

THE USE OF THE KEYS AND CONFESSION

As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household.

The Keys

First: *What is the use of the keys?*

The use of the keys is that special power and right which Christ gave to his church on earth: to forgive the sins of penitent sinners but refuse forgiveness to the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written?

The holy evangelist John writes in chapter 20, “[Jesus] breathed on [his disciples] and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’ ”

The Public Use of the Keys

Second: *How does a Christian congregation use the keys?*

A Christian congregation with its called servant of Christ uses the keys in accordance with Christ’s command by forgiving those who repent of their sin and are willing to amend, and by excluding from the congregation those who are plainly impenitent that they may repent. I believe that when this is done, it is as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us himself.

Where is this written?

Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 18, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Confession

First: *What is confession?*

Confession has two parts. The one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the pastor as from God himself, not doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven.

Second: *What sins should we confess?*

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer.

But before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

Third: *How can we recognize these sins?*

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, employer, or employee? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you hurt anyone by word or deed? Have you been dishonest, careless, wasteful, or done other wrong?

Fourth: *How will the pastor assure a penitent sinner of forgiveness?*

He will say, "By the authority of Christ, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."¹

Luther, M. (2017). [Luther's Catechism: The Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, New International Version](#) (Anniversary Edition, pp. 11–12). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House.

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