

- 1) Although anyone can forgive a sin against *himself*, only God can forgive a sin against another person (because all sin is firstly a sin against God). Thus, for Jesus to give this power to the apostles is a clear indication of the foundation of the sacrament of confession
- 2) **God does the forgiving.**
- 3) Leviticus 19:20-22 "If a man sleeps with a woman who is a slave girl promised to another man but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed. The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for a guilt offering to the LORD. With the ram of the guilt offering **the priest is to make atonement for him before the LORD for the sin he has committed, and his sin will be forgiven.**"
 - a) **Is it possible that God could establish a priesthood to communicate His forgiveness to His people or do you think that God is not powerful enough to do that?**
 - b) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tm5tMjfQnCh&feature=related>
- 4) Matthew 16:19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."
- 5) Matthew 18:18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you **bind** on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.
- 6) Matthew 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.
- 7) John 20:22-23 "And with that he breathed on them 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."
- 8) James 5:16 "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."
- 9) 2 Corinthians 5:18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us **the ministry of reconciliation**:
- 10) Matthew 9:5-6, 8 "Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . ." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home." When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, **who had given such authority to men.**

THE EARLY TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

- 11) *The Didache* "Confess your sins in church, and do not go up to your prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of life. . . . On the Lord's Day gather together, break

bread, and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions so that your sacrifice may be pure" (*Didache* 4:14, 14:1 – 70 AD)

12) *The Letter of Barnabas* "You shall judge righteously. You shall not make a schism, but you shall pacify those that contend by bringing them together. You shall confess your sins. You shall not go to prayer with an evil conscience. This is the way of light" (*Letter of Barnabas* 19 – 74 AD)

13) Ignatius of Antioch

"For as many as are of God and of Jesus Christ are also with the bishop. And as many as shall, in the exercise of penance, return into the unity of the Church, these, too, shall belong to God, that they may live according to Jesus Christ" (*Letter to the Philadelphians* 3 – 110 AD)

"For where there is division and wrath, God does not dwell. To all them that repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God, and to communion with the bishop" (*Letter to the Philadelphians* 8 – 110 AD)

14) *Irenaeus* "[The Gnostic disciples of Marcus] have deluded many women. . . . Their consciences have been branded as with a hot iron. Some of these women make a public confession, but others are ashamed to do this, and in silence, as if withdrawing from themselves the hope of the life of God, they either apostatize entirely or hesitate between the two courses" (*Against Heresies* 1:22 – 189 AD)

15) *Tertullian* "[Regarding confession, some] flee from this work as being an exposure of themselves, or they put it off from day to day. I presume they are more mindful of modesty than of salvation, like those who contract a disease in the more shameful parts of the body and shun making themselves known to the physicians; and thus they perish along with their own bashfulness" (*Repentance* 10:1 – 203 AD)

16) *Hippolytus* "[The bishop conducting the ordination of the new bishop shall pray:] God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Pour forth now that power which comes from you, from your royal Spirit, which you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, and which he bestowed upon his holy apostles . . . and grant this your servant, whom you have chosen for the episcopate, [the power] to feed your holy flock and to serve without blame as your high priest, ministering night and day to propitiate unceasingly before your face and to offer to you the gifts of your holy Church, and by the Spirit of the high priesthood to have the authority to forgive sins, in accord with your command" (*Apostolic Tradition* 3 – 215 AD)

17) *Origen* "[A final method of forgiveness], albeit hard and laborious [is] the remission of sins through penance, when the sinner . . . does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord and from seeking medicine, after the manner of him who say, 'I said, "To the Lord I will accuse myself of my iniquity"' (*Homilies on Leviticus* 2:4 – 248 AD)

18) *Cyprian of Carthage*

"The apostle [Paul] likewise bears witness and says: ' . . . Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord' [[I Corinthians 11:27](#)]. But [the impenitent] spurn and despise all these

warnings; before their sins are expiated, before they have made a confession of their crime, before their conscience has been purged in the ceremony and at the hand of the priest . . . they do violence to [the Lord's] body and blood, and with their hands and mouth they sin against the Lord more than when they denied h" (*The Lapsed* 15:1-3 – 251 AD)

"Of how much greater faith and salutary fear are they who . . . confess their sins to the priests of God in a straightforward manner and in sorrow, making an open declaration of conscience. . . . I beseech you, brethren, let everyone who has sinned confess his sin while he is still in this world, while his confession is still admissible, while the satisfaction and remission made through the priests are still pleasing before the Lord" (*The Lapsed* 28 – 251 AD)

"Sinners may do penance for a set time, and according to the rules of discipline come to public confession, and by imposition of the hand of the bishop and clergy receive the right of Communion. [But now some] with their time [of penance] still unfulfilled . . . they are admitted to Communion, and their name is presented; and while the penitence is not yet performed, confession is not yet made, the hands of the bishop and clergy are not yet laid upon them, the Eucharist is given to them; although it is written, 'Whosoever shall eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord' [[I Corinthians 11:27](#)]" (*Letters* 9:2 – 253 AD)

"And do not think, dearest brother, that either the courage of the brethren will be lessened, or that martyrdoms will fail for this cause, that penance is relaxed to the lapsed, and that the hope of peace [i.e. absolution] is offered to the penitent. . . . For to adulterers even a time of repentance is granted by us, and peace is given" (*Letters* 51[55]:20 – 253 AD)

"But I wonder that some are so obstinate as to think that repentance is not to be granted to the lapsed, or to suppose that pardon is to be denied to the penitent, when it is written, 'Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works' [[Revelation 2:5](#)], which certainly is said to him who evidently has fallen, and whom the Lord exhorts to rise up again by his deeds [of penance], because it is written, 'Alms deliver from death' [[Tobit 12:9](#)]" (*Letters* 51[55]:22 – 253 AD)

- 19) *Aphraahat the Persian Sage* "You [priests], then, who are disciples of our illustrious physician [Christ], you ought not deny a curative to those in need of healing. And if anyone uncovers his wound before you, give him the remedy of repentance. And he that is ashamed to make known his weakness, encourage him so that he will not hide it from you. And when he has revealed it to you, do not make it public, lest because of it the innocent might be reckoned as guilty by our enemies and by those who hate us" (*Treatises* 7:3 – 340 AD)
- 20) *Basil the Great* "It is necessary to confess our sins to those to whom the dispensation of God's mysteries is entrusted. Those doing penance of old are found to have done it before the saints. It is written in the Gospel that they confessed their sins to John the

Baptist [[Matthew 3:6](#)], but in Acts [[19:18](#)] they confessed to the apostles" (*Rules Briefly Treated* 288 – 374 AD)

- 21) *John Chrysostom* "Priests have received a power which God has given neither to angels nor to archangels. It was said to them: 'Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose, shall be loosed.' Temporal rulers have indeed the power of binding; but they can only bind the body. Priests, in contrast, can bind with a bond which pertains to the soul itself and transcends the very heavens. Did [God] not give them all the powers of heaven? 'Whose sins you shall forgive,' he says, 'they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.' What greater power is there than this? The Father has given all judgment to the Son. And now I see the Son placing all this power in the hands of men [[Matthew 10:40](#), [John 20:21-23](#)]. They are raised to this dignity as if they were already gathered up to heaven" (*The Priesthood* 3:5 – 387 AD)
- 22) *Ambrose of Milan* "For those to whom [the right of binding and loosing] has been given, it is plain that either both are allowed, or it is clear that neither is allowed. Both are allowed to the Church, neither is allowed to heresy. For this right has been granted to priests only" (*Penance* 1:1 – 388 AD)
- 23) *Jerome* "If the serpent, the devil, bites someone secretly, he infects that person with the venom of sin. And if the one who has been bitten keeps silence and does not do penance, and does not want to confess his wound . . . then his brother and his master, who have the word [of absolution] that will cure him, cannot very well assist him" (*Commentary on Ecclesiastes* 10:11 – 388 AD)
- 24) *Augustine* "When you shall have been baptized, keep to a good life in the commandments of God so that you may preserve your baptism to the very end. I do not tell you that you will live here without sin, but they are venial sins which this life is never without. Baptism was instituted for all sins. For light sins, without which we cannot live, prayer was instituted. . . . But do not commit those sins on account of which you would have to be separated from the body of Christ. Perish the thought! For those whom you see doing penance have committed crimes, either adultery or some other enormities. That is why they are doing penance. If their sins were light, daily prayer would suffice to blot them out. . . . In the Church, therefore, there are three ways in which sins are forgiven: in baptisms, in prayer, and in the greater humility of penance" (*Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed* 7:15, 8:16 – 395 AD)

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