

John 20:19-23

**Does That
Mean I Have
To Go to
Confession?**



“God, the Father of mercies, through the death and the resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans Catholic Words of Absolution

“God only can forgive sins, and Christ being God, has a power to do so likewise; but he never communicated any such power to his apostles; nor did they ever assume any such power to themselves, or pretend to exercise it; it is the mark of antichrist, to attempt anything of the kind; who, in so doing, usurps the divine prerogative, places himself in his seat, and shows himself as if he was God...”

John Gill

What is their basis for doing this?

John 20:23

If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.

Two things to avoid:

- a) Don't interpret this passage with Protestant or evangelical lenses. Let the text say what it wants to say.
- b) Don't read more into the text than what's actually there.

1. The Context

John 20:19 – On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

1. The Context

John 20:21 – Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

- ▶ Jesus is authorizing them to work on his behalf on the basis of his authority.

1. The Context

John 20:22 – And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Two Possibilities

- ▶ Jesus didn't actually give them the Holy Spirit here.
- ▶ The apostles received the Holy Spirit in a different way than at Pentecost.

2. The Problem Verse

- a) God is the ultimate one who is doing the forgiving.
- b) Jesus is giving his disciples authority to forgive sins on his behalf.
- c) Forgiveness has to be given under the conditions that God gives for a person being forgiven for their sins.
- d) It does not say that if you don't go to them that you won't be forgiven.

3. What does verse 23 actually mean?

- ▶ Jesus is making his disciples his representatives to tell people whether they are forgiven or not.
- a) It has to be in line with what God says about being saved.
- b) Its has to be led by the Spirit.
- c) God is the one doing the forgiving.
- d) We still need to take this seriously.