

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

A Word of Instruction for the Pope and Doctor Pusey

A SERMON

Preached on Lord's Day Morning September 18th, 1859

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD

Volume 1 Number 43

“And I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:19

No keys were ever given to Peter but the truths of the everlasting gospel; they are the keys which were given to Peter, and which were given to all the apostles, and which are given to all the saints of God. Yet there may be, and indeed there is clearly a reason why in an official respect Peter was distinguished from the rest of the apostles; and why the Savior spoke to Peter upon this matter with more particular emphasis than to any other of the apostles; first for this reason, that Peter was the man who was to be the means of opening the kingdom of heaven on the day of Pentecost to the Jews; and secondly, he was the man that was to open the kingdom of heaven, as we see, at Caesarea, to the Gentiles; and therefore, in that two-fold special and official sense, Peter had the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and yet at the same time these keys, being the truths of the gospel, were given to all the apostles, and they are given to all the people of God; for the Lord's word runs in that order and form, that he will put his laws, which means the same thing, into the minds of his people, and will write them in their hearts, and bring them into the possession of the truth as it is in Jesus. There is then this morning only two departments that our little space of time will allow us to attend to. I shall first notice, *what is implied by the keys of the kingdom of heaven*; I will then secondly show, *how Peter came by these keys*. The Lord in our text says, “I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven;” and it will be our business to ascertain how Peter came by the truths of the gospel, which are here thus referred to; and we hope when we come to that part to trace out something analogous between the way in which he came by the truths of the gospel, and the way in which we have come by the truths of the gospel; for if we take the figure literally, if you have the key of a mansion, the question is how you came by that key; if you have the key of certain premises, the question is how you came by that key; so that we see, in the literal view, there is something very solemnly important in this. So, if we profess the truths of the gospel, and I think it will manifest itself as we go along, that the keys here spoken of mean the truths of the gospel; if we profess the truths of the gospel, it is an important matter, essentially so, to ascertain how we came by those truths. And if we have any doubt upon our minds as to the meaning of the keys or

the key of the kingdom of heaven, I think that matter is made very clear in the 11th of Luke; where the Savior said, "Woe unto you, lawyers! for you have taken away the key of knowledge." Now we know that these lawyers were the professed interpreters of the law of God; these men were professed interpreters of the law of God; and in their interpretation they had set God's word aside, and had put their own constructions, conceits, and traditions in the place thereof. "Woe unto you, lawyers; for you have taken away the key of knowledge;" and I think none of you could question but that the blessed gospel of the grace of God is the key of knowledge; that is the key by which we are led into a saving knowledge of the blessed God; "You entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in you hindered." And so, we see in our day men that preach what they call the gospel, which is really not the gospel; and thus they are the means of keeping the seeking soul for a time out of the liberty of the kingdom of heaven; but the day will come when the Lord will deliver that soul from that delusion, and will bring it into the blessed liberty of the Gospel as it is in Christ Jesus.

First. I notice then, first, WHAT IS IMPLIED BY THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. It will imply, I think admission, admission into the kingdom of the blessed God. Here then is a soul made alive from the dead; a sinner made sensible of what he is as a sinner. He sees that he has been hitherto in darkness, that he has hitherto been in the kingdom of Satan, that he has been hitherto under the wrath of God, under the curse of the law, under the powers of darkness; such an one then seeks admission into the kingdom of God. Now, what is the key that can let him in? The key is this: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved;" so that the precious blood of the dear Savior is the way out of prison, out of the state we are in; and the way of admission to God's favor manifestly, the way of admission into life, the way of admission into light; the way of admission into the grace, and mercy, and blessing, and presence of the blessed God. I think, this is a self-evident matter. So then, bless the name of the Lord, while the poor sinner is inquiring, "What shall I do to be saved?" the Lord gives him this key: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Why, such an one will say, what suitable terms these are; this unlocks everything; it is the key of life; truly it is the key of salvation; it is the key of everything that I can need; it enables me to escape all that I want to escape, and brings me into the possession of all that which I should like to possess. Our text is in the plural: "I will give unto you the keys" the several truths of the gospel lead us into the several departments, into the several mysteries of the kingdom of God; so that if we keep one truth back, then we keep that mansion, I was going to say, closed; for the Savior says, "In my Father's house are many mansions;" if we keep back, for instance, the key of electing grace, then we keep people out of the mansion of eternal election; some people do not like that truth, but those that are the children of God will be led to see their need of it, and will rejoice to be led into it. So that all the different truths of the gospel lead us into the several departments of the covenant of grace, into the several departments of the kingdom of Christ, and into the several and wondrous mysteries of God's everlasting love. *Right.* So, my hearer, if you lay hold by precious faith of the blessed truth, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved;" if that truth with you is not a plaything, not a speculative thing, not a mere article of your creed, held in your hand or your head; not the mere sounding brass and tinkling cymbal; but if that truth with you be a living and a solemn reality; then this is coming by the keys rightly, this is deriving the truth from the Lord himself. You see faith has its right; and hence, it is said, "Unto them which believed in his name gave he power to become the sons of God." This right, you observe, is a given right; it is the Lord that has given the right. And right will mean power; for there is great power in right; because if I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and

that faith is the confidence of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, then that faith will prove that I am one of the seed of Abraham; for they that be of this faith, this living faith in God's Christ, in God's truth, they are the children of Abraham; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. So that come in rightly, and your right to possession is established by the mediatorial work of the dear Savior. There is something in that which I frequently run over; and I like very much to range over that blessed truth in contrast to the first Adam. The first Adam had a right to what he possessed until he sinned; but he sinned, and therefore, forfeited that right, and the right of all his posterity too. The Jews by divine gift and dealing with them had a right to the land of Canaan all the time they fulfilled the conditions of that covenant, that God made with them; but they sinned, broke the covenant, and therefore, forfeited their right. Ah, my hearers, what shall we say to the goodness of that blessed God that has established the welfare, the eternal welfare of never dying souls upon a basis corresponding with their necessities? The right is established upon the perfection of the dear Savior; and nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ doing something wrong in his life; nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ omitting in his life something that he ought to have done; nothing short of something deficient in his death, something superfluous in his death; something wrong in his death; nothing, in a word, short of something wrong in Jesus Christ, can invalidate this right. All the sins of which they were the subjects in the first Adam could not touch this divine right; all the sins of which they have been the subjects personally before called by grace, cannot touch this divine right; and all the infirmities and faults of which they are the subjects after they know the Lord, cannot touch this divine right; they are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, It is a sweet truth we have been reading this morning, and the words were very sweet to me on looking at them, "Behold, O God, our shield!" and I was led to these words, and they seemed sweet to me in this way: it is said that John looked upon Jesus as he walked; and lingered for a moment, and took that in a figurative sense; I thought, there is not a child of God under heaven that at all times will bear to be looked upon as he walks, for all of them have their faults and drawbacks; but I thought the blessed Redeemer could always be looked upon as he walked; he never stepped awry, never took a wrong step; and I thought within myself, What am I to do? In came the words, "Behold, O God, our shield; and look upon the face of your Anointed." Why, this knowledge of the blessed Redeemer causes love to spring up in our souls to him; we see how firmly our right stands: that it stands in the sinlessness and perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ, secured by the immutability of the blessed God; for "He is of one mind, and none can turn him." Then it will mean also *safety*. A key is very frequently used for safety. And so, the Israelites, when they were to be delivered from the angel of death, the blood of the lamb was to be their mystic key, that was to be their safety; they were to lock the door, as it were, with that key, and that was to make them safe. And the prophet Isaiah, in his 26th chapter, seems to refer to something of this kind; where the Lord, by the prophet, has these words, and very beautiful words they are, he says, "Come, my people, enter you into your chambers, and shut your doors about you; hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over past." Ah, when we can enter into the Rock, Christ Jesus, and feel we are shut in and say, Ah, we are safe here, and the enemy can no more reach or injure us here than the flood could touch Noah in the ark. What a blessed state is this! Give, me then, these three things, give me this admission, give me this right, and give me this safety.

Secondly. I now, in the next place, go on to show THE WAY IN WHICH PETER CAME BY THE KEYS; the way in which he came by the truth, I think we need not doubt; in fact, it is a matter beyond all dispute, that the keys here mean the truths of the everlasting gospel. Is it not by the

truths of the gospel that we are brought into the kingdom of God; and is it not by that precious faith which the Lord works in our hearts in Christ Jesus that we have an evidential right to this kingdom of God; and is it not by the truths of the gospel, that is, the Lord dealing with us according to the blessed promises of his word, that we have safety? I know of no other key; and when it can be proved that these are the truths advocated by the Pope, we will admit that he has the keys; when it can be proved that these are the truths advocated by Puseyism, then we will admit that the Puseyite has the keys. These are the keys, then, the great truths of the everlasting gospel. We shall not be able to finish this subject this morning, because I shall have in my next sermon to show what the key of the man of sin is, and what he does with that key; not that I am going to take up your time unprofitably, but there is a scripture upon it which I think will be profitable for us to notice; and then I shall have to show how the Savior in his mission meets that man of sin, and gains the victory. However, I now notice how Peter came by these keys; that is, how he came by the truths of the gospel; that is what I mean by his coming by these keys. First, then, he came by the truth, I may as well now use the singular for the sake of convenience, he came by the truth, by the Lord's adopting Peter, accepting Peter, and manifesting himself to Peter. I refer now to the first, then. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, found Peter, and said, "We have found the Messiah" Andrew had the key. Had you but asked Andrew, what do you mean by the Messiah? He would have said, I mean him who is described and set forth by the prophet Daniel; that Messiah that should finish transgression; we have found him. Ah, that is the one thing needful, my hearer, to be able to say that you have found him, that is everything. The Messiah, that should finish transgression, that should make an end of sin; we have found him; the Messiah, that should make reconciliation for iniquity; we have found him; the Messiah, that should bring in everlasting righteousness; we have found him; the Messiah, that should seal up the vision and prophecy; that should confirm the prophecies of the prophets, confirm the promises; we have found him. And we learn from another scripture that Peter knew he was a sinner; so much so that he said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man;" ah, but stop, Peter, we have found the Messiah; you did not know that. Ah, but I am a sinful man. Well, we have found the Messiah. Who is the Messiah? Why, he that puts an end to sin, that finishes transgression. Ah, then, I will no longer say, "Depart from me;" for that is just what I want. And Andrew had to use no arguments to get Peter to come; ah, if it be the Messiah, that will do for a sinner like me; I should be afraid to go if it were not the Messiah that you have found. The Lord knows how to adapt the character of the Savior to your necessities; the Lord knows how to adapt the special revelations of his mercy to your necessities. "We have found the Messiah." And Peter came, I will go, sinner as I am; I will go, fearful as I am; I will go, swearing fisherman as I have been I will go, ill bred, illiterate, ignorant, as I am; Galilean as I am; I will go, mixed, mongrel sort of breed as I am, neither Jew nor Gentile, yet partaker of both. Now, my hearer, this same blessed Savior is the same now as he was then; he is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Peter came. "You are Simon." Simon means *hearing*, you are a hearer. Yes, Lord, I have heard that my brother Andrew has found the Messiah; and I know a little of my brother Andrew's history; he has not been much better than I have; he has been very much like me; the same occupation, and the same bad man that I have been and if he has found the Messiah, I felt that I might not despair. No, that you shall not; for "you shall be called Cephas; which is by interpretation, a stone." That is the new name I will give you; a good solid name; one that will wear well; one that will stand the storm. It will not take much to blast people's names, you see, under the sun; if people get hold of some materials with which they can blast your name, they will do it. But the Lord gave Peter a good solid name, that would wear well, a new name. So, my hearer, the Lord calls his people saints, and they are saints forever; that is a name that will wear well; he

calls them righteous, and they are righteous forever; it is a name that wears well; he calls them sons, and they are sons forever; he calls them kings, and they are kings forever; he calls them priests, and they are priests forever; it is a name that will wear well. A new name: that let Peter into the secret of something new. What a vast field does that one idea, a new name, open up; why, it conveys the idea of a new heart, a new and living way, a new covenant, a new state, a new earth, new heavens; a new song; everything new; old things passed away, and all things become new. That, then is step the first by which he came by the keys. Now this new name indicated his adoption. It was customary in that day, when people were adopted into a family to give them a new name; or when adopted to some office of dignity, they received a new name. So, the Lord makes use sometimes of human customs to instruct us in eternal things; he gave Peter a new name; therein was Peter's adoption signified, and the precious assurance given to him that the Lord would take care of him. Now what say you to this, my hearers? You seemed to look quite pleased, many of you, when I was repeating the words, "We have found the Messiah;" as though you were saying to yourselves, ah, that is just what I want; that just suits me. And that brought Peter to Christ; and if that is bringing you to Christ this morning, if while I was speaking you were saying, ah, that is the Savior I need; that is the Messiah; that is the Person in whom is all my hope then you are coming by the key rightly; yes, you are you understand it; you are not coming by it ignorantly. You would not give a key to a maniac, to a person that has no idea of its use. But this great truth, "We have found the Messiah," Peter understood it; it brought him to Christ; he received a new name; and he never lost that name from that day to this; and never will. But that name would mean also that Peter would wear well; and so, he did too; and he has not worn out yet, and never will; oh no. There are plenty will be glad when I am worn out, and gone to the grave, and some few sorry. We must all wear out under the sun; but I do not mind that if I wear out well, and if to the very last my spiritual eye shall not have grown so dim but that I can see the same beauty in Jesus that I have ever seen; and if my spiritual force of faith in him be not abated; I care but little then about the outward man while the inward man is renewed day by day. So that after the flesh we must wear out, droop, and die; but after the spirit we shall never wear out, but appear at the end of the world and at the end of incalculable cycles of ages as fresh and as young as we shall at the resurrection day. Peter then came by the truth rightly, came by the keys rightly; that is step the first. Now we will take another. There were various opinions concerning Jesus Christ; and the Savior, in order to bring to light, or rather to hand to Peter another key, besides the one we have mentioned, asked the question, "Whom do men say that I am?" Well, Lord, we do not feel much union of soul to men in their opinions of you; they complain of us for going too far, and we complain of them for not going far enough. Well, what do they say? He knew what they said better than his disciples did; because it was possible, they might make a mistake, but he could not. Well, "Some say you are Elias, some that you are Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Ah, that was the world's highest opinion of Christ, that was their best opinion of him; you know what their worst was; I would not spoil my discourse this morning by naming what their worst was; but that was their opinion. "Well, whom do you say that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ." Ah, that is the Messiah; he had not forgotten that; just mark that. You are aware that the word Messiah is a Hebrew word; and the word Christ is a Greek word, both meaning the same thing. So, when first brought to Christ, he said he had found the Messiah and he seemed so to dwell upon that name that he could not forget it, "You are the Christ," the Messiah, the Anointed! Do you know anything more, Peter? Yes, I have learned something else now. What is that? "The Son of the living God." I now see that you are the Son of the living God; that there is a people chosen in you, blest in you, accepted in you, joint heirs with you; that you are come to own your brethren,

and that you will not be ashamed to own them. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." I have another key now. And then notice another Scripture just after this. We read in the 6th chapter of John, some months after this circumstance, as you may discover by tracing out the circumstances chronologically, that when the dear Savior had spoken out that wondrous discourse recorded in the 6th of John, "Many of his disciples from that time went back and walked no more with him. "Then said Jesus unto the twelve, will you also go away?" Now just notice Peter's words. He could not forget this character of the Savior that first encouraged him to come to him, the Messiah. "Lord, to whom shall we go? you have the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that you are that Christ;" just now it was the Christ, but now is it *that* Christ, *that* Messiah, *that* character that brought a poor sinner like me; "we believe and are sure that you are that Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter had this key; he did not part with it; and you thus find him using the same key in the 6th of John which he used in the 16th of Matthew. You may almost imagine the enemy saying, Ah, Peter, how did you come by that key? give it to me; you talk of his being Christ, the Son of God, Peter, and you think that you are a Christian, that you belong to the Lord. You have no business with that key; give it to me. You may imagine something of that. Ah, the Savior steps in; do not listen to the enemy, Peter; I tell you this; that you are blessed; for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but my Father which is in heaven. Never would you have so prized me as the great Sin-bearer; never would you have so loved me as the Son of God and spoken out in the very fulness of your heart in this way, "You are that Christ, the Son of the living God;" had it not been revealed to you by my Father which is in heaven. "You are the Son of the living God;" as though Peter should say, Lord, while you live, I can never die. That is step the second; first, he is brought into adoption; and another step puts him into the sonship of the dear Savior.

I will now come to step the third: 20th chapter of John, "And Jesus breathed on them." That action, of course, must be understood figuratively, perhaps he breathed on them to denote to them that the Holy Spirit was a Spirit of life, a Spirit of breathing, to breathe life into them from time to time, to breathe fresh life into them, so that they should never be out of breath, as their day was, so their strength should be. "Receive you the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained." Whose sins did they remit? Here is a man brought to receive the very truths of which I have spoken this morning; and when the apostle saw sinners brought to receive these truths, he said, Ah, you are little children; I can see you are little children; I can see you are desiring the sincere milk of the word; I can see you are believing in Jesus Christ; I can see that you are children; and therefore, being children, your sins are remitted; so "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you." Therefore, they could not forgive the wrong person; they could not proclaim the wrong person forgiven; the persons whom they proclaimed forgiven were persons who were manifested to their consciences as being forgiven by the grace of God, while the persons themselves perhaps had not yet realized that forgiveness, which the apostles saw was set to their account, and which in the Lord's own time, they should realize. On the other hand, those who gave evidence that they were enemies to the truth, those sins they retained. That is the way I understand that scripture: they proclaimed the forgiveness of sins on the ground of personal evidence in the person; and they proclaimed the retention, the present retention of sins, on the ground of evidence in the person. That I will call then step the third. Here is discrimination of character; and this is a most important matter. Why, it is everything, my hearer. When you die, you will die either in your sins or in Christ; you cannot die in both, it must be the one or the other: you must either die with a living faith in him, or in blindness and ignorance of him, and enmity against him.

Fourth. In the 2nd chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, here is an increase of keys given. See how he came by them all, all by the Holy Ghost, just the same as all the Lord's people come into the truth; for though we are not all called to be ministers, we are all called to know the truth, defend the truth, stand out for the truth, live the truth, rejoice in the truth, glory in the truth, and to be the means, in the Lord's hands, of handing the same truths uncorrupted down to those that shall follow after us. Now step the fourth, (2nd of Acts) when the blessed Spirit descended, what were the keys Peter used there? Sixteenth Psalm chiefly; the death of the dear Savior; "You will not leave my soul in hell." That was the only soul that ever went into hell and came out again; the only soul that ever went into the hell of God's wrath, and came out again. "You will not leave my soul in hell." you will leave the soul of the rich man in hell; you will leave the soul of Judas in hell; you will leave the souls of the lost in hell; but "you will not leave my soul in hell." He had atoned for all the sin that created that hell; he had gone to the end of the curse; agonized out the last suffering; drank the last drop of that bitter, bitter cup. "You will not leave my soul in hell." Here is One who has survived hell, drank hell dry, overcome hell, destroyed death, brought life and immortality to light. That is one of the keys that Peter used on that wondrous day. Then he took the key of Christ's resurrection, and enlarged nicely upon that: "This same Jesus, who you killed, and hanged on a tree, has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right-hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he has shed forth this, which we now see and hear." The resurrection and exaltation of Christ: 16th Psalm: "You will show me the path of life;" it means Christ's resurrection; "In your presence is fulness of joy: at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore." "I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Compare the Lord's promise, then, friends, with the Lord's dealing, and see how true the Lord was to his word.

But lastly, and that must be all we must dwell upon this morning; the last instance I name, and that will run itself into another instance which I must not name this morning, is that in the 10th of Acts. There was a mystery that Peter could not unlock till he had the key. Peter went to the house top and prayed. Every Christian has certain besetments and trials that he does not care to tell to any but the Lord, and it would be very imprudent if he did; many things that may stagger men, but not the Lord; many things that men cannot understand, but the Lord can; he is the best secret keeper that ever was, you may depend upon it; "Pray to your Father in secret." And while Peter was there, he fell into a trance; and there was a vision; a sheet was let down from heaven, having in it four-footed beasts, wild beasts, creeping things; that is, worms, snakes, and vipers; fowls of the air, birds of prey. What a loathsome scene! "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." Oh dear, no; I am too much of a Jew for that; I cannot understand this; I cannot make out who or what these can be. And this was done three times, and then the whole was drawn up again into heaven. May I take the liberty of asking a question or two here? Who put these creatures into that vessel? Who kept them there? Why was it that the vessel came three times to Peter? And who was it drawing them all up into heaven at last? Did the creatures put themselves there? Did they keep themselves there? Did they draw themselves up, or have any hand in drawing themselves up? I merely ask the question, that is all. Why was it done three times? To show the three causes of salvation: the original, the mediatorial, and the efficient. Election came down, took us up; redemption came down, took us up; regeneration comes down, takes us up, draws us up, and goes drawing and drawing on till we are all in heaven, not one left, not one lost. May I ask another question? You see that worm crawling in that vessel; who turned that worm not only into a man, but into a saint of God? Do you

see that snake, that viper? Who turned that viper into a saint of God? Do you see that four-footed creature, that wild beast, those fowls of the air? Had they any hand, sir, in transforming themselves from that degradation into the dignity of sons of God, priests unto God, kings unto God? Ah, Peter, you want a key. I cannot make it out; I cannot unlock it. Peter, here are three men at the gate for you. Very well, Lord, I will go down; but I wanted to have said a few more things in prayer, Lord. Ah; I have got something for you to do; you have not time to say it now; I know what you were going to say; go down to the men. Then Peter began to get a little insight into the matter. Ah, the Lord has given me this key; "What God has cleansed, that call not you common, or unclean;" that is the key. Cleansed, Lord? What, are these creatures clean in your sight? Yes: for I have chosen them in my Son. Are these creatures clean in your sight? Yes: for they are washed and made clean in a Savior's blood. Are these creatures clean in you sight? Yes: by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; and I want to send you to Caesarea, that the Holy Ghost may be shed on them more abundantly.

"I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." I have briefly described what those keys are; but time is gone; I must say no more.