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Heidelberg Catechism / Matthew 16:13–19; Matthew 18:15–20

Outline:

1. First Key - The Preaching of the Gospel
 2. Second Key - Church/Christian Discipline
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Introduction

- Before becoming members, went IC with Pastor Lance
- "Two Keys of the Kingdom"... Is this the same as "5 Love Languages?"
- Where did this term "two keys of the kingdom" come from?

Context in the outline of Heidelberg Catechism

- Previous LD includes who should be or should not be admitted to the Lord's Supper
- How to keep back and exclude unbelievers and hypocrites, lest they profane the Sacrament (i.e., use of the two keys of the kingdom).
- Matthew 16:17-19.
 - Focus on verse 19: *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

"Keys of the kingdom of heaven"

- It is called the power of the keys from a metaphor, or form of speech borrowed from stewards, to whom are delivered the keys of the house in which they are stewards
- Relate/Apply: The house where the keys are used is the house of the living God (i.e., church), while the officebearers of the church are the stewards of God.

- Note: The text is not given to Peter alone, but to the apostles and the eventual leaders of the church
- (cf. Matthew 18:17 - *"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."*)
- Point: This is the power given by God to the church (i.e., admitting or excluding people from the kingdom of God)
 - Cf. Belgic Confession Article 28, *"outside of it (church) there is no salvation."*
 - While God can extraordinarily call his people through other means, he works ordinarily through the church and the means given to the church.
- So God has given into the hands of the church the "keys of the kingdom," that is—the **means** through which:
 - a. People are brought to salvation and fellowship with God, or
 - b. People are brought to condemnation (estrangement)
- Clarification:
 - A church may externally "shut" the kingdom of God from a person, God may still open the kingdom to him/her
 - Example: Preachers who condemn poor members, or simply because of political/relational reasons
 - Nevertheless, when the declaration of the church through the ordained representatives of God are **right according to the Word of God**, then such declaration of either salvation or condemnation is also internal—as though God himself did it to the very soul of the person.

[Transition]: Now what are these keys of the kingdom of heaven?

The Two Keys: Binding and Loosing

Consists of two parts:

- a. Preaching of the Gospel / Ministry of the Word

b. Christian/church discipline (which includes excommunication)

By this two, the church "opens and shuts," "binds and looses."

- "Bind" - Keep one from God's blessing. God's judgment remains
- "Loose" - Freed from God's condemnation. Given access to God's means of grace and fellowship

[Transition]: Now how do these keys opens or closes the kingdom of God? Sermon points/highlights

- 1st Key: The Preaching of the Gospel
- 2nd Key: Christian/Church Discipline (will spend more time on this)

Main Point 1: "First Key - The Preaching of the Gospel" (Ministry of the Word)

A. "Closes and Binds"

- The church "closes" the kingdom and "binds" one in God's judgment by the preaching of the Gospel, when the Word declares to people that **the wrath of God remains on them as long as they are unconverted.**
 - The Word of God preached by the church declares eternal condemnation as long as unbelievers (and hypocrites) remains unrepentant.
- **Example/Prove:**
 - While Paul's preaching the gospel among Jews in the synagogue, (READ Acts 13: 44-46)
 - Imply: In Paul's ministry of the Word, he's saying that when you reject this message, you bring judgment upon yourselves
 - Should we consider that as a mere external declaration by a representative of God? No.
 - Internal declaration/application of God himself:

- John 3:18 (Christ says) - *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."*
- Luke 13:3 & 5 - *"No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."*

- **Implication/Application:**

- **To unbelievers and hypocrites:** Until you repent and believe in the Lord Jesus... until you believe and embrace the truth of the gospel—you do not belong to the kingdom of God.
- When you hear... do not harden your heart... do not be unbelieving.
- Prayerfully consider these truths.

Now, at the same time, through the preaching of the Word (as key)...

B. "Opens and Looses"

- The church "opens" the kingdom and "looses" ("frees") one from God's judgment, when the Word declares to people that those **who repent and turn to the Lord receives forgiveness of sins and eternal life because of Christ's merits.**
- Through the Word preached, grace is given to believers and are saved.
- **Example/Prove:**
 - OT Example (2 Samuel 12:13 - *"David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die."*)
 - NT Example (1 John 1:8-9 - *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*)

- Then, internal declaration/application of **God himself who says**, *"I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*
- **Implication/Application:**
 - Comfort for believers, and reason for confidence in God's Word (**not only what the preacher says*): Faith in Christ leads to forgiveness and eternal life. (Hebrews 4:14 - *"... let us **hold fast** our confession."*)
- **Summary point:** The word as the key that opens and shuts the kingdom of God. The ministry of the Word is God's means for salvation.
 - While many churches tend to set aside or minimize the Word, our church must uphold it.

[TRANSITION]: The second key of the kingdom of God...

Main Point 2: "Second Key - Church/Christian Discipline"

A. "**Closes and Binds**"

- The church "closes" the kingdom and "binds" one in God's judgment by the exercise of church discipline... when it **excommunicates** the wicked and unrepentant offenders, or **keeps them from the Sacraments**—in which they are excluded from the fellowship of the Christian church.
- And in the exclusion from the fellowship of the Christian church, God himself excludes them from the kingdom of Christ.
- **Example/Prove:**
 - Paul's (with apostolic authority) gives command to discipline the immoral man in Corinth church (READ 1 Corinthians 5:2, 13 *"... Let him who has done this be removed from among you... Purge the evil*

person from among you.”) ---> Addressed ultimately to the leaders of the church

- Internal declaration/application of God himself:
 - 1 Corinthians 5:4 - *“When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, **with the power of our Lord Jesus**, you are to deliver this man to Satan...”*
 - Cf. Matthew 18 - Whatever is bound on earth is bound in heaven (it involves God’s judgment too)
 - Extreme Example: Acts 5 - When Peter declared judgment on Ananias and Sapphira, God took their lives as well.
- **Point**: When the Church acts according to the Word of God (e.g., God’s law, not human laws)—then the **authority of the church carries the authority of Christ himself...** (apply to church discipline)
- **Illustrate**:
 - R.C. Sproul’s story of asking someone, *“Are you sure you’re okay being excommunicated from the church?”*
 - Wrong thinking that I can still be a member of God’s kingdom even if not part of the local church. Well, yes (visible and invisible church).
 - **But how can you be sure you’re a true Christian when the church perceives that you are unrepentant and hypocrite? If you are excluded from its benefits** (i.e., Lord’s Supper, or in the case of excommunication, even the Word)?
- **Apply**:
 - When the church rebukes us of sin, **do not be unrepentant**. Further discipline only means judgment from God.
 - And when under discipline, submit and seek God’s help for repentance. Why?

[TRANSITION]: When properly and biblically exercised, church disciplines (as a key) also...

B. "Opens and Looses"

- The church "opens" the kingdom and "looses" ("frees") one from God's judgment, when the disciplined person demonstrates **genuine repentance** and is **received back** again to the fellowship of the church.
 - And such restoration into the fellowship of the Christian church grants outward declaration that God himself has included the person into the kingdom of Christ. (*though we can't fully know the inward state of the person)
 - Restoration to the benefits of the church (meant for members of Christ).
- **Example/Prove:**
 - Referring to the same person in Corinth (READ 2 Corinthians 2:5-9 - *"Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you.* (*the whole church is affected/involved)...
 - For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather **turn to forgive and comfort him**, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. **So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him**. For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything.*" ---> (With church discipline and obedience, the person was restored back to their fellowship)
- Internal declaration/application of God himself:
 - 2 Corinthians 2:10 - *"Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ..."* ---> There's assurance of forgiveness from God himself
- **Summary point:** Discipline is the key that closes the kingdom of God to the wicked/unrepentant and opens the kingdom of God to the

repentant.

- **Observations**

- a. Goal of church discipline on the wicked and unrepentant:
 - i. 1 Corinthians 5:5 - "... you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that (ὅνα) **his spirit may be saved** in the day of the Lord." (purpose, ultimate goal)
 - ii. The goal of church discipline is to bring the erring person to repentance and ultimately restoration. Salvation rather than ultimate destruction (*not shame or punishment just for the sake of punishment)
- b. Overall purpose of church discipline is holiness and sanctification of the church.
 - i. **Christ-Centered:** Jesus Christ is our prophet who reveals his will. But he is also our King who rules over us and leads us in righteousness.
 - Through exercise of discipline, Christ loves us so much that **he will not let us remain in open rebellion or error** (doctrine or life)
 - Part of his whole work of purifying and sanctifying the church (growth)
 - ii. Illustrate: **Discipline in all areas of life is ultimately for good** (when properly administered and humbly embraced)
 - Parents' discipline on children (in varying degree and situation): There are lessons that kids will only understand through discipline.
 - Past training in basketball: 100 push-ups discipline for not listening to the coach.
 - iii. Though it can be hard and painful, discipline (in all matters of life) is **for the good. How much more the discipline of God!?**

Conclusion

- Many Christians don't like the idea of church discipline (whether excommunication, admonition, or removal of any benefits)... Ayaw natin magka-sakitan (avoidance of offending one another)
- The key to embrace discipline: Recognition of our inward corruptions and weaknesses (discipline helps us see and mortify our sins, which we otherwise won't see and mortify)
- **APPLY:** Hence, when we are admonished because of open sin or the church disciplines us (one way or another)—**do not resent!**
 - It is out of love for you!
 - Discipline is **ultimately a blessing from God** (without it, we'll be left to our sins and corruptions—unrepentance unto destruction)
 - **FOR THE MEMBERS:** Pray and encourage those who are under discipline.
- Beloved, remember this passage in Hebrews 12:7-11 (READ) (encouragement and promise in discipline)

Hebrews 12:7–11 **ESV**

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

- Christ instituted church discipline to secure our obedience to our King and to promote our spiritual edification, for the beauty of his church and unto the glory of God.
- Let us be thankful for it, faithful in it, and be trained by it. Amen.