

254. To Whom the Office of the Keys is Given.

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound In heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed In heaven. For where two or three are gathered together In My name, there am I In the midst of them. *Matt. 18, 18.20.*

We are not to believe that the above commission was given only to the twelve disciples or to them and their successors. There is no hint here or anywhere in the New Testament of any such successor, and the very nature and structure of the commission forbids any such interpretation. Whomsoever Christ sends out to do the work which He came to do in the world, on Him Christ breathes, saying: "Receive the Holy Ghost," and to him He gives the power to remit and to retain sins.

This power is given to the whole Church of Christ, to each member, not to some special one alone. Christ gave it to every local congregation in which true believers are present; for it was such a local church of which He said: "Tell it unto the church." Nor did He give this power to the Church only in the Apostolic Age. He would have all men come to the knowledge of the truth by the Word of Reconciliation, which is to be proclaimed to them. He said: "Go ye and teach all nations." The apostles, accordingly, preached the Word, and after their death their pupils, then constituting the Church, took up the message and handed it on to succeeding generations of the Church; and so the Word has come down the ages to us of the present day. The Office of the Keys is the particular church power which Christ has given to His Church on earth, to all its members, large and small, men, women, and children. All Christians are priests and kings, 1 Pet. 2, 9: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." As such they have the authority and power to loose and to bind.

And they must use this power. They must preach the Law, they must declare the Gospel. It is their duty to administer the Sacraments. They must close and open the gates of heaven. Publicly, however, not all Christians are called to bind or loose.

Prayer.

Merciful God and Father, we thank Thee that Thou hast bestowed upon Thy Church the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and we beseech Thee, grant us grace to comfort our souls with the remission of sins proclaimed by Thy servants, by sincere amendment of life continually to thank Thee for this unspeakably great gift and so to use it that we may ever remain in communion with Thee on earth and finally, with all the redeemed, glorify Thy name in the Kingdom of Glory. Amen.

Rejoice, then, ye sad hearted,
Who sit in deepest gloom,
Who mourn o'er joys departed,
And tremble at your doom.
Despair not, He is near you,
Yea, standing at the door,
Who best can help and cheer you
And bids you weep no more.

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