

**Introduction:** “We Couldn’t Have Done It Without You!” Those words are used as an advertising gimmick to flatter customers in many cases. A boss who gets a bonus and extra vacation for his team’s success will often share his wealth with a simple office party the lone cake says “I Couldn’t Have Done It Without You!”

In contrast, we labor in God’s service and turn our thankful hearts to him with the words “We Couldn’t Have Done It Without You” on our lips. The motivation for our labor is the fact that God ensures the success! **Because God guarantees the church’s success, you must faithfully do kingdom work.**

**I. The church’s success is guaranteed by Jesus’ character. (13-17).**

**A. Jesus’ true character often contradicts popular ideas about Him (13-14).**

**Explanation:** Having taken his disciples away from the bustle of life to a quiet retreat at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks them a pointed question: “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” The disciples suggest a handful of complimentary titles. People recognize the uniqueness of Jesus ministry. However, as is often the case, popular opinion about Jesus falls short of real accuracy.

**B. Jesus’s true character is revealed by God (15-17).**

**Explanation:** “Who do *you all* say that I am?” This question and its answer are particularly climactic at this point of Matthew’s gospel. Matthew has been recording people’s responses to Jesus: “Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?” (13.54). “This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead” (14.2). “Truly you are the Son of God” (14.33). “The Pharisees were offended” (15.12). “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David” (15.22). “Great crowds came to him” (15.30). This is the first recorded outright confession of Jesus’ messiahship. He is the long awaited Anointed One who would deliver Israel. “The living God” was an Old Testament phrase that emphasized Yahweh’s exclusivity and superiority over lifeless idols. The source of Peter’s statement is divine: not flesh and blood, but God himself!

**Application:** Too often, we think of “church” as “stuff that happens at HBC” and we tend to confine passages like this one to what “Heritage Bible Church” is trying to do, and we forget to apply Christ’s promise personally.

Do you know Christ well enough for Him to show up in your actions and intentions? Most “busy-ness” and “schedule chaos” is just laziness and bad priorities. We don’t run out of time to spend with God, we just choose to do a lot of other things. Jesus’ promise to build His church comes right on the heels of Peter’s accurate statement about who Jesus is: we need to know Jesus. Not just what other people say about Jesus, but Jesus himself. “Treating other things as more important than God” = *idolatry*.

**II. The church’s success is guaranteed by Jesus’ power (18-19).**

**A. Jesus enables his servants to expand the kingdom (18-19a).**

**Explanation:** A difficult interpretational question: what *rock* was he referring to? The rock is Peter, but this passage has nothing to do with establishing a papacy. Peter was

speaking for the group of apostles, answering the question that Christ had posed to all of them.

The first responsibility that Christ gives Peter is using the “keys of the kingdom of heaven.” Keys represent authority to grant entrance (Isa 22.22). Peter filled this role by preaching the Pentecost sermon as the church came into being (Acts 2). He confirmed the salvation of the Samaritans (Acts 8) and first preached to the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10). Peter used his responsibility to open the door and expand Christ’s church.

**B. Jesus enables his servants to lead in the kingdom (19b).**

**Explanation:** The second responsibility given to Peter is to *bind and loose*. Rabbinic use of the words “bind” and “loose” describes allowed and forbidden actions. “Whatever” (not “whomever”) indicates that these actions deal with things and behavior, not people. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) is a good example of Peter and the apostles exercising their authority to define behavior for the church. It is based on heavenly realities: whatever Peter looses and binds will have been loosed or bound in heaven. God’s enabling of Peter is what guarantees the success of this delegated responsibility.

**Application:** Jesus actively and continually participates in and guides our ministry, guaranteeing His kingdom’s success. Yet we so often choose substitutes for His enabling work in us. Tradigin, innovation, behavior modification, organization, programs... Those aren’t inherently wrong. But they’re not a substitute for Christ-empowered transformation! The bottom-line for success is Christ’s enabling grace.

**Conclusion:** Jesus’ promise stands on the firm foundation of who He is as our Savior and God. The promise is fulfilled by His power at work in us. Though day-by-day battles are both difficult and discouraging, we will win the battle! The Right Man is indeed on our side and, in Him, our striving will not be losing! His name is “Lord of Hosts” and He will most certainly win the battle. Whether our kingdom work appears to be small scale or large, God has willed his truth to triumph through us.