

## 252. The Office of the Keys.

**Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.** *John 20, 23.*

The keys are a symbol of power. A key is used to open or close a door. We must think of heaven as a large house with a door. The Office of the Keys is the right and power to open and close that door in the house of the heavenly Father, or, in plain language, the right and power to forgive and retain sins. Why, then, is this power called the Office of the Keys? Because by the remission of sins heaven is opened, and by the retention of sins heaven is closed. Christ says, Matt. 18, 18: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The only means which the Church possesses for the regeneration of the world is the Word of God. Being the power of the Word of God, the Office of the Keys comprises the power to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments, especially the power to remit and to retain sins. The Church has no other power, no temporal power, no power of the sword, no worldly means of enforcing any law or statute. It has no right to compel men by force to cease from sin. Its aim must not be to work for outward reforms and social improvement. The only power the Church has is the power of the Spirit of God, a spiritual power; its aims are spiritual – the conversion of the heart. Its means are spiritual – the power of the Word: the Law of God, which threatens the impenitent sinner, and the Gospel, which forgives the penitent. Where that does not avail, the Church can do no more for man.

This doctrine of the Office of the Keys is one of special interest and importance because there are so many who have a very wrong idea of the mission and power of the Church. Considering particularly the false claims of Antichrist, this matter can hardly be touched upon too often. The mission and power of the Church is to proclaim the saving Gospel of Christ, namely, to forgive the sins of the penitent sinner and to retain the sins of the impenitent according to the command of Christ.

## Prayer.

O Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior and Redeemer, we give Thee most hearty thanks that Thou didst not only by Thy perfect obedience and innocent suffering and death obtain for us the remission of sins, but didst also, with the Office of the Keys, entrust this treasure to the Christian Church, instituting the holy ministry, by which Thy gifts should be administered and applied to us in order that no penitent sinner ever might be without comfort. As it is not in our power, however, to repent, we beseech Thee to give to all first the knowledge of sin and thereupon true faith, which lays hold of Thee and Thy grace. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Abide, O dear Redeemer,  
Among us with Thy Word  
And thus now and hereafter  
True peace and joy afford.

This devotion is one of 318 taken from *Daily Bread* by F. E. Pasche, published by CPH in 1926, but now in the public domain. They have been copied and reformatted by Rev. Bruce G. Ley and made available for distribution by pastors and missionaries.

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