

255. How the Office of the Keys is Exercised.

No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. *Heb. 5, 4.*

The Christians, to whom Christ has given the Office of the Keys, or the power of the Word, should *make use* of this power. They should preach the Word of Christ to one another, the children should be baptized and taught, the Lord's Supper is to be administered.

No individual Christian in the Church, however, is the sole possessor of all the treasures comprised in the Office of the Keys; all Christians have an equal right to them. Hence no one must publicly exercise what belongs to all without the common consent of all; otherwise great confusion would result. Every Christian may *in private* comfort his brother with the Gospel of Christ or reprove him with the Law of God, administer emergency baptism, and the like; but the *public* functions of the office each Christian congregation should give to certain men qualified for the work by calling them expressly for this purpose. And what these called ministers of Christ do in their office they do in the name and in the stead of the congregation. Without such call no one should exercise these public functions. Rom. 10, 15 we read: "How shall they preach except they be *sent*?" And Heb. 5, 4: "No man taketh this honor unto himself but he that is *called* of God."

The apostles were called *directly* by Christ; but afterwards all pastors were elected by the congregation. So we read that the congregation at Jerusalem cast lots, and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. According to Acts 14, 23 the congregations in the apostolic days chose their ministers by raising their hands, thus designating their choice. And these men, who were called *indirectly*, by the congregation, – not directly, like the apostles of Christ, – also had a *divine call*. Therefore Paul said to the pastors of the church at Ephesus, who had been called by the congregation: "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the *Holy Ghost* hath made you overseers." And again, 1 Cor. 4, 1: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

Prayer.

Lord Jesus, with Thy visible presence removed, Thou wast henceforth to dwell among us in Thy Word and in the Sacraments instituted by Thee. Making these the place of Thy permanent abode and imparting through them all the fruit of Thy redemption, Thou hast committed them to Thy Church, yea, to every local congregation, as an everlasting inheritance, as the power of God for its own and the world's salvation. We heartily thank Thee that Thou hast instituted the ministerial office for our temporal and eternal welfare. Amen.

Sin's debt, that fearful burden,
Let not your souls distress;
Your guilt the Lord will pardon
And cover with His grace.
He comes, He comes, procuring
The peace of sin forgiven,
To all God's sons securing
Their part and lot in heaven.

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.

You may contact Rev. Ley at: pastorley@leychalet.com.

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