

IS IT SAFE IN OUR HANDS?



***Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."
And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them,
"Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven;
if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."***

John 20

The authority to free a living soul from the power of sin.

"In the name of Jesus, your sins are forgiven."

The authority to tell a living soul that their sins are still there.

"Your sins are holding you under the judgment of God."

This authority was given to ordinary men.

They were not Levites.

They were not priests.

They were fishermen and tax collectors and ex-revolutionaries.

By the power of the Spirit these men were sent to free captives and to warn the arrogant that they were under the judgment of God.



They spread the fire of God across the earth.

They shook the foundations of the human race.

The fruit of their work continues as we read these words.

"Receive the Holy Spirit."

The Spirit of God in these men kept them humble like their Master.

The Spirit of God in these men gave them power—God’s power, to speak with the authority of heaven.

By the gracious humility and the mysterious power of the Spirit, these men forgave sin.

“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven.”

They also spoke warnings of judgment to those who turned their backs on God’s grace.

“If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

The same risen Lord who breathed on those men, empowered them, and sent them out,

...is now speaking to us.

“Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.



Receive the Holy Spirit.

***If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven;
If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”***

But here’s the question we need to ask ourselves before the Lord:

Is such power safe in our hands?

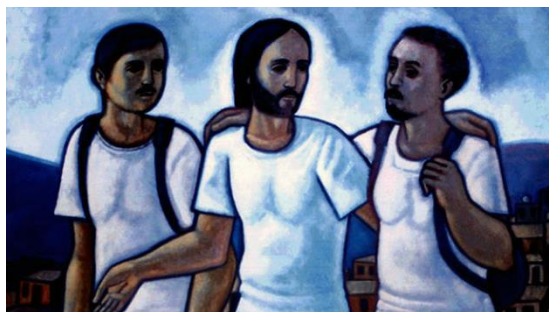
If we forgive sins in Jesus’ name, are we ourselves walking in forgiveness?

If we warn the obstinate that their sins are retained, are we doing it in fear and trembling before God?

We did not choose to be heralds of forgiveness or prophets of judgment.

We did not even choose Jesus.

He chose us.



“You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide.”

John 15

One thing we know:

Only the authority of heaven is able to break through the hard crust of cynicism and despair that grips human hearts in these waning days.

Authority to free souls that are captive to sin.

Authority to arrest the attention of the arrogant.

Is the authority of heaven safe in our hands?



If it is, we will set the captives free from the power of sin.

And when we shake the dust from our feet, the act will be more than a ritual.

God will confirm the words we speak with unmistakable power.

And people will know that the kingdom of God has come near.



Prayer: Lord, how unworthy we are to receive the authority you offer us, how incapable we feel to handle it. How can we do such things? But you, Lord, have chosen us. You are sending us. You speak your peace into our lives and breathe the Holy Spirit into us. You have given us this holy authority. What a gift, may we not waste it. Lord, help us, make your authority safe in our hands. And yes, by your mercy and power may the authority of heaven free captive souls, releasing many from despair and the grip of sin. And Lord may those we speak to, those we touch, know they have been touched with a power that is beyond us and know You and your Kingdom are real. Amen.

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