

The Essential Keys

By Rev. Richard G. Moore

In our day it has become more and more common for many in the church to clamor for open doors. We mean by this that it becomes more common, also in the “Reformed Community”, to express that the doors of the church must stand open to all. And this is understandable for many openly teach that heaven’s gates are closed to none. The reasoning continues that because God is pleased to gather His children to heavenly glory through the church instituted on earth, the membership must be closed to no one, but stand invitingly open to all. The success of the fulfillment of the church’s calling is often measured by the number of members that can be enrolled. Thus it is not, in this conception, a matter of concern if there be differences of faith or understanding of the truth, as long as one is able to say he believes in Christ. And the question as to what Christ one believes no longer seems very important, whether it be Christ of your own imagination, or the Christ of God’s infallible Word. Scripture teaches that there shall be many false Christs who will put on sheep’s clothing. The church must ask: What Christ do you confess? It ought to be a question of true doctrine or false! However, true discipline, the true exercise of the keys of the kingdom is almost unheard of in our day. As long as one can “love”, as long as he is serious, the church embraces him, and he is received with joy. Further, there is a sad lack of concern in the church today for a Christian walk in penitence for sin. It is easy to confess with the mouth, but to live antithetically as Christ’s servant is another matter. The result is that as the exercise of the key power in the church is cast off, we find divorced and remarried persons, union members, drunkards, even homosexuals and like immoral people as members in full standing in the church, partaking of the holy sacraments under the smile of the officebearers. Of course, Christ fellowshipped with harlots and publicans, but that fellowship was with sinners brought to repentance. For the wicked, Christ has condemnation and closed doors as far as fellowship is concerned.

In our day there is a very deceitful movement under way based on the desire for outward unity and growth, which results in the removal of the key-power of Christ from the church institute. The result is inevitably that Christian discipline is not exercised, the preaching is diluted (sin is no longer mentioned, the wrath of God against the wicked is not preached), and the Lord’s Table is opened to all without reservation. Thus the marks of the true church disappear! When this happens the wicked and worldly take control of the church and the true cause of the church is lost. When worldliness enters the church she loses her distinctive character of holiness, and consequently, is emptied of all blessing and grace. May we then be gravely concerned when this wicked inclination comes to the surface.

God’s blessing rests upon those that are righteous in Christ and who by His grace walk, manifesting the holiness of Christ. Unto this end Christ exercises the keys of the kingdom in the midst of His Body, the Church. By them He maintains His people in holiness and righteousness. Thus the church may not fail to employ them!

This key-power Christ gives to His Church through the apostles, of this we read in Matt. 16:19 “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” The church employing properly the keys of the kingdom, is a means Christ uses in opening, but also in closing, the kingdom. When the keys are properly exercised some are efficaciously drawn into the kingdom of God, but others are powerfully excluded from the kingdom of heaven. The church that fails to exercise the keys to close the doors, never really open them to anyone!

To properly understand this we must remember that the church is the body of Christ. In her walk she is often very impure because of sin, but in Christ she is redeemed and holy. Her sins are forgiven and there is now, therefore, no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1. Upon her for Christ’s sake, God bestows all spiritual blessings and all the riches of grace. And He calls her unto holy communion and fellowship as His covenant people. But because of this the church finds herself a stranger in the midst of the world. And with that world she is to have no fellowship. True - the church must preach, and that, in the midst of the world. She must preach the command of God to repent, but she may not enter into fellowship with the world of sin and darkness. For she has nothing in common with that world. “What concord hath Christ with Belial? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? Wherefore come out thou from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” cf. II Cor. 6:15 & 17. Always Satan and the powers of darkness would destroy the church. And in this the devil is very cunning and

deceitful. He would enter the church to bring her to darkness. He would bring false doctrine and carnal life within her to destroy her. Woe unto the church that enters fellowship with the world!

Christ exercises the keys in the midst of the Church to preserve her and gather her. May we not forsake to employ them. Oh! Make no mistake, Christ never fails to exercise the keys unto the salvation of His people. But the question is whether we will stand and continue to stand in the truth? Will we stand in the line of faith, or will we follow the trend of modernism, casting off the yoke of Christ.

Where Christ maintains His true church, He exercises the keys of the kingdom and they are powerful. By them, our Lord, through the preaching and discipline powerfully causes some to come into the kingdom of His God, but also actually closes the door to others who manifest they are not of Christ. The preaching of the living and abiding Word expels these from the church. No invitation to leave is extended to them, even as there is no invitation to enter. But the power of the keys draws or casts away!

The reason the keys are so powerful is because Christ exercises them in the kingdom of His Father. He opens and shuts the kingdom to such as God hath ordained. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Rev. 3:7.

It has pleased God that in Christ the keys of the kingdom are exercised in the church as it becomes manifest on earth. Christ calls officebearers to exercise christian discipline and ambassadors, ministers, to preach the gospel. The two go together with discipline dependent upon the true preaching for its proper exercise. The church through her preacher is, therefore, to preach the Word as a key in the kingdom. Thus, she must proclaim the Gospel of Christ at all times, in all seasons. She must always preach the glad tidings of salvation, that is in the grace and blood of Jesus Christ. The church must proclaim that salvation is alone through His blood and of grace to such as are the called of the Father. But also she must preach that there is condemnation and wrath for those who repent not of their sin. It is the true antithetical preaching, the preaching of Christ, a savor of life unto life and a savor of death unto death, that truly manifests the proper exercise of the key-power of the Word. And this Word is effectual to all hearing, either to salvation or damnation.

Where we find this preaching and the attendant discipline, God's children are not merely told about the blessings of Christ's atonement, but they are actually made partakers of the blessings of heaven. They are comforted and have peace. The keys keep the church faithful and gives peace that abides till the day of the Lord.