2 Timothy 2:4)

Upon salvation you were enlisted and empowered. God's love equips. Now it's time to engage. A loved woman lives out that love in such a way that her life accomplishes that which it was designed to accomplish. You were designed to reflect the love of God to others. It's love that rattles the gates. You are a soldier with an arsenal founded in love.

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world." (2 Corinthians 10:4 NIV)

Love draws us into intimate prayer.

Love guides us and teaches us through the Word.

Love supplies power through the Holy Spirit within us.

Love enables us to stand and gives boldness.

Love is a Person who walks with us daily.
Love is your dwelling place.

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13)

Can the same be said of you? Have you been with Jesus? Is it noticeable in your words and deeds? The main question is: Have you received His love as real and transformational?

In the first part of the chapter, I listed some disciplines of the faith that God has used to mature me over the years. Each of these has been covered in various areas of the previous chapters, but it can't hurt to take a fresh look at them and view them as personal directives that you may want to apply to your own life.

- Set aside time to read your Bible each day.
- Apply what God's Word says to your daily life.

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” (Joshua 1:8)

The first two disciplines on the list are covered well by this one verse. Notice how the final sentence assures us that reading and applying God's Word to our lives leads to prosperity and success. Spiritual growth *is* prosperity and success. This isn't about adding dollars and cents to your bank account. It's about deepening your faith, knowing God's love in a more real and relevant way, and learning to stand as a soldier of God.

- Allow the Spirit to begin the transformation process within you. Act on what God says rather than acknowledging it and then sticking to your old ways.

“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.” (James 1:23)

Though we could have used the Joshua verse above for this point, let's take a different approach. God's Word is often a mirror that shows us who we are deep down. On the surface is a reflection of what we want others to see, and we may even believe what they believe, but God's Word exposes us to us. When faced with me, the real me that I don't allow others to see or even acknowledge myself, I am given a choice: I can agree with God that change is necessary, or I can go on my superficial little way and keep the worst of me buried. Soon enough that flash of light dims, and I forget. My forgetfulness and unwillingness to make improvements produce little more than immature, bitter fruit. However, my willingness to change grows me.

- Pursue God's love.

“We love Him because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19)

Don't make the mistake I made of setting out to love God first. I wasted so much time thinking the burden was on me. Pursue His love for you. As you read and learn and grow, His love will settle into your belief system.

- Set yourself apart, as much as you can, from the world's influence through what you watch, listen to, and who you allow to influence you.

“Joshua told the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you.’” (Joshua 3:5 NIV)

The word consecrate, also translated as sanctify, means to set yourself apart as holy. We should look and act and talk differently than the world surrounding us. Like me, I’m sure there are times when you look and sound like the world. Our actions and words are driven by what we allow to shape our thoughts. Read more Bible, and you think more Bible-y (yeah, I know that’s not a word). Watch tons of TV and movies, and you will walk and talk like unbelievers. Same goes for what you read and the music you listen to. Remember, Jesus isn’t the only one who asks you to dance. On a daily basis, the world does too. You must choose with whom you will dance and to what tune, the world’s cacophony or God’s love song.

- Begin to take tiny trust-steps, then next thing you know, you will be willing to take larger ones.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Teach that class. Volunteer at the shelter. Share the Gospel with your neighbor. God is whispering a call for you to follow Him in a way only you can hear. Deep down, you know what that is. Trust-steps are some of the most frightening of all the dance steps. We stumble and get it wrong once or twice, then give up altogether. A few stumbles don’t ruin the dance. Try again to step out in faith in an area that stretches you and grows you and sometimes scares the living daylights out of you.

Can I tell you a little secret? The first time I stood up to speak at a women’s conference, I peed a little. No kidding. Later I realized it was just a drop, but while I spoke, I was certain it was, like, really there and noticeable. The best part of the story is what God did as a result. (I’m so glad we’re friends, so I can share the TMI stuff with you.) My entire focus was on my pants, so much so that I wasn’t at all nervous. The Spirit took over and was in control of what I said. I had women come up to me afterward and tell me what my words had meant to them, so clearly it was God and not me. It’s hysterical now, but that day I thought I’d die.

Moral of the story: I trusted in God and found Him faithful. After that, I knew the One who called me to speak would be there no matter what, and even take over when my mind was, um, elsewhere. You can trust Him too.

You have gates to rattle, a job to do, a battle to fight. I’m proof that God can and will do miraculous things in a life when it’s surrendered to Him. The battle is His; you just need to position yourself, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD (2 Chronicles 20).

RATTLE TAKEAWAY

Key Point:

You are intended to rattle the gates, not for the gates to rattle you.

- 1) Are you a threat to the dark world? Would you say you live your life rattling the gates? If you do, in what ways? Examples may be praying for others, encouraging others, speaking truth, answering your call, etc.

- 2) Are you easily rattled? If so, in what areas of your life are you most often affected: areas of service, your marriage, children, career? Give examples.

- 3) Are there ways you allow or enable the enemy's continued attacks due to your actions or inactions? How so?

- 4) We often give the enemy power over us without realizing it. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. How can putting on this armor daily defend you from future assaults?

Key Point:

You are destined to be a soldier, made for battle, not a babe in the faith.

Read 1 Samuel 17. Because David knew who he was and was confident in the Lord, he stood as a soldier and was able to take on a giant when the babes dressed as soldiers were cowering in the corner.

- 5) Babes crumble and cry. Soldiers fight back. Do you consider yourself a soldier, a babe, or somewhere in between? Explain your answer.

- 6) During a season of attack, even soldiers can be knocked down and out. The longer you walk with the Lord, are you able to stand more quickly, or do you stay relegated to the sidelines?

- 7) Perspective matters. How can you view the enemy's attacks in a positive light? How can they indicate you are indeed on the battlefield, right where you belong?

- 8) 1 Samuel 13:14 explains why David was able to go on the offensive against Goliath. How can being a woman after God's own heart make you an offensive and not simply a defensive soldier?

- 9) How would you describe an offensive vs. defensive Christian? What are some traits of each?

Offensive

Defensive

Key Point:

God's love enables you to stand with boldness.

- 10) Read Gideon's story in Judges 6. Do you feel like "just a normal girl" with little to offer? Explain below.

- 11) Both David and Gideon had to get beyond how others saw them and how they saw themselves in order to live in the truth of how God saw them. Do you struggle with seeing the you God sees you to be?

- 12) Is there someone in your life you see as "real," someone you know who is bold and has genuinely been transformed by God's love? What do they exhibit that you want for your own life?

The Battle is His

- 13) Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-22. In verse 21, what words did the people sing?

Because they knew by experience that God loved them, they were willing to join Him in the battle, even when they knew they were about to face a multitude. In verse 22, we see that their singing and praising prompted God's actions on their behalf.

- 14) How does knowing God's love enable you to live out your call and take steps of faith onto the battlefield?
